
Happiness

We spend our lives in the pursuit of Happiness, don't we?

Each morning we awake and prepare to spend the day in our chosen line of work. The money and satisfaction gained in performing the varied tasks of our job contributes to our physical and mental well-being. The money pays the bills incurred in providing a level of comfort to the body and mind. A portion of the earnings is set aside to provide some security against the time when this comfort is threatened through job-loss, illness, or old age. The satisfaction from doing a job well and being accepted by our colleagues reaffirms our "sense of self." We are content, for a period of time. We are happy. The mind, always in search for this "Happiness" directs the body and the senses in a manner to accomplish its quest. Our behavior is consistent with this haphazard direction of the sense-driven mind and this is our journey through this lifetime – the pursuit of happiness.

In the course of the years, the mind makes adjustments to its methods of attaining and maintaining happiness and the body and senses perform the tasks that the mind has "thought-out". If our chosen work no longer brings satisfaction, we change the job or move into a new career. If the apartment is now too small because of all the "toys" we have collected seeking to satisfy our desire to "be happy", we change apartments. When our VW no longer fits our extended image of ourselves, we begin looking for something "new" that will. The next (job/ wife/ relationship/ auto/ teacher) will be "better" and I will be "happy" again and this is our journey through this lifetime.

Our quest "to be happy" in our lifetime, at times, brings dis-ease. We fall ill when the pursuit of happiness disables our normal appetite for food and we overeat to "be happy." Now the overstuffed body causes "unhappiness" because the self image has no room for 20 extra kg. The mind decrees that it is time to go on a diet and the body suffers the abuse of a diet proposed by a mind that had only a short time ago proposed that happiness is in "eating.". The body becomes the playground for the mind-monkeys and the mind-monkeys take the body from fat-to-thin and from-thin -to-fat.

If we hold that money is our ultimate source of happiness then our world and our relation to it is from the narrow perspective of a "medium of exchange." The mind pursuing this "ultimate source" drives the body before it, ignoring signs of dis-ease from stress, anxiety and overwork. I may say to myself that the stress and anxiety are part of the price I must pay to be happy. To console myself, I review the numbers in my konto and I am happy again. Does this make any sense? Must I become ill to be happy?

And then there is the relationship-merry-go-round. My happiness lies in a "perfect relationship." My mind has already decided what a "perfect relationship" is and is now in pursuit of it. Again the body is called upon to be the agent for the mind-monkeys that specialize in "fantasy." Now it is expertly coiffeur-ed, on a regular basis. My diet is in full swing. My monthly credit card statement now lists only the most chic boutiques. Eventually, I am successful. I find what I am looking for. A new relationship blooms and I invest all of my fantasies into my new partner and conversely my new partner invests all of her fantasies into me. I am happy. How long will this happiness last? How long did it last the last time?

Life would be easier if one had only to contend with the problem of a jaded appetite for food or drink or the problem of money or the problem of a "relationship." But that is not our lot. The mind, in its quest for happiness, moves from one object (animate or inanimate) to another to satisfy its desire for happiness.

Finding "an object" that brings happiness to the sense-attuned mind becomes increasingly more complex as time passes. We are no longer satisfied with the toys we had as children. Our "tastes" have become more sophisticated. The mind that was, at one time, satisfied with the "happiness" afforded by a toy-train running on a circular track powered by a wind-up locomotive now needs to satisfy its' curiosity by delving into the innards of

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Inhalt:

- 1 - Happiness
- 2 - Happiness is not a mood
- 3 - Happiness can be *rust free*
- 5 - Happiness from *inside* not *outside*
- 7 - The Monk in the Lab



a scale model of coal-burning steam locomotive. The loc is more complex but the circular track remains.

Happiness is ...not a mood

A "mood" is a transient state of the sense-mind manifested as emotion. Our mood in each moment is the manifestation of the inner condition of our sense-mind at that moment. If my mind is still because my senses are still, because their perceptions are of the quiet room i am in at the moment, my mood will reflect this stillness. If my mind is restless because my senses are full of the noise around them, my mood will reflect this restlessness. If the crosscurrents of my thoughts are steeped in anger, my mood will be one of anger no matter how still the room is to my sense perceptions. The mind is the master of my environment.

In a normal existence, one's mood is thought to be the result of someone or something outside of one. When I am "happy" it is because of someone or something. When i am not happy it is because of someone or something. Very often the same object causes me to be happy and to be not-happy. How can this be true?

Yesterday my friend and i were happy with each other, Today my friend is angry with me. If a source of my happiness is my friend's good will, I will no longer be happy. Today's happiness will have to depend on someone or something else. And the mind will spend the day pursuing this "happiness".

Last week I purchased a new suit, it was in the latest fashion. The salesman agreed that the style and color brought out the "real-me" and in accordance with his suggestions I purchased a new shirt and tie to match the suit. It was a "smashing" combination. My joy was supreme. I wore the new suit home, leaving the old one with the salesman. I wanted my partner to see, without delay the "real me" in full regalia. Her first words were "very nice BUT it makes you look a lot older than you are, don't you think?" Do I begin thinking about a "new relationship" at this point? Or do I just stew in my anger or depression or whatever other defenses I can muster? Where has my joy gone? Where is my happiness? I am now rudderless. What do I do to regain my "happiness"? What have I done before to regain my "happiness"? Did it work then? For how long?

Pause and reflect on the course of your life. Remember your "happineses". Remember how they arose and how they receded. Reflect on their transience. Remember your "un-happineses". Remember how they arose and how they receded. What caused them to arise? What caused them to recede?

Now reflect on how you dealt with with an "un-happiness". What did your mind do to regain its "happiness?" Did it look for a new "something" or a new "someone" to provide it, or old "someone", or old "something" to take the blame for its last disappearance? (happiness, to the sense-mind can come in negative flavors too :-)

Now reflect on your reflections. How many experiences of happiness did you reflect on? How many experiences of unhappiness did you reflect on? The list would stretch into infinity if our memories were complete.

The common thread through all of these reflections is – transience. What is a happiness today can be an un-happiness tomorrow. Nothing is "rust-free." We have a lifetime of experience behind us to prove it.

We are looking into a non-"rust-free" world for something that is "rust-free". It doesn't exist.

Happiness can be "rust-free"

One may rightly ask "well, isn't searching for happiness a worthy pursuit, especially when one considers the alternative? There is certainly enough un-happiness around." Yes, the search for happiness is a worthy quest. It is our quest. It is our only quest. Could it be that it is not the quest for happiness that is the problem? Could it be that looking in the impervious world of objects for happiness is looking in the wrong direction? Could it be that the lasting happiness we seek is "within-us" and not "without-us"?

There comes a time for each of us, maybe in a quiet moment or maybe in the rush of our day, when a question forms itself into a thought and we ask ourselves, for the 1st time, "what is going on, I have tried this before and it didn't work then. why do i think it will work this time?"

Or, after going through the pain of another "failed relationship", i become bold enough to consider the thought that "my notion of a perfect relationship is just that ...a notion."

Or, as i watch the sizable fortune i have amassed at the expense of my health and personal life moving into the pockets of doctors, psychiatrists and attorneys, i may ask myself, "what is the difference between my life to this point and the life of a caged hamster that spends its lifetime running on the rotary treadmill fastened to the wall of its prison?"

For others of us it may be the realization that whenever our idea of what the world should be is threatened we retreat to the security provided by an extra portion of Schwarzwald torte.

Each of us has had these questioning-experiences. Many of us have had them a number of times. Many of us have ignored them a number of times. Each time we have ignored "this call to question", the objective-world presented us with another teaching to demonstrate that happiness in the objective-world is never without pain. How then could it be happiness if it causes pain?

The objective world is a world of "pairs"; where the concept of "hot" includes the concept of "cold"; where the concept of "black" includes the concept of "white"; where the concept of "happiness" includes the concept of "unhappiness." And whereas, the dual concept of "hot/cold", "black/white" is quantifiable, measurable, consistent, the dual concept of "happy/unhappy" is not quantifiable, measurable consistent.. Ask your friends what their "idea of happiness is", ask them what their "idea of unhappiness is". Any similarity to your own "ideas of happiness/unhappiness"? We see that happiness is "in the eyes of the beholder". Your idea of happiness may not be my idea of happiness, today. Tomorrow it may all be different. The sense-mind, seeks happiness in its own definition of happiness and finding nothing "rost-frei", amends its definition of happiness and moves in the new direction. As long as that direction is in the objective realm the law of duality applies., we will find happiness and we will find non-happiness.

This constant movement of the mind seeking, the state of happiness, is experienced as thought and reaction to thought. The mind, unaware that it (mind) is not the body and the senses, seeks happiness, a state transcendental to the body and senses, using the only tools "it thinks" it is - the body and senses.

It is the constant movement of the mind from one concept to another, from one thought to another that obscures the very thing it is dashing around to find. Much like a dog chasing its tail, we chase after happiness, which is none other than our spiritual heritage, our natural state, round and round and up and down the canyons and cliffs of our minds. Once a dog tires of its senseless tail-chasing, it sits down and discovers its tail to be where it has always been. We too must find a way to sit the body and the mind down and

allow the same discovery to manifest in us. The happiness we seek is where it has always been ...inside. To become aware of it requires a practice of quieting the mind ... meditation.

Once the mind stills, its notions of what happiness "is" and what happiness "isn't" fade away (along with a host of other notions), because the thoughts that make up "notions" fade away. The thoughts fade away because a quiet mind finds thoughts to be empty. It finds them to be constructions of other thoughts. And these thoughts are likewise constructions of other thoughts, impressions, memories, karma. The quieting mind finds that as it observes these thoughts, they rise and fall of their own accord. It also finds that when it "loses" its orientation and is no longer the "observer" of the thoughts it becomes enmeshed in the thoughts. With practice, quiet mind attains a deeper quiet and thoughts and the notions they construct become fainter. As the thoughts grow fainter, one attains to a state of contentment, peace, even-temperament, happiness.

This state of happiness, found in the quiet moments of meditation , manifests in one's daily living. It is not that the problems of life go away and, as if by magic, my relationships blossom forever or that I now detest Schwarzwald Torte. No, what slowly permeates my daily existence is the realization that "life's little pleasures" are a poor substitute for the contentment, peace, happiness that proceeds from a quiet mind. A mind that now, through the process of becoming quiet, begins to discern between what is "rust-free" and what is not.

"Avalokitesvara Bodhisattva doing deep Prajna-paramita,
clearly saw the emptiness of the five conditions.
Thus completely relieving misfortune and pain"

Avalokitesvara Bodhisattva while in deep meditation clearly saw that; matter, sensation, recognition, volition, and consciousness were creations of the mind and therefore empty.

She saw the transiency of physical things that arise and fall to rust and dust.

She saw *sensation* as the process of data-acquisition (through sense-organs) and its subsequent interpretation as pleasant, unpleasant or indifferent.

She saw *recognition* to be the process of conceptualizing the *sensations*. This process of conceptualization generating "notions". Notions that are then expressed in names and words.

She saw *volition* , mental action, to proceed from the notions generated through the *recognition* of *sensations*. She saw this mental action manifest in its various aspects as attention, will, determination, confidence, concentration, wisdom, energy, desire, hatred, ignorance, conceit, idea of self. She saw the manifestation of these aspects in word, thought and deed as the the prime mover of a normal mans existence. She saw the generation of karma.

She saw *consciousness* to be "the awareness" of the other four conditions and therefore being dependent on them.

Avalokitesvara Bodhisattva, in deep communion with buddhi, *realized* that;

she was not materia,
she was not sensation,
she was not recognition,
she was not volition,
she was not consciousness.

With this realization Avalokitesvara Bodhisattva; "thus completely relieved all misfortune and pain." Samadhi – happiness. That is what we are looking for. But up till now, we have been looking in the wrong direction. It's not "outside". It is "inside."

Happiness from "inside" ...not "outside"

How did the Avalokitesvara Bodhisattva "clearly see the emptiness of the five conditions"? Avalokitesvara Bodhisattva *saw* while "doing deep Prajna-paramita". How did the

Avalokitesvara Bodhisattva "do deep Prajna-paramita"? She followed a scientific method of stilling his mind that is rooted in the ancient Vedas.

The Vedas, going back to 3000bce are revealed knowledge. Revealed to seers, much like Avalokitesvara Bodhisattva, that during "deep Prajna-paramita clearly saw" reality. Clearly saw that this world of duality was not "all there is". This revealed knowledge was passed on from teacher to student over the millenniums. Over time, this knowledge was systematized and codified.

Patanjali in circa 200 ce systematized and codified the methods that the Avalokitesvara Bodhisattva, the Buddha, Krishna, Jesus the Christ and all those that came before and after have used to attain "deep Prajna-paramita". The method, modified by culture, is the root of all "spiritual-religions" All the mystics, saints, holy-people, zen-masters, sufi masters, etc, according to their cultural tradition, have applied the principles and practices codified by Patanjali.

Patanjali, a master of brevity, said it this way:

"Yoga is the process of stopping the behavior of formed consciousness.

Then the perceiver in us settles down in her own nature.

Otherwise , the perceiver undergoes identification with behavior.

That stopping of the behavior of the mind is possible through constant repetition and through non-attachment."

Or,

"doing deep Prajna-paramita is the *process of stopping the behavior of the mind*. During the process of stopping the behavior of the mind the *perceiver in us* the "watcher-in -us", the "voice of silence" in us, the "conscience" in us, the "soul" in us, *settles in its own nature*.

Otherwise the perceiver-in us identifies itself with the behavior of formed-consciousness. The behavior of formed consciousness is our normal relation to the objective-world. The perceiver in us is drawn away from its true nature – happiness, and is seduced by the transient satisfactions presented by the senses. This is the way a normal man spends her day.

The process of stopping the behavior of the mind is possible;

through constant repetition of the concept that one is not what one has thought oneself to be. How can one be this body, as it constantly changes on its journey to dust (again)? How can one be this mind, constantly moving from object to object, thought to thought, plan to plan, seeking to regain a state of transcendence through objects that soon turn to dust. How can one be these emotions, that sweep over one without apparent warning and cause one to stumble through the day? How can one be any of these concepts so slavishly adhered to even to the point of dis-ease and death? In the face of the questions, how can one not entertain and finally realize the concept that one is not the body, one is not the mind, one is not the emotions, one is not what one thinks oneself to be?

and through non-attachment. that is through the non possession of any-one or any-thing. Possession is a behavior of the mind. I seek to possess in order to satisfy the mind's quest for happiness. "Oh, if I only had a "this" or a "that" my life would be simpler/peaceful/complete/happy. And once the mind has found it's latest "everlasting-joy", it maintains every effort to stay in this transient state of "everlasting-joy" by holding fast to the object that provides it ...possession.

Possession is an idea that manifests in words like "me" or "mine". Who is "me"? Is it this physical body? Is it this mind? Is it these emotions? Who is left when it is not any of these three? Who is asking, "who is me?"

What is "mine"? Who is it that says this is "mine", this is "yours". What is it that is "mine"? My wife? my father, my husband, my career, my job, my happiness, my "this", and my "that".

Non-attachment is the process of getting beyond "me" and "mine." It is the letting go of ideas, habits, assumed and stolen behaviors, past and present karma.

"Thus completely relieving misfortune and pain"

The Monk in the Lab

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These are times when destructive emotions like anger, fear and hatred are giving rise to devastating problems throughout the world. While the daily news offers grim reminders of the destructive power of such emotions, the question we must ask is this: What can we do, person by person, to overcome them?

Of course such disturbing emotions have always been part of the human condition. Some - those who tend to believe nothing will "cure" our impulses to hate or oppress one another - might say that this is simply the price of being human. But this view can create apathy in the face of destructive emotions, leading us to conclude that destructiveness is beyond our control.

I believe that there are practical ways for us as individuals to curb our dangerous impulses - impulses that collectively can lead to war and mass violence. As evidence I have not only my spiritual practice and the understanding of human existence based on Buddhist teachings, but now also the work of scientists.

For the last 15 years I have engaged in a series of conversations with Western scientists. We have exchanged views on topics ranging from quantum physics and cosmology to compassion and destructive emotions. I have found that while scientific findings offer a deeper understanding of such fields as cosmology, it seems that Buddhist explanations - particularly in the cognitive, biological and brain sciences - can sometimes give Western-trained scientists a new way to look at their own fields.

It may seem odd that a religious leader is so involved with science, but Buddhist teachings stress the importance of understanding reality, and so we should pay attention to what scientists have learned about our world through experimentation and measurement.

Similarly, Buddhists have a 2,500-year history of investigating the workings of the mind. Over the millenniums, many practitioners have carried out what we might call "experiments" in how to overcome our tendencies toward destructive emotions.

I have been encouraging scientists to examine advanced Tibetan spiritual practitioners, to see what benefits these practices might have for others, outside the religious context. The goal here is to increase our understanding of the world of the mind, of consciousness, and of our emotions.

It is for this reason that I visited the neuroscience laboratory of Dr. Richard Davidson at the University of Wisconsin. Using imaging devices that show what occurs in the brain during meditation, Dr. Davidson has been able to study the effects of Buddhist practices for cultivating compassion, equanimity or mindfulness. For centuries Buddhists have believed that pursuing such practices seems to make people calmer, happier and more loving. At the same time they are less and less prone to destructive emotions.

According to Dr. Davidson, there is now science to underscore this belief. Dr. Davidson tells me that the emergence of positive emotions may be due to this: Mindfulness meditation strengthens the neurological circuits that calm a part of the brain that acts as a trigger for fear and anger. This raises the possibility that we have a way to create a kind of buffer between the brain's violent impulses and our actions.

Experiments have already been carried out that show some practitioners can achieve a state of inner peace, even when facing extremely disturbing circumstances. Dr. Paul Ekman of the University of California at San Francisco told me that jarring noises (one as loud as a gunshot) failed to startle the Buddhist monk he was testing. Dr. Ekman said he had never seen anyone stay so calm in the presence of such a disturbance.

Another monk, the abbot of one of our monasteries in India, was tested by Dr. Davidson using electroencephalographs to measure brain waves. According to Dr. Davidson, the abbot had the highest amount of activity in the brain centers associated with positive emotions that had ever been measured by his laboratory.

Of course, the benefits of these practices are not just for monks who spend months at a time in meditation retreat. Dr. Davidson told me about his research with people working in highly stressful jobs. These people - non-Buddhists – were taught mindfulness, a state of alertness in which the mind does not get caught up in thoughts or sensations, but lets them come and go, much like watching a river flow by. After eight weeks, Dr. Davidson found that in these people, the parts of their brains that help to form positive emotions became increasingly active.

The implications of all this are clear: the world today needs citizens and leaders who can work toward ensuring stability and engage in dialogue with the "enemy" – no matter what kind of aggression or assault they may have endured.

It's worth noting that these methods are not just useful, but inexpensive. You don't need a drug or an injection. You don't have to become a Buddhist, or adopt any particular religious faith. Everybody has the potential to lead a peaceful, meaningful life. We must explore as far as we can how that can be brought about.

I try to put these methods into effect in my own life. When I hear bad news, especially the tragic stories I often hear from my fellow Tibetans, naturally my own response is sadness. However, by placing it in context, I find I can cope reasonably well. And feelings of helpless anger, which simply poison the mind and embitter the heart, seldom arise, even following the worst news.

But reflection shows that in our lives much of our suffering is caused not by external causes but by such internal events as the arising of disturbing emotions. The best antidote to this disruption is enhancing our ability to handle these emotions.

If humanity is to survive, happiness and inner balance are crucial. Otherwise the lives of our children and their children are more likely to be unhappy, desperate and short. Material development certainly contributes to happiness - to some extent - and a comfortable way of life. But this is not sufficient. To achieve a deeper level of happiness we cannot neglect our inner development.

The calamity of 9/11 demonstrated that modern technology and human intelligence guided by hatred can lead to immense destruction. Such terrible acts are a violent symptom of an afflicted mental state. To respond wisely and effectively, we need to be guided by more healthy states of mind, not just to avoid feeding the flames of hatred, but to respond skillfully. We would do well to remember that the war against hatred and terror can be waged on this, the internal front, too. - *Tenzin Gyatso is the 14th Dalai Lama.*

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