

Discussion Topic May - Relative and Absolute Happiness

The aim of our Buddhist practice is to become happy. What is the definition of human happiness? Usually, we consider a sound financial basis, status, beauty, health, love and appreciation from others as requirements for being happy. Many people seem to enjoy these circumstances, but that does not necessarily mean that they are completely happy. They can still be anxious and worried. And yet, everyone believes that is what happiness is all about. However, happiness of this kind is relative, and as such, fleeting and impermanent. How rich a person may be, they can still lose all of their wealth from one day to the next through drastic social change. The seemingly healthiest of persons can suddenly fall ill or suffer an accident. And as we grow older, we often meet with sickness in some shape or form. Relative happiness depends upon our circumstances. When circumstances change, it is easily lost.

Truly indestructible happiness cannot be found in relative happiness, but in absolute happiness. Absolute happiness is not dependent upon our constantly shifting circumstances. It is unchangeable, a feeling of fulfilment and contentedness at the deepest level of our lives.

We practise Nichiren Buddhism in order to attain a life-state in which we experience the simple fact of being alive as joy. When we reach such a life-state, our lives sparkle with delight, vitality, courage, wisdom and compassion. This is what it means to attain Buddhahood. When we exert ourselves for kosen-rufu, the vast life-state of the Buddha arises within us. And even if we meet with big difficulties, or struggle with illness, we are not discouraged by such circumstances, and we experience a life-state of joy, fulfilment and satisfaction. That is absolute happiness.

This is why the Daishonin states that there is no greater joy than to chant Nam-myoho-enge-kyo. When you possess strong life force and deep wisdom, you can dauntlessly face the challenges of any ordeal, just as a surfer finds excitement in crashing waves, and a mountaineer is thrilled by a steep rock face.

1. What does happiness mean to you?
2. Have you ever experienced absolute happiness, and can you give an example?