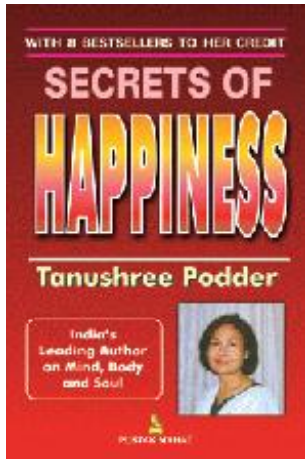




## Secrets Of Happiness



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Happiness is a feeling of joy and gratitude that is more often than not fleeting.

There are no magic mantras that will impart joy and happiness when recited continuously.

It is only by developing a positive and cheerful attitude towards life that one can be happy.

For peace of mind and contentment, we need to look inwards rather than outwards.

We need to find peace within ourselves because it is not available through other means - no matter what price one is willing to pay.

The book delineates ways and means to ensure happiness in every walk of life.

But the purpose of this book stretches beyond the visible endeavour of outlining codes of happiness.

It also encompasses the need to bring in a little light in otherwise gloomy lives.

Many of the inspirational stories in this book will succeed in doing just that.

Some Secrets:

- \*Develop Creative hobbies
- \*Read something inspiring each day
- \*Forego Revenge
- \*Keep expectations low
- \*Think of someone with more problems
- \*Do not seek perfection

About the author:



A management graduate, Tanushree Podder has specialised in labour laws and HR. Besides forays into fields like beauty, education, Reiki, Vipassana, Pranic Healing and Yoga, she has lately been studying various alternative therapies.

Tanushree has written on diverse subjects from health and humour to serious social issues. Over the past 20 years, she has contributed to many periodicals in India. Her other books published by Pustak Mahal include: Over 1000 Household Hints, Indian Cuisine, Beauty Solutions, Fit & Fine in Body & Mind, You Are What You Eat, Smart Memory, Youthful Forever, and The Magic of Massage.

## PREFACE:

"Ah! Happiness!" exclaimed my friend. "So, you are writing a book about happiness? Tell me - is anyone happy in this world? I think there is no happiness in this world. We all live in constant search of that elusive element," he ended cynically.

"Are you unhappy?" I asked, curious about his statement.

"Not really! But I'm not happy, either," he replied, after thinking for a moment.

He was right. So many of us are neither happy nor unhappy; we are living in an undecipherable condition. Most of the time, we do not know what we want. Happiness is an intangible state of mind that is difficult to define. It is an elusive state of Utopia that we crave for constantly, all through our lives.

Again, happiness means different things to different people. To some, it may just mean the ability to ensure three square meals a day. If they are able to get those meals, they are happy. To others, it may be experienced when they acquire a new car or a new house. To a few, it may mean establishing a perfectly compatible relationship with their spouse or family members. To each of us, the word 'happiness' has different connotations.

However, a state of happiness does not last forever. If I am happy today, it doesn't mean I will be happy tomorrow. It also doesn't mean that happiness doesn't have an everlasting quality! It is just that our concept of happiness keeps changing every few days. If a certain thing brings joy and happiness into our lives today, we may find something else missing tomorrow and may become unhappy yet again. This leads to an unending quest for the illusive quality called happiness, with the parameters and definition changing constantly.

Therefore, man is in constant search for happiness. He will devour books written on the subject, seek blessings from godmen, and attend any lecture or seminar that promises to reveal the path to joy and happiness.

But what is happiness? In my opinion, happiness is just a state of mind. You are only as happy as your mind allows you to be. If you are in a state of restlessness, how can you be happy?

There are no magic wells to provide water that can ensure happiness, nor are there any mantras that will impart joy when recited continuously. It is only by developing a positive attitude towards life that one can be happy. To develop the state of mental peace and contentment, people need to look inwards and not outwards. They need to find peace within themselves because peace and contentment are not available in the market, no matter what price one is willing to pay. Happiness is not a prescription drug. One doesn't have to work hard to acquire it nor go seeking it in the Himalayas. Either it is within you and you learn to discover it, or it will never be yours.

Recall the story of the musk deer searching tirelessly for the musk that smells so good; little does it realise that the aromatic musk lies within itself! A human being also spends his lifetime looking for things that will ensure him happiness and joy without realising that happiness lies within himself, waiting to be discovered.

If finding happiness were so easy, why would so many people remain unhappy? The truth is that it is not so easy to find this elusive gem. You can achieve wealth, position, status, social recognition, almost anything, but achieving satisfaction, joy and happiness seem ever so difficult. Why? I think it is simply because we are so intent on achieving materialistic things that we just don't have enough time to discover the joy of living - the happiness of being blessed by God. We never think of the blessings we have received from Him in terms of health and life. It is only when we see a handicapped person that we realise we are fortunate in having our limbs intact. But do we thank God for making us normal and healthy? We don't. Because we take it for granted. Similarly, there are many other things that we take for granted in life.

As long as we remain unaware of the things we have been blessed with, we can't be happy. We crave more and more materialistic things but ignore the greater value of the intangibles.

Many of my friends and family members asked me why I decided to write a book on such a difficult topic. I admit, it is difficult to write a book on happiness, simply because there are no guidelines, no research, no facts and figures that one can rely on. It is simply a matter of relating to the subject in your own way, relying on the heart and its dictates. But I had a reason for writing on this subject and I'll share it with readers. I am writing because I had suffered many incidents of frustration, unhappiness and disquiet for years - until I found a way to deal with them. I won't say I discovered the secrets of happiness or found the way to eternal peace but I have come a little closer to discovering it.

I have seen friends grieving over the loss of a close one; seen people get overwhelmingly depressed because they have lost a job or suffered some ailment. These can be extremely disturbing for people who can't handle such problems and end up needing the help of counsellors. Many of them become emotional wrecks and resort to various medications like tranquillisers and sleep-inducing drugs. It is not easy to deal with the downside of life. In fact, it is easier to advise than to practise.

I have experienced life's blows at close quarters. I have seen my loved ones die; I have seen my life go through mayhem and turmoil of the worst kind. There were times when I didn't want to live any more. But better sense prevailed and I began hunting



for ways and means to deal with ups and downs in life. I went through the gamut of going to spiritual assemblies, seeking out truth, attending classes on various forms of spiritual practices like Vipassana, yoga, meditation, Reiki, Pranic healing etc. I ran from pillar to post seeking a practice that would bring peace and serenity to my heart. It took immense patience and fortitude, and there were many occasions when I almost gave up. It is so easy to throw in the towel and so difficult to strive and struggle. In the end, I overcame the reverses and turned my life around towards the light of progress and happiness. I can't claim that adversities do not disturb me, or that I don't cry over them. But I get over them and that wins half the battle.

No one can discover happiness simply by reading books. It needs a more determined effort than the mere reading of words. It requires the implementation of suggestions; it entails an acceptance of things around us. The purpose of writing this book stretches beyond the visible endeavour of delineating codes of happiness. It encompasses the need to bring a little light into otherwise gloomy lives. In my quest for solace and joy, I discovered some simple truths. It is these truths that I am keen on sharing with readers.

I am neither a seer nor a preacher but a normal human being with my own share of woes which I am constantly struggling to overcome; but in the process of having spent half a century in this world I have discovered a few tenets which lead to the path of happiness and it is these tenets that I want to share with readers. If I am able to infuse even a single heart with joy and happiness, I will consider it reward enough.

-Tanushree Podder

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Chap. 14. This is Life



Life is an adventure; venture into it,  
Life is a journey; complete it,  
Life is a path full of roses and thorns,  
Enjoy the roses and pick out the thorns.

There is no one in the world who does not have his share of troubles and anxieties. When we go through adversities in life, we always assume that God has singled us out for unfair treatment. In our ignorance, we feel that we are encountering more distressful events than others. We forget the months of happiness and success we have enjoyed.

Anxieties are caused by our way of interpreting events. If we can interpret it in a positive manner we could use the experience to learn and grow, but if we interpret the same in a negative way, we will feel defeated by the event. The power of positive thinking can help us overcome adversity with ease, while the negative attitude can rob us of our happiness, self-esteem and optimism.

When Prashant was unable to get admission in IIT despite full preparation, he didn't lose hope. He applied at the Regional Engineering College and got admission. After that he continued to work hard and passed out with flying colours. He was picked up by an MNC in a campus interview and his life was made.

Positive minds think differently. When a door closes they expect many windows to open. This makes all the difference.

Just as every dawn is followed by dusk, happiness and joy are followed by sorrow. It is how you accept this cycle that ensures peace.

## Chap. 37. Keep Life Simple

Half our problems will disappear if we can simplify our lives. If you look back and think, you will realise that your childhood was so carefree and uncomplicated. Why was it uncomplicated? It was so because you didn't have ambitions and ego problems.

Half our problems arise due to ambitions and the other half due to ego problems.

If you examine relationships gone sour, you will realise that almost all of them soured because of ego. If even one of the affected parties had come forward boldly and thrown ego out of the window, things would not have gone bad. Similarly, most of our frustrations, unhappiness and miseries arise from ambitions. If we downsize our ambitions, many of our problems would vanish.

All seers, godmen and scriptures advocate simplicity of life and thought. Yet, we can barely live a simple life. In order to be happy, you have to give up certain things. Why not begin by giving up a simple thing each year? If you give up smoking this year, try giving up non-vegetarian food the next year and silks or jewellery the year after that. Step by step, you can make a difference in your life.

A simple life doesn't necessarily mean you have to live in a hut and wear khadi; it means giving up things that lead you towards unhappiness, even if indirectly. If you give up wearing silks and jewellery, for instance, you will bring down your cost of living, which in turn will reduce your needs. Reduced needs mean less ambition and less greed. It helps you get out of the rat race.

Get the point?

Simplicity of thought and deed and a simple life can reduce stress levels magically.

## Chap. 42. Don't Seek Perfection

Do you believe there is perfection in this world? Don't even bother to answer this question! There is nothing in the world that is perfect and never will be. Yet, we all chase the mirage of perfection relentlessly throughout our lives. And what do we achieve? Frustration, unhappiness, misery and tension! So, is it really worth the effort?

I was a perfectionist for almost 30 years of my life. I began early in my childhood, being fastidious about everything, striving for perfection. I never liked anything less than perfect, yet I couldn't find the standards of perfection I desired, neither in myself nor in others. One sentence that I always added to all my statements was: 'I am particular about....' I was particular about almost everything. Whether it was my house, my career, my relationships or my possessions, I was particular about everything and nothing less would please me.

As a result I was a highly-strung person, always looking for faults to rectify. I was diagnosed as a Type A personality, which meant high stress and a highly volatile atmosphere at home. I couldn't sleep well and found myself grinding my teeth over trivial matters. If the children messed up the bed I would scream, if my husband left the toothpaste without its cap on the bathroom shelf, I threw a fit. I shouted at the maid because she didn't sweep the floor properly, I ranted at the gardener because I found weeds in the garden. I blew my top at work because someone had not met the deadline. I fought at the bank because the cashier was lethargic and slow. I had altercations at the supermarket because they over-billed me. Life was an endless struggle and my blood pressure shot up each time I interacted with someone.

Things began to go out of control and I sought my doctor's help. It was on his recommendation that I did a course in Vipassana meditation and found myself gaining some control over my emotions. I also realised that my pursuit of perfection was getting me more trouble than I could handle.

I learnt the hard way that seeking perfection is pointless.

If one stops trying to change things or find perfection in everyone and everything around him, he will definitely be in a much happier frame of mind. That does not mean anything goes - it just implies that things beyond your control should not bother you. Do your best but don't expect others to be perfect. We live in a world full of imperfections and striving for perfection can only cause a lot of unhappiness.

Perfection is a Utopia that exists only in the minds of perfectionists.



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## About Pustakmahal Publishers

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