

The Concept of Happiness

Modern “new age” philosophy characterizes happiness in the following way:

A person’s happiness or unhappiness is ultimately determined by their attitude and way of thinking. No matter how bad a situation may be, what is most important is to tell yourself, “I’m happy,” and believe it.

On the surface, this seems reasonable enough. Unfortunately, it is actually a mistaken idea ignoring the true nature of all human life. Our lives encounter time and events, and because of this, undergo many changes. At times we are happy, other times we are sad or angry, and at still other times we may feel peaceful. From this we can see that our lives undergo constant change as we encounter “*en*,” or external causes. Every instant, a part of the many workings of the Three Thousand Worlds in a Momentary State, are inherent in the depths of our lives and always react to these external stimuli.

The windows linking our inner nature with the outside world are our five senses: sight, hearing, smell, taste, and touch. Colors and objects of the external world are transmitted to our inner nature through our eyes. Sound is transmitted through our ears. Scent comes through our nose, and flavors through both our sense of taste and smell. We are sensitive to cold, heat, soft or hard through our sense of touch. Our inner nature receives these stimuli, and immediately sorts through them, producing appropriate reactions such as likes, dislikes, pleasure and anger.

When a person gets his way and is satisfied, he correspondingly feels happy. Conversely, when situations we detest continue to happen, when unpleasant events assail us directly, we feel unhappy. These feelings are instinctive and absolutely natural for all human life. To force our inner-nature to “continue to feel happy regardless of the situation,” is no different than telling ourselves to believe that a circle is a square, or that blue is red.

Like our physical body, our inner nature experiences fatigue and exhaustion, demonstrating its own very real limitations. If we are out of shape, with a weak constitution, and are suddenly made to do strenuous exercise, we could easily injure ourselves. In the same way, forcing someone with no experience in self-discipline to “believe that he is happy,” and to ignore the current negative situation, regardless of the external stimuli he is encountering, would be exerting excessive psychological pressure, which could even lead to mental disorder.

These “new age” philosophies make a fundamental mistake in regard to the concept of happiness. Either ignorant or unaware, they overlook the true nature of human life. These errors are not just restricted to thoughts on a personal level, and unfortunately, extend to the teachings of many religions. These religions actually are powerless to save mankind, and are merely forcing people to believe in a certain way.

Ignoring the fundamental truth of human existence, they only work on the externals of human thought.

By contrast, the teachings of this true religion were expounded by the True Buddha, enlightened to all phenomena and to the reality of all life permeating the universe. By following his teachings, and believing in the True Object of Worship, we are able to tap the ultimate source of tremendous benefit, which is truly beyond the limited evaluation of our own minds. By continuing to practice, all believers who exactly follow his teaching, can achieve this lasting, fulfilling and indestructible happiness.

Nichiren Daishonin expounded the following:

Those who believe in the Lotus Sutra and chant Nam-Myoho-Renge-Kyo can transform the three paths of earthly desires, karma, and suffering into the three virtues of the property of the Law, wisdom, and freedom.

True happiness is not an abstract belief, or a product of affirmations, self hypnosis, psychology, mind control, nor is it a conceptual belief. It is an extremely serene life condition, not affected by externals, which brings forth a strong energetic nature from within the very depths and core of our lives. It fosters profound wisdom, and an inner force so powerful that it is able to defeat all suffering through practice, guarded by the power of the Buddha and of the Law.