

Quacking All Day Does Not Make Me a Duck

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Ram: This essay was written by friend who is a disciple of Swamini Atmaprakashananda.

All of us act in order to feel secure, peaceful and as happy as possible. What we don't have in common is how we go about trying to feel secure, peaceful and happy within ourselves.

When we act dishonestly we have problems because the difference between what we know and what we do creates inner conflict. We act dishonestly to feel more secure, peaceful and happy, but end up feeling more insecure, disturbed and unhappy. When we go along with anger, for example, we are doing so in order to feel better, but it sometimes irrevocably damages our relationships. If we indulge these emotions we do not stop seeking to be secure, peaceful and happy, because our lives are based on trying to attain security and happiness. All we really want is to stop seeking happiness and be happy.

The question of how to go about living in the most secure and peaceful way possible is the most important issue in our lives. The way we live presently is our personal answer to this question. Is the way we live the right answer? And how do we know what is the right answer? It is not a mystery when we are living rightly.

If we feel insecure, disturbed and unhappy, we can safely assume that we are not living rightly. Living rightly consists of an understanding of ourselves and the world that lines up with how others and the world actually are. For example, if we think that people should act honestly in relation to us and our happiness depends on it, we are in for a lot of trouble. Given the opportunity, many people will act dishonestly and exploit us. We do not have to like this fact, but we had better understand it or our dealings with the world will not be fruitful.

Are we being negative when we believe that people tend to be dishonest and exploitive? No, we are being realistic. This is good because we can learn to discriminate between the people we can trust and those that are ready to screw us. Realistic notions about the world is extremely positive, but it is not a positive attitude. Cultivating a positive attitude is as stupid a cultivating a negative attitude because it can blind us to people who are trustworthy and honest. True-to-fact thinking is positive thinking. It is absolutely necessary for a happy life.

True-to-fact thinking about yourself is just as important as true-to-fact thinking about others. The happiness spin doctors tell us that we have to believe in ourselves. They ask us to create a notion about ourselves that we want to be and then convince ourselves that this is true. Be optimistic and maintain this optimism no matter what and it will guarantee success. This idea is crap. Mistaken notions about myself and ignorance about my given God-given capacities and how to exercise them successfully will not be resolved by embracing an attitude that is based on trying to actualize an appealing belief about myself. This is the difference between "I see it because I think it is" and "I see it because it is there."

In the absence of true-to-fact thinking – which delivers a realistic appraisal of what life is actually like – we become dependent on others to be told what living is all about and how best to live it. It

is extremely unwise to trust others with the job of how to live life. It is a violation of *svadharma*. Realistic, or true-to-fact, thinking forms a sound basis for living. It is one of our greatest capacities and can be developed with practise.

If we have a notion that we are losers, this will blind us to the discovery of any capacities in us that contradicts this belief. Self-rating will not be resolved by trying to convince ourselves that we are winners. If we quack all day it does not make us ducks. Because we mess up a number of times does not make us a failure. It just makes us people who can mess up. Because we succeed at various endeavours does not mean we are winners; it just means we are successful people.

Rating others with global labels like “stupid,” “fool,” “idiot,” “SOB,” “prick,” “bastard,” “liar” or “bitch” is building a subjective cage because nobody has ever met a liar – only people who lie.

Labelling is moving away from true-to-fact thinking. One reason we resist true-to-fact thinking is that we don't like the truth to interfere with a good story. The harsh reality is that when we think positively or negatively about ourselves or others we are writing fiction. Our thoughts about who we are should be in harmony with who we are. Self-rating is delusional and never true to facts.

True-to-fact thinking is an innate human capacity. It is wise to cultivate it.