

BOOK EXCERPT



# HAPPINESS SHUNRI

MANNY ANCHAN

"Defining book of the moment. A must read!"

**John Abraham**

## 侍 INTRODUCTION TO THE HAPPINESS SAMURAI 幸

If you were to ask me about my Ikigai journey and when it began, I would not begin with the exact year or the exact date. Instead, I would tell you the story of my happiness transformation.

Have you ever thought to stop in the middle of a busy crowded street and just watch the human traffic going by, blinded by their sense of “not doing enough” or “not achieving enough?” Have you ever wondered what their lives would be like, once they are home, away from the hustle bustle? Do they ever actually leave the hustle bustle outside the door, or do they carry it in their consciousness, making it a part of their mind and their mindset, refusing to let go in case they miss an important train to an unseen, important destination?

At the very peak of my career, when I was showing up at work by 8.45 am every single morning, getting a summary of the previous day’s business reports, drinking coffee, and preparing cutting edge presentations that would apparently help me get the maximum out of Maximum City, Mumbai - I asked myself these questions.

And the answers astounded me.

I asked myself these questions at a time when the entire world was rapidly diminishing into the falling lines on a

graph that screamed recession. I asked myself these questions when I stopped finding joy and was instead, plagued by fear of diminishing markets and the financial tumble that would defeat my passion for numbers. I asked myself these questions when my work became a bureaucratic nightmare that threatened to negate the sanity I had preserved for 14 years of growth in a place where I thought I had been planted for a good reason. I asked myself what that good reason was. Was I planted there to help rich companies make more money? Was I planted there to quash the voice of reason and dedicate my faculties to a job that had me chained to numbers - numbers that seemed to have a life of their own? Was I trading my time and energy for money?

And hence, the answers came swiftly.

I found that I was only functioning on the surface of things. My job was there for a reason, but it was not the only reason. My home, my marriage, the life that looked so good on the outside - all of it was there for a reason. But there was more; so much more. In all of this, where was I?

Was I being me? Was I being the reason for all this? Was I being?

Being.

That was the answer.

Ikigai and my sense of being came together in a seamless way when I understood where and how I must stop, take stock and be more mindful. The simple act of stopping and being in the moment to experience what you are doing and why, is the simple act of finding your Ikigai, one mindful moment at a time.

So what really is Ikigai?

### *A Closer Look at Ikigai*

The origin of the word Ikigai can be traced all the way back to the Heian Period (between 794 and 1185 AD). While the word Gai is a derivative of the word Kai, meaning shell (a highly valuable and prized possession back in the day), the word Ikigai signifies finding the value in life with a certain way of living. As per clinical psychologist and associate professor at the Toyo Eiwa University, Akihito Hasegawa, this word sums up all the small joys that make life that much more fulfilling. It is a Japanese born concept that is slowly yet surely becoming a mainstream lifestyle for many people who are embracing it the world over.

This resonates deeply with my own sense of Ikigai since I have found that the ten principles pertaining to the various areas of life to be soaked in mindfulness propelling philosophies - from career to money, from food to nature, from child rearing to setting up a whole life.

And in that sense, Ikigai truly gives me something that I can look forward to. In doing so, I am not urging the reader to give up a swanky apartment, a gleaming set of wheels or a high-flying career. I am merely setting out to tell you - the reader - how these ten principles can help you find your being in the now, wherever you may be. In the words of Mieko Kamiya, who has authored the book *Ikigai-finstitute*, “Ikigai is what allows you to look forward to the future even if you are miserable right now.”

***Discovering my Aha Moment atop the Kilimanjaro, Tanzania 2013***

In Japanese Calligraphy and Buddhist philosophy, there is a simple circle of two strokes coming together. This circle and the way it is rendered is called an Enso. The Enso Circle provides the answer to happiness in two simple strokes that form a circle - these two strokes contain the principles of living a life filled with Zen, or calmness. These two strokes for me include mindfulness and experience. Yet, the Enso is not filled, it is an outline. We fill it with who we are and what we mindfully decide to experience.

I had to experience what I did one stormy February night in 2013, in order to experience my Ikigai fully and to master the art of being in every moment and experiencing my own sense being. This was the day I found hope that there could be life beyond banking. After eight hours of hiking up the near death -25°C conditions to reach the summit of the

world's tallest single free standing mountain, I stopped to rest at a high point overlooking the crater. I had my moment of epiphany. And it was perfect.

I realized that up until then, I was only doing. I was not being. While I was doing - and I was doing a great deal - I was not being anyone or anything. Was I the graphs I was charting at a sleek desk, or was I the tie I would remove and throw as soon as I would get home? Was I the early morning run on the beach that would help me stay in shape or was I the sand beneath my toes? Was I my job and my house, or was I me? And if so, who am I? What am I being?

In that moment of clarity, the other stroke of the Enso came to complete my circle of inner dialogue and I found that I was fear. Fear of not having a job, fear of not having the perfect home, fear of not staying fit, fear of retirement, fear of the "then what," fear of all the things I had been told I should not be.

But no one had told me what I was and what I could be. Because that was an answer I had to find for myself.

The first stroke in my circle of Enso had been painstakingly set over the years by society and my workplace. The second stroke could only be rendered by me. But how?

By being mindful of what I was doing and how I was doing the things set by the first stroke. I had to complete the circle. And Ikigai was the answer.

We all need a job. We all need a home. We all need a partner. We all need a car to get from place A to place B. But what is the cost and how are we doing it? Ikigai showed me the way.

That was the moment when I realized I could finally escape my job. I devised my new happy plans. Ikigai will help you find your way and be fine even after you “retire.”

Before we go into that, I want to discuss another question I had. Do we have to wait until we go through a loss to look for our Ikigai, to look for a reason to be more mindful? Or can it happen even when you have everything? It can. And it should.

Despite having enough money to survive, after you retire you will always be worried for an unknown period of time. My worry lasted for about four years before I could confidently say that I 100% no longer feared running out of money or questions about whether or not I had made the wrong decision. Even after the failure of my marriage, losing my dad, losing my pet dog Elsa and my son going on to live with his mother in India, I realized I had nothing to fear, nothing to worry about; all thanks to my Ikigai.

After you retire from a conventional job, after your relationship has come to an end, after you find you have the time - you are not going to simply sit and do nothing. You will naturally start doing what provides you with the most

amount of purpose. And because you will be so focused on making sure retiring when you did was the right choice, you will inevitably find your Ikigai!

In hindsight, I now understand why I have been able to keep my Ikigai going. Helping people does not feel like work. Instead, it is a joy that lets me experience a couple of the things that I love: creating happiness from nothing and learning new perspectives. If I have not involved myself in productive endeavors for a couple days, I start feeling edgy, as though I have not exercised for a couple days; as if I have not come up for air.

13 years took me to four continents and I was allowed a peek into the world - from the Himalayas to great-plains and deserts. I found my purpose and I found a path I could stay on. And in all of this, I found a way to be, I found what being truly meant to me. Finally, the happy face of a child monk in Bhutan drove home the big idea of promoting 'Happiness' on a global scale, starting with India.

### ***Always Find Your Ikigai***

Ikigai is like a compass, always pointing due north to where your sense of being lies. When you align with this direction, you will find mindfulness. You will complete the circle of Enso when you are in the midst of any activity, any crisis, any situation at all. Whether you are still working or in retirement, always keep searching for your Ikigai.

Mindfulness can find expression in self introspection. This might not always be easy since you will have days when you cannot connect with yourself and there will be days when your desires and what you think you want from life may have changed. That is where Ikigai steps in to keep you consistent even when change moves like water through the length and breadth of your life.

*“Life is truly about perpetual internal transformation, just like the time when the caterpillar transforms into a beautiful butterfly.”*

### ***How to use This Book***

This book is meant to show you the principles of Ikigai and how they can help you find your path, stay on it and reach your destination.

But first, it will help you find yourself. Whether you want to get over your fear of retirement, or reconnect with forgotten things like eating right and spending more time in nature, you will find the right basis to do it. It will help you answer your own questions with the right action so that you can be exactly who you want to be. If you still don't believe me, know that the Okinawans have the highest life expectancy of any country: 90 for women and for men, 84, *a significant 15 years longer than global life expectancy.*

It is a joy to help make people believe a little more in themselves by showing what's possible. Changing the

world positively, one soul at a time with love and compassion, is the way forward. Ikigai is why you should not be afraid of anything. Find your Ikigai and nothing will scare you.

As a special note, I would like to mention that this book is also for children, especially for those who are ten years and above. This is because children are born centered and for them, finding Ikigai is merely a matter of being allowed to be their true selves. It is my humble request to parents everywhere to introduce their children to these principles so that they can continue being who they are in the face of the changes and challenges we are facing the world over. We owe this Ikigai to the next generation.

*Having to live for something that truly MATTERS!*

*Manny*