

Traveling in Quest of Happiness

Shashank V. Parulekar

It is true that some people are genuinely happy travelling, visiting places, seeing things, meeting people, and enriching their lives through all those experiences. There are those who are perfectly happy staying where they are, doing what they do. They do not need and want a break. They are not stressed by their work because they love it. So they don't want to go in search of happiness, with a change in the environment. Then there are those who believe they will be happy if they take a break to go travelling. They are conditioned to believe this by tourism departments, travel and tour agencies, family members, friends, and neighbours etc. They look at colorful ads in newspapers and magazines, ads on TV showing people enjoying travelling. They believe those are real-life people really enjoying themselves while in reality they are models and actors working to make money. They choose summer for pleasure travels because their children in schools and colleges have summer vacations which are longer than any other vacations during the year. They do this in tropical countries too, where the heat can be killing in the summer. Then the choice of the place to visit falls to a hill-station, which is cooler than the hometown, though not as cool as one would like. Hill stations are few and get overcrowded in no time, with so many pleasure-seekers flocking there. Then one ends up meeting the same people one meets regularly during the working time of the year, to get away from whom one has gone touring, believing oneself to be happy,

No matter where a tourist goes, there are local crooks to exploit him/her. A taxi-driver will take a roundabout route to the destination to extract more money. Tour guides will take him to restaurants and shops of his choice where he gets a commission for the service rendered. Pickpockets will pick his pocket, and thieves will steal his baggage. Even the journey to and from may not be safe, armed dacoits robbing trains, buses, and cars. Despite such experiences, tourists visit tourist spots, gaze at buildings and monuments and exclaim, 'it looks exactly like it does in photographs', and are happy about it. At other times they would have realized that things will look the same in real life and in photographs. But as tourists perhaps they take off their thinking caps to don those tourist caps. They admire gardens though they possibly have similar or better gardens in their home towns, which they cannot find time to visit. They eat food with a relish though it may not be as good as the food they get back home. They buy trinkets they call souvenirs at prices far higher than their actual cost. They do all this because that is what everyone does and they do not want to feel inferior in any way. They do this to rejuvenate themselves so as to be able to go through another year working. Some of them do this so as to be able to speak about it in front of others.

I am not against tours. I am against doing things without realizing why one does those things. Those who do these things knowing all these things are requested to ignore this article.