

What gives us more satisfaction: the pursuit of our desires?



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What gives us more satisfaction: the pursuit of our desires or the attainment of them? People have diverse definitions of happiness. Psychologists relate happiness to emotions and feelings of gratification. Economists define happiness in terms of wealth of individuals. Some people attribute happiness to attainment of desires. Some others believe that satisfaction lies in accepting the fact that human life is miserable and expectations just betray men. But where does real happiness and satisfaction lie?

Although attainment is the objective of every pursuit and sense of accomplishment is an ingredient for further progress but still desires and destinations don't completely satisfy humans yet it is the pursuit which instills a positive attitude towards life and struggle, makes the process enjoyable, it explores ones capabilities and eventually enables humans to transcend from petty pleasures to the higher purposes of their life. Happiness is not something to be derived from achievements as such; rather it comes after the pursuer who knuckles down for his desires.

The proponents of attainment of desires say that achievement of desires, the motive of every pursuit, is the only way to happiness. They support their claim by saying that achievement is the final point of all human actions done in regard to pursuit of particular desire and outcome is what determines happiness not the pursuit. They exemplify that people and nations who have attained more are better than those who have attained less. Some economists went so far to claim that GDP and GNP can also measure the happiness level of nation. However, supporters of this point of view fallaciously ascribe happiness and pleasure to attainment.

Attainment does not necessarily give us happiness and contentment. Furthermore, the example that they cite to support their point is hardly persuasive. This can be proven by the recent study conducted by WHO on over 90000 citizens of various countries. The study found that affluent nations like France (21 percent), New Zealand (18. 2 percent) and the United States (19. 2 percent) had the highest depression rates and people are unsatisfied for their lives, while lower-income countries such as China (6. 5 percent) and Mexico (8 percent) had the lowest incidences of depression. This discontentment is because the man, who acquires things easily, cannot stay satisfied and contented for long. Pursuit is better than attainment in the sense that they keep a person alive and satisfied in his work and also synergize his desires in accordance to his pursuit and eventually give him a bigger reward. Sense of accomplishment no doubt comes with attainment of desires and tangible success. Humans feel confident when they have success. Their achievement brings a positive attitude, and proud feeling. Still it would be quite superficial to say that attainment can give a kind of lasting happiness.

In fact accomplishment and the happiness associated with it are based little on the net outcome but the way we reach our outcome. Thomas Paine rightly says, “ The harder the conflict, the more glorious the triumph. What we obtain too cheap, we esteem too lightly” (qtd. in Bogle 36). It is our pursuit and hard struggle that gives everything its meaning and contribute to human happiness. For instance, Sir Edmund Percival Hillary would have no charm in conquering Mount Everest if he could do it by an elevator; similarly there is

no point in conquering moon and mars if humans could do it as easily as climbing on the roof of house.

The greater the pursuit involved in any achievement the greater the charm, thrill and pleasure of doing it. Furthermore, it is human nature to want what we don't have. Human brain values distant things very attractively and our imagination also magnifies the importance of that particular desire in our mind. We struggle for things but once achieved they lose their fervor. This is the time when the person who exclusively focuses on attainment realizes that human life is a wretched life and desires don't satisfy us. These are mere illusions which keep us busy.

However, the person who has struggled for the thing has enjoyed the whole pursuing process and he is satisfied because his struggle, irrespective of outcome, has proved his capabilities and hard work. Pursuit of goals provides humans with real pleasure by giving him bigger success. Pursuit is not only the struggle but it is a whole paradigm which can inspire a person to keep working hard to achieve his goal and redefine the new goals after the achievement. Pursuit oriented persons dream bigger in life and they are more idealistic in their approach.

It's in fact the unending pursuit that bears the sweet fruit of extraordinary success and satisfaction. For instance, Alexander Fleming, Nobel laureate in medicine, never knew that he would win Nobel Prize. He even never aimed at discovering the Penicillin. He was just pursuing his interest of studying microorganisms with devotion. The discovery of Penicillin, the noble prize and the title 'Father of Biology' were the by-products of his pursuit (Sir Alexander Fleming – Biography). Another point illustrating importance of <https://assignbuster.com/what-gives-us-more-satisfaction-the-pursuit-of-our-desires/>

pursuits is that pursuit has many gains in addition to the goal. It has content in itself.

It is human nature that he finds himself satisfied in efforts towards his goals. “ The human animal, like others, is adapted to a certain amount of struggle for life, and when by means of great wealth homo sapiens can gratify all their whims without effort, the mere absence of effort from his life removes an essential ingredient of happiness” (Russell 30). Thus, people enjoy the hard work only when they are interested in pursuits rather than in desire. History shows various relevant examples, “ Louis Pasteur was so buried in his work on his wedding day that he entirely forgot the ceremony and had to be fetched by a friend” (Avery).

Similarly, John Nash, a great economist, found that his interests, fun and pleasure lie in Economics and its understanding. It is the pursuit which gives Stephen Hawking enough pleasure and happiness that despite of all his physical disabilities he is still living a contented, meaningful and productive life. Famous American philosopher and poet, Henry David Thoreau, says, “ Happiness is like a butterfly: the more you chase it, the more it will elude you, but if you turn your attention to other things, it will come and sit softly on your shoulder” (qtd. n Brentar 36). An attainment oriented person always focuses on the upcoming excitement and pleasure because the purpose of his attainment is neither struggle nor pursuit. But do excitements and luxuries give us happiness? “ A life that is too full of excitement is actually an exhausting life in which continually stronger stimuli are needed to give the thrill that has come to be thought as an essential part of pleasure” (Russell

62). And a time comes when it becomes almost impossible for humans to satisfy themselves with attainment of desires and excitements.

For instance, Maharaja Patiala in spite of having all the luxuries and attainments could not withstand boredom and died of unhappiness and discontentment (Collins and Lapierre). For a happy life it is necessary to pursue for desire, as pursuit is never ending and it also modifies your goals and desires. This brings us to conclude that all the extra ordinary successes have been made possible by the great pursuit undertaken by human beings.

Pursuit by virtue of stretching the human capabilities beyond their limits, enriching human personality with positive attitude and by creating a balance in life provides us real imperishable happiness. A pursuer finds contentment, learning and development for him in every struggle irrespective of the result. On the other hand an attainment oriented person is more interested in net outcomes, therefore, he finds his happiness confined and diminishing. It is pursuit which makes human entity superior to his attainments and transcends his happiness beyond his desires.