



on to. It is something that unfolds from life itself. It has an unending source, like a fountain that eternally bubbles forth water from deep within the earth.

This sense of happiness is accessible to anyone. It is not dependent on age or gender. It is not limited to any particular ethnicity. It is the deepest wish and aspiration of the Buddha that all people live a meaningful, fulfilled, and happy life.

We can find such a sense of happiness through listening to the teachings, studying the teachings, discussing the Dharma with others, and by reflecting within ourselves in our daily life.

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**A Buddhist View of**

# Happiness

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## A BUDDHIST VIEW OF HAPPINESS

All people seek happiness. No one wants to live a miserable, unhappy life. But how can one live a life of happiness? What is the source of happiness? Where can one find happiness? Although this question is a simple one, it is not easily answered. Many religions, teachings, philosophies, and also contemporary self-help methods and gurus all claim to know the way to happiness. What is the Buddhist perspective on happiness?

### The Buddhist view of the world

When the Buddha became awakened, or “enlightened”, he saw that we humans are living in a world of delusion, which we cannot see or are aware of. The metaphor for this world of delusion is like being lost in the forest, and to think that you know your way out, but you really don’t. You wander around and around, and eventually end up to where you started. This is called the world of “samsara” or delusion. To make matters worse, you don’t even realize or admit that you are lost.

We men are notorious for hating to admit that we are lost. I don’t know how many times I have been driving with my wife looking for a restaurant or some location that I think is, “Just right around here, somewhere.” My wife suggests, “Why don’t you stop and ask for directions?” My reply is always, “No, I know it is right around here, ... somewhere.” 30 minutes later, I give up and stop and ask for directions. Buddhism says that we are lost and in delusion and we don’t even want to admit that we are lost. Being in delu-

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sion, we seek for happiness in all the wrong places.

### Inner Happiness vs Outer Happiness

Normally, we pursue happiness in things external to us. We seek to increase our wealth. We seek to buy a new home. We seek to buy a new car. We seek the perfect job or position. We even seek a spouse to complete our life and to make us truly “happy.” But even if we are fortunate and able to have wealth, a nice home, a nice car, and meet a nice partner, we are only, “somewhat” happy. We are not “deeply” happy, or we find that our happiness is brief and fleeting. The new home is nice for a while, but quickly seems “too small.” The new car is nice but as soon as we get a scratch or a ding in it, we suffer. Even our spouse or partner may not bring the kind of happiness that we thought it would.

Buddhism, first of all addresses how we seek happiness outside of ourselves, and turns the direction around, to seek a sense of inner happiness, happiness that comes from a fulfilled life, happiness that comes from the giv-

ing of oneself, the happiness that comes from living beyond the ego centered life.

### The Happiness of the Awakened Person

How does an awakened person live a happier life compared to an un-awakened person? First of all, an un-awakened person seeks happiness outside of themselves. Second, an un-awakened person is always looking for the gratification of one’s own needs and desires. The un-awakened person discriminates between the positives and the negatives of life and thinks that positives only are meaningful. The un-awakened person thus rejects and tries to avoid or escape from the negatives of life.

The awakened person does not seek happiness outside of themselves. The awakened person finds deep gratification in making others happy, in serving others, rather than finding gratification for oneself. The awakened person embraces both the positives and the negatives of life. The awakened person embraces fortune and misfortune, health and sickness, success and failure. Nothing in life is an obstacle for the awakened person. No matter what one faces in life, there is something to learn, something to realize, and something to reflect on.

For such a person, happiness does not go up or down depending on external circumstances. Happiness does not come and go. Happiness is not a mirage in the desert that disappears as soon as you get there.

The awakened person has a different sense of happiness. It is not something that you can grab