



HAPPINESS IN THE PERSPECTIVE OF BUDDHISM

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ABSTRACT

Happiness forms a central theme of Buddhist teachings. For ultimate freedom from suffering, the Noble Eightfold Path leads its practitioner to Nirvana, a state of everlasting peace. Ultimate happiness is only achieved by overcoming craving in all forms. More mundane forms of happiness, such as acquiring wealth and maintaining good friendships, are also recognized as worthy goals for lay people. Buddhism also encourages the generation of loving kindness and compassion, the desire for the happiness and welfare of all beings. Each and Every religious tradition Speaks about waking up to the truth. Every path promises that the direct experience of the truth sets us free, brings us peace, and compels us to compassionate action in the world. Knowing the truth brings happiness. Practicing mindfulness and metta (loving-kindness) is not religiously challenging. This makes them accessible tools for meditators in all traditions. Awareness, clarity, compassion, generosity, understanding - these are in the middle of everyone's spiritual road. "A well-guarded mind brings happiness. Those who are free from all worldly desires will attain Nirvana. Never covet what others have. It is deadly sin which grows away from all happiness. Learn to be happy with what you have," taught Buddha. Everyone wants to be happy and no one wants to suffer, but very few people understand the real causes of happiness and suffering. We spend almost all our time adjusting the external world, trying to make it conform to our wishes. All our life we have tried to surround ourselves with people and things that make us feel comfortable, secure, or stimulated, yet still we have not found pure and lasting happiness.



It is time we sought happiness from a different source. Happiness is a state of mind, so the real source of happiness must lie within the mind, not in external conditions. If our mind is pure and peaceful we shall be happy, regardless of our external circumstances, but if it is impure and peaceful we can never be truly happy, no matter how hard we try to change our external conditions. We could change our home or our partner countless times, but until we change our restless, discontented mind we shall never find true happiness.

KEYWORDS: *Buddhist teachings , compassion, generosity , happiness and suffering.*

I. INTRODUCTION:

The first and second verses of the Dhammapada, the earliest known collection of Buddha's sayings, talk about suffering and happiness. So it's not surprising to discover that Buddhism has a lot to offer on the topic of happiness. Buddha's contemporaries described him as "ever-smiling" and portrayals of Buddha almost always depict him with a smile on his face. But rather than the smile of a

self-satisfied, materially-rich or celebrated man, Buddha's smile comes from a deep equanimity from within.

During the late 6th and early 5th century BCE, Siddhartha Gautama of Shakya, who later became known as the Buddha, was born in modern-day Nepal near the Indian border. While there are a number of mythical stories surrounding his conception and birth, the basic facts of his life are generally agreed upon. Born into a wealthy royal family, the Buddha was born and raised in worldly luxury. Despite his father's attempts to shield him from the ugliness of life, one day he ventured out beyond the castle walls and encountered three aspects of life: the old, the sick and the dead. Each of these experiences troubled him and made him question the meaning and transience of life and its pleasures.

After this, he encountered an ascetic who, by choice, lived a life renouncing the pleasures of the world. Even while he was completely deprived of life's comforts, his eyes shined with contentment. These shocking experiences moved Buddha to renounce his comfortable lifestyle in search of greater meaning in life. During his time practicing extreme forms of self-denial that Buddha discovered the "Middle Path" of moderation – an idea that closely resembles Aristotle's "Golden Mean."

During his life, he had experienced intensive pleasure and extreme deprivation but he found that neither extreme brought one to true understanding. He then practiced meditation through deep concentration (dhyana) under a Bodhi tree and found Enlightenment. He began teaching the Four Noble Truths to others in order to help them achieve transcendent happiness and peace of mind through the knowledge and practice that is known today as Buddhism.

The Chinese Confucian thinker Mencius, who 2300 years ago sought to give advice to the ruthless political leaders of the warring states period, was convinced that the mind played a mediating role between the "lesser self" (the physiological self) and the "greater self" (the moral self) and that getting the priorities right between these two would lead to sage-hood. He argued that if we did not feel satisfaction or pleasure in nourishing one's "vital force" with "righteous deeds", that force would shrivel up (Mencius,6A:15 2A:2). More specifically, he mentions the experience of intoxicating joy if one celebrates the practice of the great virtues, especially through music.¹

Al-Ghazali (1058–1111) the Muslim Sufi thinker wrote the *Alchemy of Happiness*, a manual of spiritual instruction throughout the Muslim world and widely practiced today.

The Hindu thinker Patanjali, author of the *Yoga Sutras*, wrote quite exhaustively on the psychological and ontological roots of bliss.²

In the *Nicomachean Ethics*, written in 350 BCE, Aristotle stated that happiness (also being well and doing well) is the only thing that humans desire for its own sake, unlike riches, honour, health or friendship. He observed that men sought riches, or honour, or health not only for their own sake but also in order to be happy. Note that eudemonia, the term we translate as "happiness", is for Aristotle an activity rather than an emotion or a state.³ Happiness is characteristic of a good life, that is, a life in which a person fulfils human nature in an excellent way. People have a set of purposes which are typically human: these belong to our nature. The happy person is virtuous, meaning they have outstanding abilities and emotional tendencies which allow him or her to fulfil our common human ends. For Aristotle, then, happiness is "the virtuous activity of the soul in accordance with reason": happiness is the practice of virtue.

Many ethicists make arguments for how humans should behave, either individually or collectively, based on the resulting happiness of such behaviour. Utilitarian's, such as John Stuart Mill and Jeremy Bentham, advocated the greatest happiness principle as a guide for ethical behaviour.

Also according to St. Augustine and Thomas Aquinas, man's last end is happiness: "all men agree in desiring the last end, which is happiness."⁴ However, where utilitarian's focused on reasoning about consequences as the primary tool for reaching happiness, Aquinas agreed with Aristotle that happiness cannot be reached solely through reasoning about consequences of acts, but also requires a pursuit of good causes for acts, such as habits according to virtue.⁵ In turn, which habits and acts that normally lead to happiness is according to Aquinas caused by laws: natural law and divine law. These laws, in turn, were according to Aquinas caused by a first cause, or God.

According to Aquinas, happiness consists in an "operation of the speculative intellect": "Consequently happiness consists principally in such an operation, viz. in the contemplation of Divine things." And, "the last end cannot consist in the active life, which pertains to the practical intellect." So: "Therefore the last and perfect happiness, which we await in the life to come, consists entirely in contemplation. But imperfect happiness, such as can be had here, consists first and principally in contemplation, but secondarily, in an operation of the practical intellect directing human actions and passions."⁶

II. BUDDHISM AND HAPPINESS

Buddhism provides two definitions for happiness. One is defined in terms of our relation to an object, while the other is defined in terms of our relation with the state of mind of the feeling itself.

The first defines happiness as the experiencing of something in a satisfying manner, based on believing that it is of benefit to ourselves, whether or not it actually is. Unhappiness is the experiencing of something in an unsatisfying, tormenting way. We experience something neutrally when it is in neither a satisfying nor a tormenting way.

The second defines happiness as that feeling which, when it has ended, we wish to meet with it once more. Unhappiness as that feeling which, when it arises, we wish to be parted from it. While a neutral feeling is that feeling which, when it arises or ends, we have neither of the two wishes.

The two definitions are related. When we experience something in a satisfying way, the way we experience the object is that the object, literally, "comes to our mind" (yid-du 'ong-ba, Skt. manapa) in a pleasant manner. We accept the object and it remains comfortably as the object of our attention. This implies that we feel our experience of the object is of benefit to us: it makes us happy; it feels good. Because of that, we want the benefit from this experience to continue and, if it ended, we would want it to come back. Colloquially, we would say that we enjoy the object and the experience of it.⁷

Buddhism, however, provides many methods for overcoming the limitations of our ordinary happiness, this suffering of change, so that we reach the everlasting joyous state of a Buddha. Nevertheless, despite the drawbacks of our ordinary happiness, Buddhism also explains the sources for achieving that kind of happiness. Buddhism provides this teaching because one of its basic axioms is that everyone wants to be happy and no one wants to be unhappy. And, since everyone is looking for happiness and, as ordinary beings, we do not know of any type of happiness other than the ordinary, usual kind, Buddhism tells us how to achieve it. Only when that wish and need for happiness has been fulfilled on the most basic level of ordinary happiness can we go on to aim for deeper, more satisfying levels of it with more advanced spiritual practices.

Although there are many types of happiness, here let us focus our attention on ordinary happiness. To understand its sources, we first need to be clear about what is meant by "happiness." What is this happiness (bde-ba, Skt. sukha) that we all want? According to the Buddhist analysis, happiness is a mental factor – in other words, it is a type of mental activity with which we are aware of an object in a certain way. It is one section of a broader mental factor called "feeling" (tshor-ba, Skt. vedana), which covers a spectrum that spans a wide range from totally happy to totally unhappy.

What is the definition of "feeling?" Feeling is the mental factor having the nature of experiencing (myong-ba). It is the mental activity of experiencing an object or situation in a way that actually makes it an experience of that object or situation. Without a feeling somewhere on the spectrum between happiness and unhappiness, we do not actually experience an object or a situation. A computer takes in and processes data, but since a computer does not feel happy or unhappy in doing this, a computer does not experience the data. This is the difference between a computer and a mind.

Feeling a level of happiness or unhappiness accompanies either cognition of a sensory object – a sight, sound, smell, taste, or physical sensation such as pleasure or pain – or cognition of a mental object such as when thinking something. It does not need to be dramatic or extreme. It can be very low level. In fact, some level of feeling happy or unhappy accompanies every moment of our life – even when we are deeply asleep with no dreams, we experience it with a neutral feeling.

"The first step in seeking happiness is learning. We first have to learn how negative emotions and behaviours are harmful to us and how positive emotions are helpful. We must also realize that these negative emotions are not only very bad and harmful to one personally, but are also harmful to society and the future of the whole world," teaches Dalai Lama.

Everyone wants to be happy and no one wants to suffer, but very few people understand the real causes of happiness and suffering. We tend to look for happiness outside ourselves, thinking that if we had the right house, the right car, the right job, and the right friends we would be truly happy. We spend almost all our time adjusting the external world, trying to make it conform to our wishes. All our life we have tried to surround ourselves with people and things that make us feel comfortable, secure, or stimulated, yet still we have not found pure and lasting happiness.

It is time we sought happiness from a different source. Happiness is a state of mind, so the real source of happiness must lie within the mind, not in external conditions. If our mind is pure and peaceful we shall be happy, regardless of our external circumstances, but if it is impure and peaceful we can never be truly happy, no matter how hard we try to change our external conditions. We could change our home or our partner countless times, but until we change our restless, discontented mind we shall never find true happiness.⁸

III. CONCLUSION:

Buddhism had taught about happiness in the 6th century to overcome from the swarrow. Because all desire made man to be in swarrow. Desire is the cause for unhappy in the world, that sway Buddhism fallowed some of the principles like four truths, eight fold paths, karma etc. Through fallowing these principles man would lead his life with happily in the world. Buddhism is building up good habits to get happiness for example, Zen meditation is one of the good ways to get happiness. We also find some qualities to happiness in the perspective of Buddhism, like happiness is a state of mind, not a state of sense gratification, compassionate, loving and kind, shared feeling with all. It also helps us to get Nirvana.

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