

# Pursuit of Happiness: The Buddhist Way

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# Pursuit of Happiness

- ♦ “All living beings”, says the Buddha, “desire happiness and recoil from suffering” (*sabbe sattā sukha-kāmā dukkha-paṭikkūlā*).
- ♦ Yet, “what the Buddha calls true happiness, others call it suffering. What others call suffering, the Buddha calls it true happiness”. It is in this context that the Buddha says: “There are some divines (*brahmanas*) and philosophers (*samanas*), who call the day the night and the night the day. I say that this is an abiding in delusion on their part.”

# What, then, is happiness?

## How can we define happiness?

- ♦ It is not possible to define happiness with mathematical precision. There are some who argue that what constitutes happiness is purely subjective, relativistic, emotive, or attitudinal. They also maintain that sources of happiness cannot be properly identified. On this issue, Buddhism takes a different position.
- ♦ The Buddhist position is that there is an inseparable connection between morality and happiness: What is morally good leads to happiness. What is morally bad leads to unhappiness.

# Morality and Happiness

- ♦ The Buddhist term for what is morally good is “skillful” (*kusala*), and the Buddhist term for what is morally bad is “unskillful” (*akusala*). Accordingly, a mind which is poisoned with the three poisons of greed, hatred, and delusion is a mind that is “unskillful” (morally bad), a mind that is “defiled”, a mind that is “ill”, a mind that is “in bondage” — in other words, a mind that “suffers”. On the other hand, a mind that is free from the three poisons is a mind that is “skillful” (morally good), a mind that is “pure”, a mind that is “well”, a mind that is “in freedom” — in other words, a mind that is “happy”.

# Morality and Happiness

(continue)

Buddhism says that when we have “skillful” qualities, we experience mental health (*arogya*), mental purity (*anavajjata*), mental ability (*cheka*) — all resulting in happiness (*sukha-vipaka*).

# Happiness and Psychology - I

If negative mental dispositions, such as anger and jealousy, are called “unskillful”, it is because they make us unskillful; they impair our mental and physical health and lead to our unhappiness. And if positive mental dispositions, such as compassionate love and kindness, are called “skillful”, it is because they make us skillful; they enhance our mental and physical health and, thus, promote our happiness.

# Happiness and Psychology - II

Therefore, the Buddhist moral evaluation in terms of “skillful” and “un-skillful” is based on psychology, on a distinction made between positive mental dispositions which promote our happiness, on the one hand, and negative mental dispositions which lead to our suffering, on the other.

# The Two Options Before Us

If we want to be happy, there are in fact two options before us: One option is to change the nature of the world to suit our desires. The other option is to change ourselves to be in harmony with the nature of the world. It is the second option, though difficult, that Buddhism adopts, because the first option is simply not possible.

# How can we be truly happy?

# How can we have sustainable happiness?

- ◆ According to the Buddha:

**It is only when we have a mind under our own control that we can be truly happy, not when we come under the control of our own mind.**

# How can we be truly happy? How can we have sustainable happiness? (continue)

We find this idea clearly explained in the early Buddhist theory of the cognitive process.

Cognitive process means the way we cognize or perceive different kinds of objects: colour, sound, smell, taste, touch, and mental objects through our six sense-faculties: the eye, ear, nose, tongue, body, and mind.

# The Cognitive Process

- ◆ Depending on the eye and the eye-object arises eye-consciousness. The correlation (union) of the three is sensory contact. Depending on sensory contact arises feeling.
- ◆ What one feels, that one perceives. What one perceives, that one examines. What one examines, that one makes manifold. What one makes manifold, due to that conceptual proliferations begin to overwhelm the individual, dragging his mind to similar objects that he has seen in the past and similar objects that he expects to see in the future.

# The Cognitive Process

(continue)

If the object appears as something pleasant, he will be assailed by greed-driven thoughts. If the object appears as something distractive (repulsive), he will be assailed by hatred-driven thoughts. If the object appears as something neither pleasant nor unpleasant, he will be assailed by delusion-driven thoughts.

At this level, the individual becomes a hapless object of his own uncontrollable conceptual proliferations.

# The Cognitive Process: The Three Stages

- ♦ In the cognitive process, sketched above, we can identify three stages:
  - 1) The eye-consciousness arises according to the principle of dependent arising (*paṭicca-samuppāda*).
  - 2) From “feeling” up to “conceptual proliferation”, the individual assumes the role of an agent and directs the cognitive process.

# The Cognitive Process: The Three Stages

- 3) The individual loses his role as the agent, and becomes an object of his own uncontrollable conceptual proliferations. In other words, the individual comes under the control of his own mind.
- ◆ If the individual becomes an object of his own conceptual proliferations, what this really means is that he does not have a mind under his own control.

# Happiness and Mindfulness

In order to have a mind under our own control, we need to develop mindfulness (*sati*) and clear comprehension (*sampajañña*).

# Happiness and Mindfulness

(continue)

- ◆ “When one is going forward or returning, when one is looking ahead or looking aside, when one is drawing in or extending the limbs, when wearing one’s clothes, when eating, drinking, chewing and tasting , when defecating and urinating, when walking, standing, sitting, falling asleep, waking up, speaking, and keeping silent” — in all these activities and occasions one should have mindfulness and clear comprehension.

[Stipatthana-Sutta in Majjhima-Nikaya]

- ◆ To be mindful is not the same as to be self-conscious.

# What prevents us from experiencing happiness

What prevents us from experiencing true happiness are the Three Poisons: **Greed**, **Hatred**, and **Delusion**. They are called poisons because they corrode our mental and physical health and destroy our happiness.

**Of these three poisons,  
what is the most poisonous?  
What is the most corrosive?**

It is neither greed nor delusion  
but hatred.

# This is because:

- 1) A mind motivated by greed can give rise to pleasure (*somanassa*) or indifference (*upekkha*). But it never gives rise to displeasure (*domanassa*).
- 2) A mind motivated by delusion gives rise to indifference. But it never gives rise to displeasure.
- 3) On the other hand, a mind motivated by hatred always gives rise to displeasure.

# The Wretchedness of Anger

1. **“When anger does possess a man,  
He looks ugly and lies in pain.”**

[Anguttaranikaya of the Pali Buddhist Canon]

# The Wretchedness of Anger

(continue)

2) Through anger people kill not only others, but they kill themselves (suicide):

**“No being but seeks his own self’s good,  
None dearer to him than himself,  
Yet men in anger kill themselves,  
Distraught for reasons manifold:  
For crazed they stab themselves with daggers,  
In desperation swallow poison,  
Perish hanged by ropes, or fling  
Themselves over a precipice.  
Yet how their-life-destroying acts  
Bring death unto themselves as well,  
That they cannot discern, and that  
Is the ruin anger breeds.”**

**What is the most effective antidote,  
the most effective medicine to prevent our  
getting poisoned by the poison of hatred?**

**It is loving kindness  
(*Mettā*).**

# This is how, the Buddha says, one should develop loving kindness:

- ♦ “Whatever living beings there be: feeble or strong, tall, stout or medium, short, small or large, without exception, seen or unseen, those dwelling far or near, those who are born or those who are to be born, may all beings be happy.”
- ♦ Let none deceive another, nor despise any person whatsoever in any place. Let one not wish any harm to another out of anger or ill-will.

# This is how, the Buddha says, one should develop loving kindness:

- ♦ Just as a mother would protect her only child at the risk of her own life, even so, let one cultivate a boundless heart of compassion towards all beings. Let one's thoughts of boundless compassion pervade the whole world: above, below and across without any obstruction, without any hatred, without any enmity.
- ♦ Whether one stands, walks, sits or lies down, as long as one is awake, one should develop this mindfulness. This is the noblest living here.

[ Suttanipāta of the Pāli Buddhist Canon ]

# There are eleven blessings, the Buddha says, which one can have by developing loving kindness:

1. One sleeps in comfort.
2. One wakes up in comfort.
3. One dreams no evil dreams.
4. One is dear to human beings.
5. One is dear to non-human beings.
6. The deities protect him.
7. No fire or poison or weapon harms him.
8. One's mind can be easily concentrated.
9. The complexion of one's face becomes serene.
10. One will face death with no mental confusion.
11. Even if one fails to realize the highest goal in this life, he/she will pass on to the world of High Divinity (*Brahma-loka*).

# Happiness through the Four Sublime States or Divine Abodes (*Brahma-Vihāra*)

- a) **Loving Kindness (*Mettā*)**: It is love, without the desire to possess. It is love, without selecting and excluding. It is love, embracing all living beings. Loving Kindness should be distinguished from selfish affection. The Buddha advises his disciples to live merged together in their minds through mutual love like water and milk mixing together. (M. I 207)
- b) **Compassion (*Karuṇā*)**: It is compassion to all suffering living beings. Compassion is not the same as sentimentality. Sentimentality is a state of mind accompanied by sorrow.

# Happiness through the Four Sublime States or Divine Abodes (*Brahma-Vihāra*) (continue)

- c) **Altruistic Joy (*Muditā*)**: It is the ability to feel happy and joyful at the success of another. It is the sharing of others' happiness as if it were ours. Altruistic Joy is the best antidote, the best medicine for the poison of jealousy. Jealousy is the resentment and bitterness one experiences when another succeeds.
- d) **Equanimity (*Upekkhā*)**: It is the perfect, unshakable balance of mind. It is not negative indifference, but a positive social virtue. Equanimity is our ability to remain calm and unruffled when we face “the eight vicissitudes”, or “the eight ups and downs of life” (*aṭṭha lokadhammā*). These are: **gain** and **loss** (*lābho alābho*), **blame** and **honour** (*ayasa yaso ca*), **insult** and **praise** (*ninda pasamsā*), **delight** and **despair** (*sukhañ ca dukkhaṃ*).

# Happiness through the Four Sublime States or Divine Abodes (*Brahma-Vihāra*) (continue)

- e) Equanimity does also mean an attitude of impartiality. As such, equanimity enables us to transcend all divisive thoughts and feelings based on caste (caste-ism), race (racism), nationality (nationalism), ethnicity and other forms of parochialism, as well as gender-distinctions.

**Indeed, this is an ancient practice,  
Not one only of today;  
They blame those who remain silent.  
They blame those who speak much,  
They blame those who speak in moderation.  
There is none in this world  
Who is not blamed.**

**There never was,  
There never will be,  
Nor is there now,  
A person who is wholly blamed  
Or wholly praised.**

**[Dhammapada]**

# How can we laymen, we who are not monks or nuns, achieve happiness?

The Buddha calls us “the lay people who enjoy sense-pleasures” (*gihī kāmabhogino*). To us as laymen, the Buddha has given many instructions as to how we can lead a happy life, while being lay people enjoying sense-pleasures.

# Happiness and Wealth

- ♦ One of the most important prerequisites to lead a happy life is adequate wealth. As a religious teacher the Buddha never praised poverty. As a matter of fact, the Buddha singled out poverty to be the most socially destabilizing factor. In one discourse (Cakkavattisīhanāda Sutta), the Buddha says:

**“When there is no proper distribution of wealth in the society, poverty grows rife; from poverty growing rife, stealing increases; from the spread of stealing, violence and use of weapons increases, from violence and use of weapons destruction of life becomes common, when destruction of life becomes common, people’s life-span decreases, their beauty decreases.”**

# Another Buddhist discourse says:

- ♦ If the king of the kingdom were to think: ‘I will get rid of this plague of robbers by executions and imprisonments, by confiscation, threats and banishment’, by such means the plague would not be ended.
- ♦ Those who survive would later harm the kingdom. “There is another plan”, the discourse goes on to say, “by which the king can completely eliminate the plague: To those in the kingdom who are engaged in cultivating crops and raising cattle, let Your Majesty distribute grain and fodder; to those in trade, give them capital; to those in government service, assign them proper living wages.
- ♦ Then those people, being intent on their own occupations, will not harm the kingdom. Your Majesty’s revenues will be great, the land will be tranquil and not beset by thieves, and the people, with joy in their hearts will play with their children, while dwelling in open houses.”

# From the Buddhist perspective, what indeed is the Highest Wealth?

- ◆ According to the Buddha:

**“Contentment is the Highest Wealth”**

*(Santutṭhi paramaṃ dhanam)* [Dhammapada]

- ◆ This is because:

- 1) Even the richest person is poor, if he is not content with his wealth;
- 2) Poverty has objective indicators as well as a psychological dimension.

# Health and Happiness

**“Among all gains,” says the Buddha,  
“health is the Highest Gain.”**

*(Arogyā paramā lābhā)* [Dhammapada]

# Advice to householders on how to be happy:

- ♦ One day a person called Dīghajānu came to the Buddha, and said:

“Lord, we householders are immersed in the round of pleasure; we are cumbered with bed-mate and sons; we delight in the muslins from Benares and in sandalwood; we deck ourselves with flowers, with garlands and cosmetics; we enjoy the use of both silver and gold. Lord, to such as us, let the Exalted One also teach the Dhamma, teach the things which will be conducive to our advantage and happiness here on earth and to our advantage and happiness in the world to come.”

# In response to this request, the Buddha refers to four requirements which are conducive to happiness in this life:

- 1) Accomplishment in Effort (*uṭṭhāna-sampadā*): The Buddha says that it is the honest effort needed to earn one's living: One must be energetic, tireless, of an inquiring turn of mind and capable of organizing and carrying out one's work systematically and efficiently.
- 2) Requirement for Protection (*āraṅkha-sampadā*): One should see that the wealth one has earned is properly guarded and protected.
- 3) Good Companionship/Friendship (*kalyāṇa-mittatā*). One should associate and cultivate friendship with people who are virtuous, who are faithful, charitable, and wise.

# In response to this request, the Buddha refers to four requirements which are conducive to happiness in this life:

- 4) The Need to lead a Balanced Life (*samajīvikatā*): “One should neither be unduly extravagant nor unduly miserly in one’s living. He should know that his income will stand in excess of his expenditure, but not his expenses in excess of his income. Just as the goldsmith knows on holding up a balance that by so much it has dipped down, by so much it has tilted up; even so a householder, knowing his income and expenses leads a balanced life, neither extravagant nor miserly.”
  
- 5) “If a householder with little income were to lead an extravagant life, there would be those who say — ‘this person enjoys his property like one who eats wood-apples.’ If a householder with a large income were to lead a wretched life, there would be those who say — ‘This person will die like a starveling.’”

# The wealth earned by a householder has four sources of loss

- a) Debauchery or looseness with women
- b) Addiction to intoxicating drinks
- c) Gambling
- d) Associating with evil-minded people.

# There are six evil consequences in indulging in intoxicants

- a) Loss of wealth
- b) Increase of quarrels
- c) Susceptibility to illness
- d) Loss of one's good name and reputation
- e) Shameless and indecent exposure of one's body
- f) Weakening of one's intellect.

# There are six evil consequences when one indulges in gambling

- a) The winner makes enemies
- b) The loser bewails his loss
- c) Loss of wealth
- d) His word is not relied upon in a court of law
- e) He is despised by his friends and associates
- f) He is not in demand for marriage, for people would say he is a gambler; how can he look after a wife.

# There are six evil consequences in being addicted to idleness

“The idle man does no work, saying:

- a) That it is extremely cold
- b) That it is extremely hot
- c) That it is too early in the morning
- d) That it is too late in the evening
- e) That he is extremely hungry
- f) That he is too full.”

# Causes of Downfall (*parābhava*)

- 1) “Being fond of sleep, fond of company, indolent, lazy and irritable – this is the cause of one’s downfall.”
- 2) “Though being well-to-do, not to support father and mother who are old and past their youth — this is the cause of one’s downfall.”
- 3) “To have much wealth and ample gold and food, but to enjoy one’s luxuries alone — this is the cause of one’s downfall.”
- 4) “To be proud of birth, of wealth or clan, and to despise one’s own kinsmen — this is a cause of one’s downfall.”

# Causes of Downfall (*parābhava*)

(continue)

- 5) “To be a rake, a drunkard, a gambler, and to squander all one earns – this is a cause of one’s downfall.”
- 6) “Not to be contented with one’s own wife, and to be seen with harlots and the wives of others — this is a cause of one’s downfall.”
- 7) “Being past one’s youth, to take a young wife and to be unable to sleep for jealousy of her — this is a cause of one’s downfall.”
- 8) “To place in authority a woman given to drink and squandering, or a man of like behavior — this is a cause of one’s downfall.”

# Happiness through Family Life

- 1) Filial piety or devotion to parents is very much emphasized in Buddhism. According to the Buddha, the parents are the “**first teachers**” (*pubbācariya*), the “**first deities**” (*pubba-devatā*), “**worthy of offerings**” (*āhuṇeyya*). One’s mother and father, the Buddha says, are the Brahma, the Creator God (*Brahmā’ti mātāpitāro*).
- 2) When the Buddha was asked who is man’s greatest friend, the Buddha’s reply was: “**The wife is man’s greatest friend**” (*Bhāriyā ve paramā sakhā*).
- 3) Children are man’s greatest wealth (*parama vitti*).

# Children's Duties to the Parents

♦ **There are five ways in which a child should minister to his mother and father:**

- 1) Having been supported by them, I will support them.
- 2) I shall perform their duties for them.
- 3) I shall keep up the family tradition.
- 4) I shall be worthy of my heritage.
- 5) After my parents' death I shall offer alms in honour of my departed parents.

# Parents' Duties to the Children

- ◆ There are five ways in which, the parents so ministered by their children, will show their compassion to the children:
  - 1) They restrain them from evil
  - 2) They encourage them to do good.
  - 3) They train them for a profession.
  - 4) They arrange a suitable marriage
  - 5) At the proper time, they hand over their inheritance to them.

# Husband's Duties to his Wife

- ◆ There are five ways in which a husband should minister to his wife:
  - 1) By being courteous to her.
  - 2) By not despising her.
  - 3) By being faithful to her.
  - 4) By handing over authority to her.
  - 5) By providing her with adornments.

# Wife's Duties to her Husband

- ◆ The wife, thus ministered to by her husband, shows her compassion to her husband in five ways:
  - 1) She performs her duties well.
  - 2) She is hospitable and courteous to relations and attendants.
  - 3) She is faithful to her husband.
  - 4) She protects what he brings.
  - 5) She is skilled and industrious in discharging her duties.

# Householder's Duties to his Friends and Associates

- ◆ In five ways should a householder minister to his friends and associates:
  - 1) By liberality.
  - 2) By courteous speech.
  - 3) By being helpful.
  - 4) By being impartial.
  - 5) By being sincere.

# Friends' and Associates' Duties to the Householder

- ♦ The friends and associates, thus ministered to by a householder, show their compassion to him in five ways:
  - 1) They protect him when he is heedless.
  - 2) They protect his property when he is heedless.
  - 3) They become a refuge when he is in danger.
  - 4) They do not forsake him when he is in troubles.
  - 5) They show consideration for his family.

# Householder's Duties to his Servants and Employees

- ◆ In five ways should a householder minister to his servants and employees:
  - 1) By assigning them work according to their ability.
  - 2) By supplying them with food and with wages.
  - 3) By tending them when they are sick.
  - 4) By sharing special delicacies with them.
  - 5) By granting them leave from time to time.

# The Servants' and Employees' Duties to their Master

- ◆ The servants and employees, thus ministered to by their master, show their compassion to him in five ways:
  - 1) They get up before him.
  - 2) They go to sleep after him.
  - 3) They take only what is given.
  - 4) They perform their duties well.
  - 5) They uphold his good name and fame.

# The Four Winning Ways

Generosity, sweet speech,  
Helpfulness to others,  
Impartiality to all,  
As the case demands.

These four winning ways make the world go round,  
As the linchpin in a moving car.  
If these in the world exit not  
Neither mother nor father will receive,  
Respect and honour from their children.

# The Four Winning Ways

(continue)

Since these four winning ways  
The wise appraise in every way,  
To eminence they attain,  
And praise they rightly gain.

[ Sigālovāda-Sutta in the Dīgha-Nikāya]

# What does Buddhism mean by “Suffering” ?

What Buddhism calls “suffering” (*dukkha*) has a philosophical connotation: It embraces any kind of conditioned experience. Conditioned experience can range from the highest level of pleasure to the lowest level of displeasure. Yet they are all included in “suffering”. Within conditioned experience, therefore, there can be many levels of pleasure and happiness.

# Many Levels of Happiness

- ♦ The very fact that *Nibbana* (*Nirvana*) is described, not as “happiness”, but as the “highest happiness” should show that there are many levels of happiness below the Nibbanic experience.
- ♦ As a matter of fact, the Buddha does not deny the possibility of sensual indulgence. What the Buddha denies is the validity of sensual indulgence as a means to the Highest Happiness. “It is not through the lower,” says the Buddha, “that the higher can be attained; it is only through the higher that that the higher can be attained.”

# Many Levels of Happiness

(continue)

The Buddha draws our attention to many kinds of happiness, ranging from the lowest to the highest, from the grossest to the most refined: There is a gradual refinement and sublimation of happiness until it reaches the Highest Level Happiness.

# Many Levels of Happiness

(continue)

- 1) The process begins with sensual pleasure (kama-sukha), the pleasure that we experience by gratifying our five-fold sensuality through the five physical sense-organs. What is unsatisfactory with this kind of pleasure is that it alternates with feelings of displeasure, and nourishes more and more desire for sensory gratification.
  - ◆ This situation is compared to a leper with sores and blisters on his limbs cauterizing his body over a burning charcoal pit. He will certainly enjoy some momentary pleasure by cauterizing his body, though this act will increase the problem rather than curing it.

# Many Levels of Happiness

(continue)

- 2) Then come higher levels of non-sensuous happiness, as for example, the happiness one experiences when one unifies and concentrates one's mind in higher levels of Jhanic Experience.

# Evaluation of Happiness

- 1) Since there are many levels of happiness, the Buddha has asked his disciples to make a “**proper evaluation of happiness**” (*sukha-vinicchya*). The purpose of this evaluation is to give up lower levels of happiness in order to pursue higher levels of happiness.

# Evaluation of Happiness

(continue)

- 2) Engrossed in sensual pleasure, the ordinary people think that there is no happiness higher than sensual pleasure. So they are scared of any happiness that goes beyond sensual pleasure. It is this psychological resistance that prevents them from pursuing higher levels of non-sensuous happiness. Such happiness, the Buddha says, should not be feared (*na bhāyitabbaṃ*).

# Happiness-Motivation

An important motivating factor for pursuing abiding sustainable happiness is the reflection that it is better to give up a lower level of happiness if, by doing so, one can experience a higher level of happiness. The psychological principle behind this is that “one who pursues happiness will certainly obtain happiness” (*Sukham sukhattho labhate*).

# The Path to the Highest Happiness (*Nibbāna*)

- 1) Is the path to the Highest Happiness through suffering or happiness?
- 2) Answer: The path to the Highest Happiness is also through happiness, not through suffering.
- 3) Why? Because the Noble Eightfold Path, the path that leads to the Highest Happiness, avoids not only sensual indulgence, but also self-mortification.

# The Path to be Trodden with Joy

- 1) Accordingly, the Buddha describes the Noble Eightfold Path as the “**Path to be Trodden with Joy**” (*pīti-gamanīyo maggo*) [S. IV 480]. The Path does not involve “**suffering, vexation, despair, and anguish**” [M. III 232].
- 2) The Path is also described as “the fortunate” (*bhaddaka*), “the peaceful” (*khema*), and “the auspicious” (*sovatthika*).

# Happiness and Fruitful Effort

The Buddha reminds us that **“it is only when one does not give up happiness that accords with the Dhamma that the effort will be fruitful”**

*(Dhammikañ ca sukhaṃ na pariccajati ... evam pi saphalo upakkamo hoti, saphalaṃ padhānaṃ)* [M. II 223]. This clearly demonstrates the indispensability of happiness in order to pursue higher levels of happiness, leading to the Highest Level of Happiness (*Nibbāna*).

# Historical Evidence

As a matter of fact, monks and nuns during the time of the Buddha, delightfully pursued their religious life. King Pasenadi of Kosala once told the Buddha that “he sees Buddhist monks and nuns smiling and cheerful, sincerely joyful, plainly delighting, their faculties fresh, living at ease, unruffled”. This was in contrast to non-Buddhist recluses and brahmins “who are lean, wretched, unsightly, jaundiced, with veins standing out on their limbs as if they were leading the holy life in discontent.”

[Dhammacetiya-sutta of Majjhimanikāya]

# The Quest for the Highest Happiness

In the quest for the Highest Happiness, the decisive turning point is not fear, but a real encounter with suffering. It is suffering that spurs the awakening of the religious consciousness. From then onward the sequence is not one of suffering but degrees of happiness leading to the Highest Happiness.

# From Happiness to the Highest Happiness

“ Birth is the supporting condition for suffering, suffering is the supporting condition for faith, faith is the supporting condition for joy, joy is the supporting condition for rapture, rapture is the supporting condition for tranquility, tranquility is the supporting condition for happiness, happiness is the supporting condition for concentration, concentration is the supporting condition for the knowledge and vision of things as they really are, the knowledge and vision of things as they really are is the supporting condition for disenchantment, disenchantment is the supporting condition for dispassion, dispassion is the supporting condition for emancipation, while emancipation is the supporting condition for the knowledge of the **destruction of the cankers.**” [Saṃyuttanikāya]

# The Natural Sequence of Happiness

“It is in the nature of things (*dhammata*) that the absence of remorse is present in a virtuous person. A person who has no (feelings) of remorse need not determine in his mind that joy should arise in him. It is of the nature of things that joy arises in a person who has no remorse. A person who is joyful need not determine in his mind that delight should arise in him. It is of the nature of things that delight arises in a joyful person.”

[Aṅguttaranikāya]

# Did the Buddha penetrate the Truth of Suffering through suffering?

1) No. It is through happiness that the Buddha realized the fact of Suffering.

2) In this connection, the Buddha says:

“I do not say that the breakthrough to the Four Noble Truths is accompanied by suffering or displeasure. Rather, the breakthrough to the Four Noble Truths is accompanied only by happiness and joy.”

# Through Happiness to the Highest Happiness

Through happiness to the Highest Happiness is also the theme of some spontaneous poetic utterances of some Arahants as recorded in the Theragāthā. They claim: “**Happiness has been attained through happiness**” (*sukhena sukhaṃ laddhaṃ*).

# What prevents us from achieving the Highest Level of Happiness?

- 1) Is it the nature of the world, or is it our perspectives on the nature of the world?
- 2) It is not the nature of the world. Rather, it is our perspectives on the nature of the world, or how we look at the nature of the world, that prevents us from realizing the Highest Level of Happiness.

# The Three Signs of Sentient Existence

According to Buddhism, **impermanence** (*anicca*), **suffering** (*dukkha*), and **self-less-ness** (*anatta*) are the three characteristics of the nature of the world, the world of experience. The correct understanding of these three characteristics is the liberating knowledge, the knowledge that liberates us from all suffering.

# Views as the Cause of Suffering

- 1) The fact of impermanence is not a problem.  
The problem arises only when we see impermanence as permanence. This is what is called “**the perception of permanence in impermanence**” (*anicce nicca-saññā*).
- 2) In the same way, the fact that there is no self is not a problem. The problem arises only when we see non-self as self. This is what is called “**the perception of self in what is not self**” (*anatte atta-saññā*).

# Views as the Cause of Suffering

(continue)

- 3) When we see impermanence as permanence and self-less-ness as self-ness, then we come to suffering. So if we suffer it is not because of the nature of the world, but because of our theoretical views and dogmatic assertions relating to the nature of the world, which we construct through the lens of our ego-centric perspectives.

# Views as Suffering, and Cessation of Views as Happiness

- 1) The Buddha says “origin of views is the origin of suffering.”
- 2) Accordingly, Nibbāna, the Highest Level of Happiness came to be described as **“the cessation of all views”** (*diṭṭhi-nissaraṇa*).

# What exactly is the Final Goal of Buddhism?

- 1) Is it to realize the Highest Level of Wisdom and to gain the Highest Level of Mental Purity?
- 2) No, the final Goal of Buddhism is not to realize the Highest Level of Wisdom or to gain the Highest Level of Mental Purity.
- 3) Rather, the final goal of Buddhism is to attain the Highest Level of Happiness.

# The Be-all and End-all of What the Buddha Taught

Our conclusion is based on the Buddha's well-known declaration that as a religious teacher he teaches only two things: Suffering and the Cessation of Suffering. **“Cessation of Suffering”** is another expression for Happiness. If the Buddha begins with the problem of suffering, it is precisely in order to find a solution to the problem: the ending of all suffering, which means happiness.

# The Means and the Goal

Happiness is not a means to wisdom, whereas wisdom is a means to happiness. Happiness is not a means to mental purity, whereas mental purity is a means to happiness. While wisdom and mental purity function as the means, happiness becomes the goal.

# Why Wisdom and Mental Purity are Indispensable

This is not to downgrade, but to upgrade the importance of Wisdom and Mental Purity.

For what this really demonstrates is that True (Sustainable) Happiness is certainly not possible unless it is grounded on a proper understanding of the nature of actuality (= Wisdom) and the cultivation, to the highest level, of Mental Purity.

# Where Happiness Consummates

- ◆ Happiness itself came to be described by the Buddha as:

**“Happiness has Nibbāna (Nirvāṇa) as its  
Consummation.”**

*(Nibbāna-paramaṃ sukhaṃ)* [Dhammapada]

# EPILOGUE

**Happiness is the only thing  
we pursue for its own sake.**

# The End



**Thank you.**