

Breeding Happiness: Living With or Without Money

If we are to mention the precise amount of money with which we shall never need any more money, it is very unlikely that we come to an exact sum. This comes to be so as we tend to set a high(er) standard once we possess particular amount of money. The more money we have, the greater is the impulse to generate new necessity to accomplish that has never even been drawn long before having the money.

The fulfillment of something in our life is closely related to the satisfaction that finally ends in happiness. Satisfaction may be bred from anything, quite relatively depending on what one needs. It is understandable that we human beings are in continuous pursuit of more and better things in the course of our life; in fact, our needs will continue to be limitless if they are not controlled by heart and mind. All are aimed at achieving happiness.

Money does not answer

Happiness, indeed, is never easy to describe physically. Smiles or laughter are not happiness, but the mere indication of an existing happiness. Sometimes people even demonstrate happiness and sadness in different ways. Happiness is the state where heart and mind are thoroughly synergized at the best possible coordinate in order to sincerely take everything at our discernment. It is to say that we are likely to be happy from even the smallest event or stuff, not necessarily due to the possession of money or any other material belongings.

Everybody does need money but money does not always make them happy.

It is undeniable that we have a craving for money, of course at a relatively different rate of fondness. Money enables us to meet almost all of our worldly needs, albeit there are some which wouldn't be purchased. We cannot tell someone to be happy after handing him or her some money, for he or she is actually in an extreme need of somebody to talk to, a funny story, or perhaps an answer to a problem. Similarly, it is impossible to make our friends smile up by offering them meals or fresh fruits while they are in fact expecting an immediate advice on their valuable concerns.

Thus we may now proclaim in firmness that even with the absence of money the buoyancy of happiness is apt to grab. Isn't it customary to see people around us going haplessly in despair being unable to taste happiness despite having large sum of bank deposit and given with wealth of abundance? It is no longer strange to find in our society some people being drowned in a miserable life due to medical problems or relationship issues regardless of possessing, say,

substantial blocks of gold and considerable shares in various companies. We are to understand that happiness is also bred from the sincerest heart to take something the way it is.

Patience and gratitude

Happiness can also be an extension of gratitude upon what Allah has blessed us. This doesn't mean that we then run an ascetic life without even trying every effort and simply giving in. Gratitude does at least serve as the borderline for us in order not to transgress God's laws and overlook every blessing we have attained. One of ayas in the Quran (14:7) obviously strikes our attention that genuine gratitude upon Allah's favor will call more blessing to come for us. In contrast, we will be prone to receive God's terrible punishment once we fail to thank Him. The punishment may appear as the true torment in the afterlife or may also be manifested in daily's mishap that keeps choking us half-dead in the world.

Let's refresh our memory with a man named Tsa'labah ibn Khatib who had always been impatient to experience economic problems. He proposed the Prophet to pray for him so that he may develop a better life. When God finally endowed him with generous wealth, he turned to be ignorant, refusing to thank God for whatever he had acquired. What a bad story! It is still better for us to possess little money but have the ability to demonstrate gratitude to God than to own plentiful riches but fail to tender thankfulness for God's favor for us, that's what the Prophet has strongly advised. Modern people like us will probably arrive at a remark such as, "Well, it would be favorable if we possessed abundant wealth and remain thankful to God!" This is certainly an ideal condition, but we must agree to say that not many people indeed who can perform this role. The fact is, the more wealth one possesses, the less grateful one is likely to be.

The fact of being affluent or deprived is nothing but a test from God for us.

As true believers, we have to have the competence to grow both patience and gratitude during calamity or when we are wealthy. The inability of extending patience and gratitude has become the root of almost human's crime. One commits corruption since he or she can't stand living ordinarily and chases to live profusely instead; they desire to be well-off quickly, being impatient to undergo the process and submit no longer to honesty and perseverance. Out of their consciousness, they are in reality much luckier than their neighbors or other people who could even only have meal once a day. The latter does feel fortunate already. The first group of people refuses to develop patience and is reluctant to exhibit gratitude. They are those depicted in two ayas of the Quran (89:15-16):

As for man, whenever his Lord tries him and then is gracious and provides good things for him, he says: "My Lord has been gracious to me." But when He tries him by restraining his means, he says: "My Lord despises me.

When they are overwhelmed with ease and valuable wealth, they glorify and extol God simultaneously. However, they turn to curse God as He has limited their livelihood. They thought that God has humiliated themselves owing to the restricted resources. They simply forget that surplus and scarcity of wealth are both tests from God for them to pass. It is very lucky for those who are fully aware of this. But what we often find is that people tend to blame God for their misery and forget Him while they are happy.

They always measure happiness on the basis of money and material possession. They are ignorant that the true blessing and delight are the delivery of guidance from God and possession of truthful faith. Once this understanding remains strong in one's heart, then there will be no space for impatience and ingratitude. When we don't have enough money or significant wealth, then we have to feel very providential of being given with health and wellness. If we happen to experience medical problems, we need to cultivate gratitude as God has allowed faith to be strongly embedded in us. The point is that it is vital to look for opportunities to be incessantly thankful, in whatever ways we may be. This is relevant as we are now living in a hectic life with the price hike in everything and the world is getting more competitive.

This elaboration doesn't then make us decide to live without money. The title of this essay doesn't imply that we are forced to live in a stark poverty and to leave out all the possessions. It is okay to hunt and own material belongings in order to meet our needs as long as it comes in fair amount. One of the greatest Caliphs Umar ibn Khattab once said that wealth wouldn't lead to detriment once it is not too much in quantity. If material belongings appear in fair amount, then it will be much easier to manage and make use of it wisely. In addition, the well-organized wealth will ease us to report on the distribution to the Lord on Judgment Day.

This essay needs to be viewed as a note that happiness is not merely bred from possessing money or other material belongings. However much or little you money is, and even if you don't have any, there are plenty more fish in the sea—you do have ample opportunities to taste happiness. I remember a small talk with a fellow teacher when we were teaching English at a language institution where we were honestly paid with low wages. Despite the payment was inadequate for our living, but there was something far beyond that made us teachers stay to

teach English to the students. There was a slice of inner satisfaction splashing throughout ourselves when we see our students being skilful and competent in practicing what we have all learned together. It was an exclusive feeling similar to happiness, only grander, that somehow failed to be described in words.

Franklin D. Roosevelt once wrote that happiness lies in the joy of achievement and the thrill of creative effort. It can be inferred that true happiness, to be sure, is not determined by the bountiful supply of money, but uniquely established on the basis of even the trivial success and demanding tasks. In other words, happiness is not merely generic; it is not present in identical formula for every person despite the fact that there are some generally specific things that will come to everyone's contentment and happiness.

Necessity-based

I'm recalling my memory to when I was on the 3rd grade of Senior High, right after my father passed away of a sickness. The loss was a sudden blow to our family, to me in particular, since he had always been the only one to support our finance that time. I got so personally downcast that I finally made up my mind to write a highly trusted teacher whom I considered to have the adequate competence to answer a question that soon comforted my dispirited self. I wrote in the letter: "*What makes people happy?*" and she provided a clearly insightful elaboration from which I can now remember one single sentence out of the reply. It is said that people's happiness will depend completely on what they expect to have. But the highest rewarding happiness may be resulted from doing good deed for other people as it generates a unique feeling—something more than happiness.

It is obvious that what makes people happy varies from one person to another and perhaps very personal. To newlyweds, happiness is when the two characters can meet and combine in a newly established institution called family. Or happiness emerges when they are blessed with the birth of a kid. But this doesn't apply to an employee. He or she might be happier when completing the task right on the deadline at a highly good quality so that he or she may have the opportunity to receive bonus or job promotion. As for an author or poet, he or she might be tremendously satisfied and happy once coming to write a work of art/poem appearing in highly esthetic word selections and rendering sublime message. The list may continue to add even more and longer.

The power of sharing

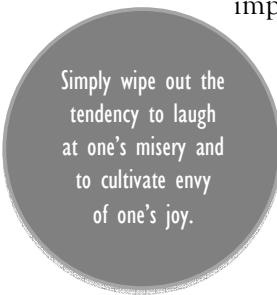
This does imply that money is once again one of, instead of the only one, worldly elements to be the spring of happiness. It is frequent that however much money one has, there is neither happiness nor joy generated due to the possession. Some people are simply overcome by anxiety of others' threat to steal the money. It is in this sense that Islam teaches us to share our belongings as the best way to purify all we possess which are actually God's property given to us to be in our custody. The real significance of our own saving is those we freely give out for donation as well as sincere almsgiving.

The fear to be unhappy is truly manufactured by us. It has been common that we experience the apprehension of failures and shortage. It is we who engender the anxiety along with life complexity that discourage our own spirit to revive. Allah has licitly asserted in the Quran (3:154):

After (the excitement) of the distress, He sent down calm on a band of you overcome with slumber, while another band was stirred to anxiety by their own feelings, Moved by wrong suspicions of Allah, suspicions due to ignorance.

Five levels of happiness

To be brief, there may be several levels of happiness we can have. First of all and the most important one, the paramount happiness that a true believer expects is meeting up with God—a very moment that every Muslim desires, even the Prophet. The second is happiness that exists when we succeed to make others happy. The third level of happiness results from our sincerity to feel happy and cherish others' happiness. The next lower happiness is bred due to the success of achieving something valuable—however small it is, or when we escape from calamities or troubles. The lowest level of happiness is the joy that rises in our heart when noticing people's difficult situation or when they are swamped with plight. In a popular say it is said that people today are likely to be happy to see others' misery and grow no joy when others are happy. May Allah prevent us from occupying the last level for this is unquestionably counterproductive to the growth of our own happiness as well as our future. But the choice is totally ours. It is imperative to note that any level we decide to take, it will bear consequence, either for ourselves or for other people. And most importantly, let's now crawl to progress from the lowest to the higher and the highest level of happiness. Let the flowers of happiness blossom in everybody's heart.



Simply wipe out the tendency to laugh at one's misery and to cultivate envy of one's joy.