

1st Class - Introduction

Introduction

Before we speak about the habits of happy people we need to think about happiness

For someone like me and maybe for many of you who are here - this term 'happiness' is regularly used. For someone who is for the first time here the idea of happiness might seem illusive, straightforward, impossible, whatever...

But for the conversation to be of real value and relevance we need to establish what is meant by the word happiness - this is in order to make sure we speak about the same thing so that you are not disappointed by what you hear here. Then you as a listener can decide if what I say suits you.

Happiness - Two Approaches

Generally if you search for what is happiness you will come up with two main ideas:

1. The feeling we get when we experience excitement
 - this word excitement is interesting - but it fits to be used both towards the imagination and the senses
2. The feeling we have when our life has meaning purpose or growth - and this does not necessarily mean pleasure or excitement in the manner expressed by the first description of happiness (the above point)

The above two approaches should be acceptable for most people. These two approaches are sensible and reasonable for anyone caring to think about this situation.

Happiness - The Buddhist Interpretation

The way Buddhists approach the idea of happiness is somewhat different.

Buddhism states that any living being has a basic aspiration having two sides - to be happy and to avoid pain. This aspiration is our basic aspiration and everything we do consciously or not is aimed at fulfilling this wish.

The fulfilment of this wish is the real meaning of human life.

It is important to remember that in Buddhism fulfilling one's basic aspiration is the meaning of life and also the most important achievement. (particularly when contemplating the concept of precious human life and how fragile and short the precious human life we have actually is)

The idea of Hedonic Happiness - where pleasure and excitement are the real meaning of happiness, and these are achieved by the constant stimulation of the senses - this, on the Buddhist view is actually a source of pain. For Buddhist this can actually send the individual on a journey of torment. (we'll explain more about why this is the case later or maybe immediately?)

The idea of Happiness through meaning - is more acceptable for the Buddhist view. However, where or what you believe the purpose or meaning of your life is really important. Without identifying this correctly, if you find the sense of purpose and meaning only through things such as family, career, fame or reputation, the Buddhist view is that finally you will be disappointed.

The meaning of Happiness in Buddhism

In Buddhism happiness means peace of mind. That's it. These few simple words which might not sound like much have in reality most profound meaning in our life.

When spoken by someone who experiences inner peace, these words are truly meaningful and the listener should learn to cherish them.

How Buddhism Understands The Normal Manner of Seeking Happiness

In Buddhism any attempt to find happiness that is outside the aspiring for a peaceful mind is regarded as part of ignorance. Here ignorance refers to simply not knowing. Not knowing what true happiness is leads to not knowing how to go about bringing our own happiness => ignorance is actually suffering.

Beings Who Are Happy

This simple equivocation of happiness with inner peace then opens the door to differentiating between different kinds of beings

- those with permanent and complete inner peace - known as Buddhas
- those who are experiencing permanent but not complete inner peace - known as Bodhisattvas and Fo Destroyers
- those who experience inner peace that is changing according to the conditions of their life but believe that by using this life in a specific way humans can improve themselves and become closer and closer to the experience of inner peace - which are ordinary people like myself

- and those who do not believe that permanent inner peace is possible

Now the Practical Stuff

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