

Loneliness and Depression

Anon.

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Modern man suffers from two great maladies—loneliness and depression. It appears that we have lost the art of being alone. Ruby Lilaowala has this to say (Afternoon Despatch & Courier, August 14):

“Our finest hours are not in the hustle-bustle of our family, nor the noise and excitement of friends, but in solitude. When we're alone we enter into an intimate union with wisdom, peace and happiness. At times, during the “doing nothing” meditation, we touch divinity, so that we function later, with a heightened sense of perception. ...It's sheer bliss to be oblivious to the attributes of human nature that have caused us suffering—like gross selfishness, inevitable misunderstandings, unworthy hatreds and jealousies. ...We may spend an entire evening socializing with, say, 150 people at a party and yet feel “lonely,” because while bodies come near each other with “air-kissing” and “hello darlings,” the hearts and minds may be so distant.... We've lost the art of being alone, and don't know what to do with ourselves in solitude. We don't know how to make ourselves happy with our inner resources. So, we switch on the radio...the TV...go to a movie or phone a friend, because we crave companionship. However, if, by daily practice, we “learn” to be meditative while being alone, we can have peace and joy and wisdom within ourselves.”

When we are other-dependent for our happiness it leaves us craving for more. To experience lasting peace and happiness, it is necessary to turn within—every day, for a few minutes. We may find this practice difficult at first, but if kept up, it would yield positive results. It is not enough to be alone, but when alone we must learn to “think away from ourselves.” We have very encouraging words in *Light on the Path*:

“Listen to the song of life.... Look for it and listen to it first in your own heart. At first you may say, It is not there; when I search I find only discord. Look deeper. If again you are disappointed, pause and look deeper again. There is a natural melody, an obscure fount in every human heart. It may be hidden over and utterly concealed and silenced—but it is there. At the very base of your nature you will find faith, hope and love.” (pp. 10, 23)