

<1> Presentation on Happiness

<2>A: How happy are you today ? I'm quite unhappy because I'm hungry. Yeah, our degree of happiness fluctuates with circumstances. Some days we beam with joy, on other days we're dull. Our emotions go up and down like riding a roller coaster.

B: In Buddhism, there is a term describing such sense of happiness - "relative happiness". Once the stimuli of good feelings are removed, we will sink back to a dull life state, or even the realm of suffering.

<3>B: As Buddhism teaches, "all is in flux, and there is no permanence,"

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A: In fact, an appreciation of the constantly changing nature of all things is a key to happiness

<5>W: In contrast to happiness that is transient, there is "Absolute Happiness" in Buddhism, a deeper degree of happiness that is everlasting, immune to external circumstances. It further teaches that everyone of us possess the potential to be absolutely happy.

B: Where does this absolute happiness be found? How can we become happy? Happiness is not a question of how you look to others. Rather it is a matter of what you yourself feel inside; it is a deep answering response in your life.

B: When we draw strength from within, our outlook undergoes a dramatic transformation; everything around us looks completely different.

A: Does true happiness means getting rid of our desire ?

B: This is a misconception on Buddhism. While some sects of Buddhism emphasis the rid of desire, in Nichiren Buddhism and other sects, earthly desire is a mean for us to grow. What is encouraged is to live our lives to the fullest, solidly on ground without detached from reality.

<6> B: Of course, the gratification of desires is not happiness. Genuine happiness can only be achieved when we transform our way of life from the unthinking pursuit of pleasure to one committed to enriching our inner lives, when we focus on "being more" rather than simply having more.

<7> A: Isn't that Buddhism arises from the recognition of suffering? Life is suffering, as we all inevitably go through birth, aging, sickness and dead.

B: Yes, these are life events that are inevitable to all of us. As long as we are alive we will experience sufferings. But that does not mean we have to be unhappy. Unhappiness comes from allowing ourselves to be controlled by life's ups and downs-from feeling defeated, from losing hope, losing courage, losing the will to advance. Indeed, as we cultivate absolute happiness, unfavorable circumstances become a training ground to further expand our lives. Happiness does not mean a life free of toil and suffering, rather it means living without being swayed no matter what happens. True happiness means forging a strong spirit that is undefeated, no matter how trying our circumstances.

<8> A: Indeed, in Buddhist teaching, it states clearly that "All living being are here to enjoy themselves at ease". "The purpose of life is to become happy." The purpose of life is to challenge and triumph over the darkness of misery. Buddhist faith is a deep sense of belief that we, and every people in this world, all deserve to be happy. Happiness is something we must create for ourselves. No one else can give it to us.

B: So how can we cultivate the state of absolute happiness ?

A: There are two main aspects. First we need to cultivate our inner strength of heart and the sense of appreciation. Second is to develop our compassion to other.

<9>A: Happiness doesn't exist on the far side of distant mountains. It is within us. However, it's not found when we sit in idle passivity. It is to be found in the vibrant dynamism of your own life as you struggle to challenge and overcome one obstacle after another, as you clamber up a perilous ridge in pursuit of that which lies beyond. When we draw strength from within, our outlook undergoes a dramatic transformation; everything around us looks completely different. To be strong is the key to happiness.

<10> A: Secondly, Happiness does not exist as an isolated quality, nor does it conform to a single fixed pattern. It is impossible to build one's own happiness on the unhappiness of others. The exclusive pursuit of one's own interests cannot bring true happiness. It is in striving for the sake of others that the great path to genuine happiness is opened. Happiness is something that breathes and lives in the relationships between one person and another. The truth is that devoting ourselves to others' happiness is actually a necessary condition for becoming genuinely happy ourselves. The more happiness we bring to others, the happier we ourselves become.

<11>B: The essence of Buddhism is "To practice for yourself and for others". It's best summed up as "When we light a candle for others, we light for ourselves too"

W: So is there a concrete way of practice in Buddhism that help us to cultivate absolute happiness ?

<12>B: In Nichiren Buddhism, our daily practice is to repeatedly chant the term "Nam Myoho Renge Kyo". Myoho Renge Kyo is the title of the "Lotus Sutra". The Buddhist teaching that elucidates this belief of our innate potential to be unlimitedly happy. Chanting the title of this teaching can spiritually open up our heart to the vast universe, and that expand our inner state of life.

<13><14> A: To establish such indestructible sense of happiness, we need to live with integrity, our hearts will then begin to fill with a happiness as vast as the universe. It's about being true to ourselves and starting from where we are. From there our happiness will expand and grow limitlessly.