

HAPPINESS AND LIFE'S OBJECTIVE

Chapter 4 of *Shakubuku Kyōten*

Translated by Noah S. Brannen

The objective of a man's life must be clear. However, it is common to find in this world that those who appear to be certain concerning their objective are, when questioned, surprisingly unclear about it.

Though you would expect anyone to realize that he must have a goal for his life, there are still a great many people who have either forgotten the ultimate objective or else have adopted lesser objectives or mid-objectives which are actually only expedient measures on the road toward the realization of the final objective. It is commonly said that the ordinary goal for a man before the War was to become Premier or General, whereas today many are possessed with the ambition of becoming distinguished entrepreneurs, educators, technicians, religionists, etc. Philosophers, however, after a little toying with this problem of life's objective, have come up with the dilemma whether man works to eat or to preserve the race, or, to put it another way, which comes first, the chicken or the egg? Having offered no answer whatever to the basic question, they have left us in utter confusion. They make a pretense of contributing to a solution of the problem when actually they have not produced an answer acceptable to anyone. Since these spokesmen speak out of their

1. Edited by Yoshihei Kodaira. Tokyo, Sōka Gakkai, 1958.

own indecision it follows that those who listen will not understand. Therefore, it is no wonder that it has been said that philosophy is only another name for ignorance.

If one pursues the above line of thought he cannot gain ultimate satisfaction. What is the reason for this? If a man becomes a great businessman, a distinguished educator, an artist of renown, or a giant in some other field, he takes this to be the achievement of ultimate happiness. But supposing that in spite of the fact that a man has gained a position of superiority his body is sickly or he suffers pain, or his wife or child becomes ill and dies, or his home is upset or he meets with some calamity ; such a man cannot, after all, call his state a state of happiness. On the contrary, success now becomes empty and happiness is unfulfilled.

There is one condition which is prerequisite to a man's achievement of his life goal ; this is the condition of happiness. But there are many who mistake secondary goals, such as the goal to become a great businessman or a great artist, which are only means to the ultimate objective -- for life's objective itself.

Selection of the right way is the only means of realizing the answer to the prayer for a happy life. Some think that a man has only to work at it in order automatically to achieve happiness. This is like rowing a boat in the middle of the Pacific with neither compass nor goal. Such people don't really believe they can become happy, rather they have nothing more than a vague desire to achieve happiness.

We claim that the real objective of human life is to lead a life of happiness. Of course when we speak of happiness it

is important to avoid vague statements as to content. Happiness must have a specific content which is communicable to everyone. It must be capable of communication and expression to anyone, and at the same time it must be ultimate. It cannot be a temporary end mistaken for the ultimate objective.

A certain German philosopher said that the objectives of human life are the True, the Good and the Beautiful. Let us examine this a bit.

We will state our conclusions afterwards, but first, let us admit that the Beautiful and the Good are unquestionable elements of happiness — the objective of human life. The True, however, is another question. It is not necessarily an element of happiness. The True is an integral part of the meaning of words like truth, reality, genuineness,² and is first and last an object of cognition. Value, on the other hand, is related to a man's life. Thus we experience happiness or unhappiness in the relationship of the True-False to human life in the form of Benefit-Harm. But the True alone, as a universal validity, has nothing to do with happiness. It is obvious, therefore, that the element of the True embedded in concepts such as 'reality' or 'genuineness' is not a necessary condition to happiness.

For example, having no children, or being sickly may be realities; or the death of one's mother, father, wife, or child may be realities, but obviously these things are misfortunes [non-happiness]. The invariability of truth does not make for inevitable happiness. Truth is able to make enquiry outside the

2. All these terms are etymologically related to the one Chinese root 信 (*shin*, 'truth'); *shinri*, 'truth', *shinjitsu*, 'reality', *shingi*, 'genuineness'.
Translator.

self — that is, into the existence of a third person — while happiness and unhappiness are conditions which evolve out of the relationship between the self and another, second-person, existence.

The wish to be happy is the common desire of us all, but the understanding of what happiness is differs from person to person. “If I am satisfied, that to me is happiness,” say some; or “I may not be the luckiest fellow in the world, but then I’m not the unluckiest, so I suppose this is happiness,” say others. These people have a half-resigned notion of happiness. Others think they are happy because they are healthy or have a peaceful home, or because they are blessed with material goods.

Before the War pensioners thought they had a guaranteed income for the rest of their lives, and people who owned rental houses felt they had guaranteed themselves a living and security for old age. Capitalists and landlords probably all thought this way. But in the face of the calamities brought about by the War, with the defeat and the present economic reversal, not only are they not able to cling to their old expectations, the exact opposite condition is all too plainly in evidence.

No doubt there were those who, oblivious to the constant threats to life, thought they were happy until recently when the unprecedented large number of train accidents, shipwrecks, and overturned buses have intruded upon such tranquillity. We cannot agree with those who equate happiness with good fortune, for we have no way of knowing when fortune will crumble. The future is not guaranteed. Some say that everything is fate, but when faced with a personal problem they cry,

“I don't know,” or “I don't understand.”

True happiness decidedly is not something which crumbles because of external conditions at a particular time or in a particular manner; it must be something which energetically springs up from within a man's life.

When one says happiness, first he thinks of material or spiritual happiness. Frequently you hear, “I am not blessed with material things, but I am spiritually blessed, so I am happy.” It is no overstatement, however, to say that whether it be one of the world's “systems” or one of the “isms” all such structures are incapable of constructing the happiness which is the objective of human life. The more science progresses the greater benefits it brings to human life. And there are those who think that as science advances we will be able to lead happier lives. These people neither know science nor true religion. To explain this in simple terms: as over against science which investigates the outside world from the standpoint of self, religion is the investigation and the solution of the problem of man's internal life. Therefore, no matter how much science advances and contributes unlimited benefits and conveniences to all areas of life, it cannot solve the suffering which comes from childlessness, sickness of one's father, mother, wife, or child, an unhappy home, etc.; or all the sufferings that rise out of anger, envy, covetousness, etc. Nor can these be relieved by taking a sedative. It is religion alone which can solve the question of the meaning of the life we are now living.

In spite of the fact that science is making rapid strides, when it comes to the solution of the problem of man's internal existence, science is far too worldly and indifferent. It cannot know

what true happiness is, nor does it even know where to begin.

On the other hand, from the standpoint of actual practice and practical application, the religious world today has degenerated and forsaken the truths discovered by the great sages of old. The leaders today have become nothing but clown-like priests or monkey-like religionists, pretending to know the truth and rattling on in a pompous manner. One cannot help but be shocked; one cannot help but be dumbfounded.

That which constitutes happiness to us comes out of the relationship of our lives with the outside world, and unless we firmly recognize the immanent truth in our lives we can never achieve happiness.

The opposite of happiness is unhappiness [misfortune]. When unhappiness dies happiness is born. But where does unhappiness come from; how did the sufferings of mankind come about? There is no other way to find the answer to this question than to ask the sage who arrived at the ultimate religious truth.

In the *Kaimoku-shō* [On Opening the Eyes] (*Gosho*, p. 199) the Great Holy One, Nichiren, having the same mind as Gautama, touches on the subject of the reason of the appearance of unhappiness in this world saying, "In order to discover whose understanding is the true understanding in that time, when, long after Gautama has left the world and all Buddhism falls into error, Gautama said, as recorded in the *Nehan-kyō* [The Nirvāṇa Sūtra],

In the period of the Latter Law [*mappō*] the followers of the True Dharma will be as the dirt of the fingernails, but those who slander the Dharma [*hōbō*] will be as the earth of the ten quarters.

And in the *Hōmetsujin-kyō* [Sūtra on the Complete Annihilation]

lation of the Dharma] he says,

Those who slander the Dharma will be as the sands of the Ganges,
but those of the True Dharma will be as one or two small stones.

But there has not appeared a single follower of the True Dharma — not one in a thousand years — not in five hundred years ; and those who through the sins of the world fell into evil ways were as the dirt of the fingernails, while those who fell into evil ways because of the Buddhist Law [*buppō*] have been as the earth of the ten quarters. The priests more than the laymen, the nuns more than the women — many fell into evil ways. Here I, Nichiren, reflect : the world has already entered the last dispensation for over two-hundred years. Born in the hinterlands, lowly, of the poor ; during six rebirths, once born as a great king of the people making the multitude bow the knee, just as the great wind bends the limbs of small trees, still not becoming Buddha. As a result of practicing the deeds of the great bodhisattva of the Mahāyāna and the Hīnayāna, acquiring first the *gebon* then the *naibon* ranks, one kalpa, then two kalpas, and, passing through infinite kalpas, achieving the *samsara* of bodhisattva ; and, though already deserving to enter the *avivartya*, being cast into the strong flourishing of evil temptations, still I did not become Buddha. Was I in the succession of the Daitsū Buddha [Mahābhijñājnānābhibhū]? or in the eternal five-hundred age did I forsake the Lotus Sūtra and choose withdrawal from the position attained? and thus have I finally reached here? I, following the teachings of the Lotus Sūtra, have endured the sufferings of the evil karma of the world, the sufferings inflicted by the rulers, sufferings caused by alien religions, the sufferings of the Hīnayāna teachings, and so

forth. I see deeply that to these are added those inflicted by Dōshaku, Zendō, and Hōnen, who delved deeply into the Accommodated Mahāyāna and the True Mahāyāna, but the devil entered into their flesh. Though they praised the Lotus Sūtra they degraded the common man saying that the Lotus Sūtra is deep and hard to understand, so that there has not yet appeared one who is able to understand — not one in a thousand. So that all men, just as the sands of the Ganges, were deceived and fell into the evil of the Accommodated Sūtras into the Hīnayāna Sūtras, and then into alien religions and alien doctrines, and finally into the evil way. In Japan he who knows this is Nichiren alone.”

These words contain a very deep meaning. In addition to showing how the erring religions are responsible for unhappiness and thus unable to perfect life, they tell how this is not the opinion of the Great Holy One alone but is also that of Gautama. The words teach that our present experiences of unhappiness and our inability to experience happiness are due to the fact that in the former world we believed in a false religion. They teach, also, that those who, in the present life, believe in a false religion will be unhappy not only in the present world but must also bear that unhappiness in the future. Perhaps the scientist will not believe this. But the saying, “He who knows this is Nichiren alone,” is not within the realm of the scientist’s knowledge. Although scientists may be able to study things scientifically, they must come to realize that they are ignorant of the spiritual truth of life.

In our lives there operate the two Laws of *sempō* [the law of stain], and *jōhō* [the law of purity]. It is not strange that

a pure life which accepts the total outside world smoothly and is in harmony with the great rhythm of the universe, should undergo transmigration. And it is this life indeed that manifests the Great Life Force that is able to make human life happy. The law of stain is this: along the road of the numerous transmigrations of life — all the mistaken lives — life becomes stained and marked by certain characteristics. These characteristics are created by greed, anger, foolishness, jealousy, etc., and a life stained by a variety of these is not in harmony with the rhythm of the universe, and the power of life fades away. A withered life cannot cope with the various conditions of the universe, and living itself becomes painful. In other words, the phenomenon of unhappiness is created.

In the present day of the *mappō* [End of the Dharma] life cannot be made pure without the Great Holy One, Nichiren's Hidden Basic Scripture [*montei hichin*] — the Great White Law — the Sacred Object of Worship [*gohonzon*] of the Three Great Secret Laws.

Today there are several tens of thousands who recite the *Namu Myōhōrengekyō*; but they do not recite the *Namu Myōhōrengekyō* of the Three Great Hidden Laws of the Deep Hidden Basic Scripture of the Great Holy One. Therefore, they cannot be called disciples of the Great Holy One. Since the Great Holy One's *Namu Myōhōrengekyō* is the Great Law of the Three Great Hidden Laws, those who do not recite the *Namu Myōhōrengekyō* of the Three Great Secret Laws of the Preaching [*geshu*] of the Base of the Scripture [*montei*, the teaching hidden behind the literal words], *Juryōbon* ["Duration of the Life of the Tathāgata," from the Lotus Sūtra], cannot

expect to purify their lives by simply reciting this *Namu Myōhōrengekyō*. And if a religion does not purify life then it is a religion with no value. Indeed, as the Great Holy One says in the *Kaimoku-shō*, it cannot be other than false religion.

False religions, according to the Great Holy One, are enemies of the Buddha and enemies of mankind. But where in this world does there exist a religion which follows the Great Holy One's teaching? The religion which faithfully follows the teaching of the Great Holy One, keeps the Three Great Secret Laws of the Great White Law, and leads mankind into the true happiness, is none other than Nichiren Shō-shū [the Nichiren Shō Denomination] of Fuji Taisekiji. I proclaim that Nichiren Shō-shū is the one great religion which follows that basic truth, purifies life, strengthens life, and makes possible the turning of this miserable human life into a joyous paradise [*jōdo*].

Therefore, by belief in this great religion we harmonize the rhythm of life with the rhythm of the universe and experience a complete feeling of living happiness. The great joy of life is itself the fountain-head of happiness.

Therefore, in conclusion, the objective of human life is the achievement of absolute, eternal happiness. And that happiness is the state of Buddhahood. I strongly, strongly affirm that the attaining of Buddhahood is accomplished through the Buddhist Law [*buddhō*, Dharma] of the True Buddha, The Great Holy One, Nichiren's Three Great Secret Laws alone.