How to live a meaningful life

‘MAKE YOUR EXISTENCE TRULY WORTHWHILE BY CONTRIBUTING TO THOSE AROUND YOU’

Q: How would you define a meaningful life? How can one make his life more fulfilling?

Sadhguru: Everything that we do is in some way contributing to someone’s life. If you see how to make this a conscious process of contributing to everyone’s life through your work, then your life will be very different. Contributing does not mean that you will not make money in your business. If you constantly see how to give your best to everyone around you, then profit will happen – you do not have to worry about it.

Contributing is not about money or material; it is the basic vocation of your life. If you make your life into a contribution, then your life will become truly meaningful and worthwhile because you are creating what you care for. If you are creating what you care for, then it will be a joy to go to work every day. With this, you will never die of stress, believe me. You may die of exhaustion, but you will not die of stress. That is a very good thing.

The moment you are seeing how to contribute, the moment there is a certain pleasantness of experience within you, your body and mind will function at their best. There is substantial scientific and medical evidence to prove this. If your body and mind are not functioning at their best, do you believe you will attain success? Success is a consequence of harnessing all that you have to the best possible result. If this has to happen, you must be in a pleasant state of experience. Then, the more you do, the better you should feel. This will only happen to you if you are always looking at how to make a contribution to everything around you.

Why are we here? What do you think is our purpose in life?

If you were feeling really ecstatic, would you ask about the purpose of life? You are asking this question because in some way, the experience of life is not good enough. Most human beings have become a bundle of thoughts, emotions, ideas, opinions and prejudices. That means your psychological drama is hijacking your life. Most of the time, you are only thinking about life, not living it. You have come here to live life, not to think about it.

Do not try to invent all kinds of purposes for life. If you explore the nature of this life that you are, you will know that life does not need any purpose – life is too phenomenal by itself. If you experience this life in its fullness, life is a purpose unto itself.

We often hear stories of people who committed suicide soon after they reached the pinnacle of success. Why is modern life so stressful?

We usually think of “success” in terms of what we could do and where we will stand in the world. What I see is, generally successful people are far more stressed and are suffering a lot more than the not-so-successful people. Success means essentially, you are sitting on a good perch. So if someone sits on a perch which they are not equipped to sit on, success kills them.

If people are successful because of social trends, educational qualifications or family backgrounds which carry them to certain places, then they suffer constantly. If you want to enjoy your perch, it is very important that before you engineer situations for success, you first engineer yourself.

Essentially, people’s stress and suffering have nothing to do with success or failure. Stress is not happening to you because of the work that you are doing but because you have not learned how to handle the basic faculties of your body and mind.

Every human experience has a chemical basis to it. You may call it stress, anxiety, bliss, or ecstasy, but everything has a chemical basis to it. As there is a science for external wellbeing, there is a whole science as to how to create your inner chemistry. Yoga has many methods through which you can create the right kind of chemistry where being peaceful and joyous comes naturally to you.

Why do human beings sometimes experience an existential crisis? How can one overcome it?

Everything has become a crisis in people’s lives. Adolescence was a crisis, finding a career was a crisis, midlife is a crisis, old age is a crisis. So when are they not in a crisis? If they sense a little bit of a crisis, that is when most people freak out. But especially if you are in a crisis, it is all the more important that you function at your best at that moment, but that is when most people give in.

This dimension can be easily transcended if a person is willing to invest a certain amount of time upon themselves. If you think what you are doing is important, then the first thing that you need to do is work upon yourself. Various types of methods are available through which every human being can do this. There are ways to improve the very way the fundamental life force within you functions – there is a whole science and technology for this.

- Ranked among the fifty most influential people in India, Sadhguru is a yogi, mystic, visionary and bestselling author. Sadhguru has been conferred the “Padma Vibhushan,” India’s highest annual civilian award, by the Government of India in 2017, for exceptional and distinguished service.