



The Science

OF HAPPINESS

Asking what true happiness is can be tantamount to asking about the meaning of life. It can be different for every person and there may be no universal answer. Some people have a natural proclivity for happiness, while others do not.

Dr. Ong Tien Kwan (MBBS)

What is Happiness?

hap·pi·ness

/ˈhæpᵻnəs/

noun

the state of being happy.

"she struggled to find happiness in her life"

synonyms: [pleasure](#), [contentment](#), [satisfaction](#), cheerfulness, [merriment](#), [gaiety](#), [joy](#), joyfulness, joviality, [jollity](#), [glee](#), [delight](#), good spirits, lightheartedness, well-being, enjoyment; [More](#)



Translations, word origin, and more definitions

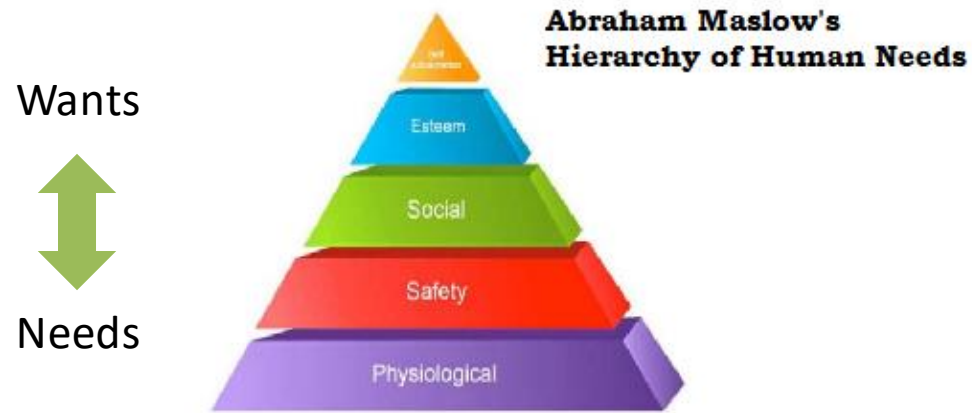
Happiness

Getting what we want

Not getting what we don't want



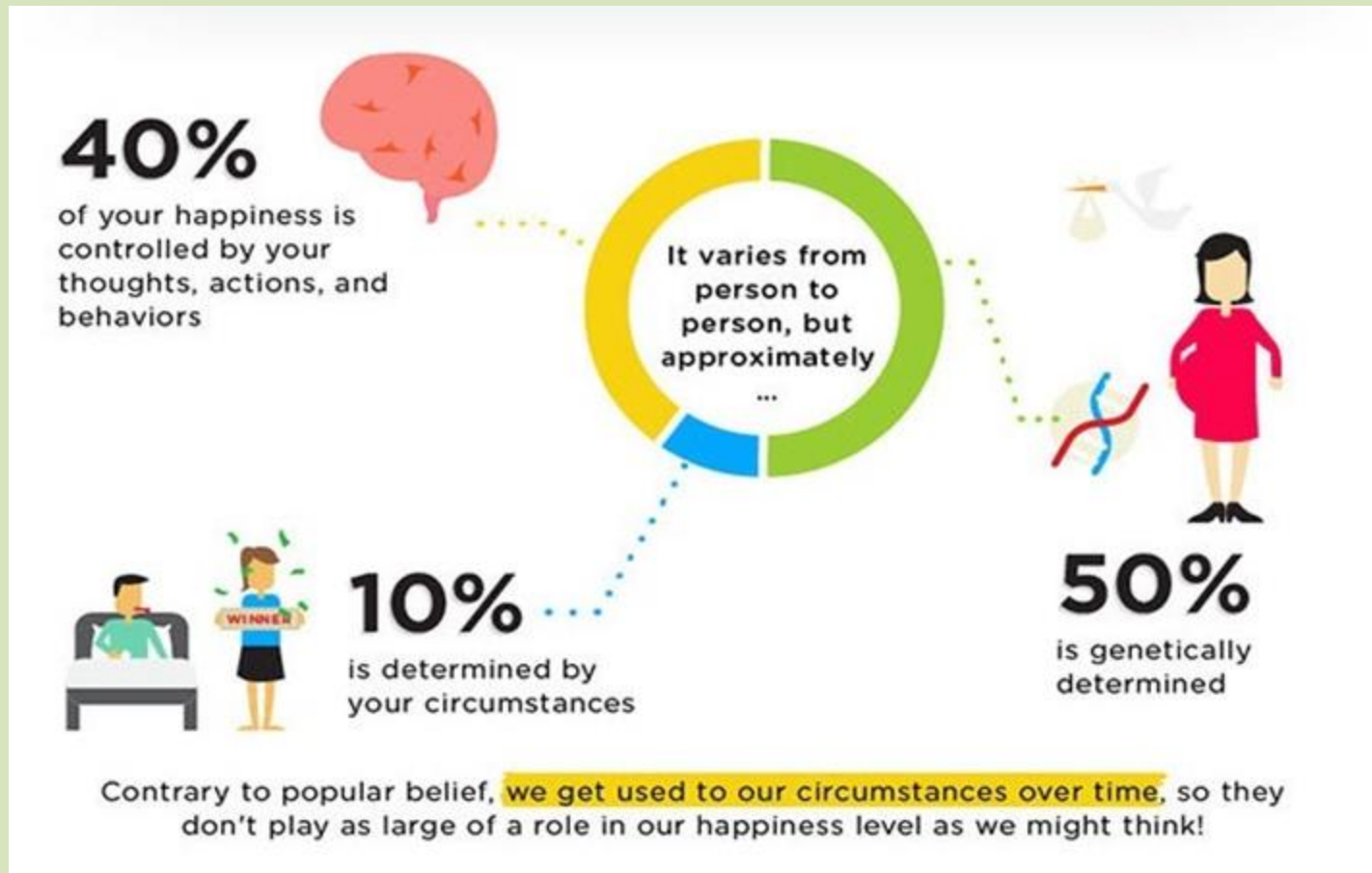
What about our needs?



We all have deeply personal (and different!) definitions of happiness.



What determines our happiness?



Adaptation

- We adapt remarkably well to physical circumstances.
- In **unpleasant** circumstances, we adapt to the new norm. We learn to **tolerate** the discomfort or the pain.
- In **pleasant** circumstances, we adapt to the new norm. We learn to seek for **greater** pleasure.



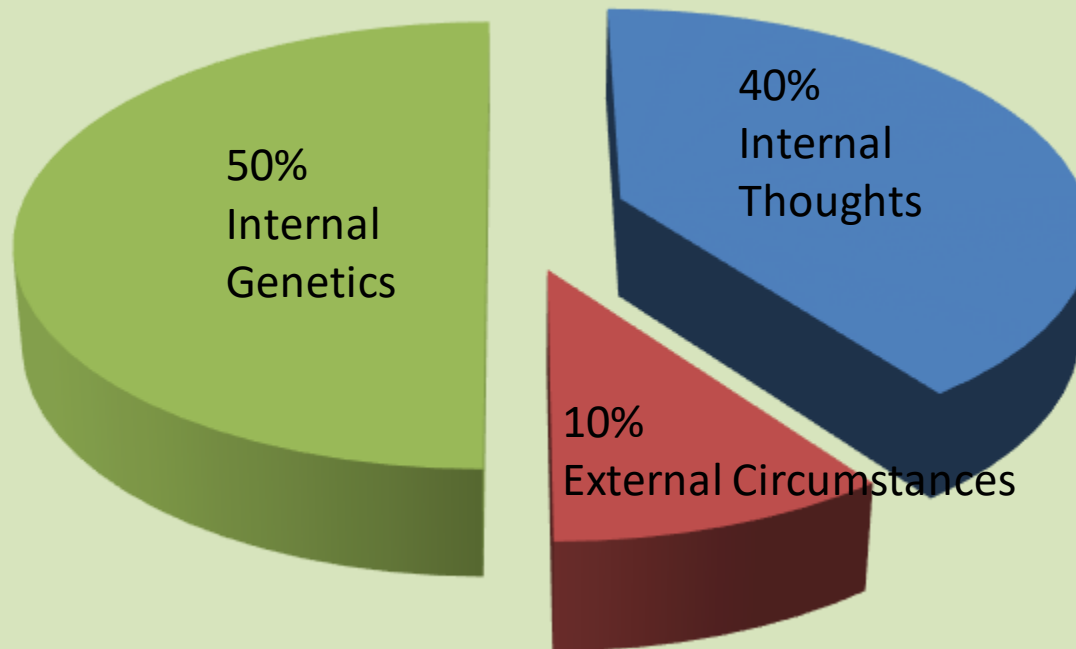
Extreme Conditions



Bottomless Pit



90% Internal vs 10% External



What makes us happy?

1. Happiness and **WEALTH**
2. Happiness and **HEALTH**
3. Happiness and **RELATIONSHIPS**
4. Happiness and **MEANING OF LIFE**
5. Happiness and **SPIRITUALITY**



1. Happiness and Wealth

- **Belief:** The more wealth (money), the happier we are
- **Finding:** We only need wealth to provide for basic needs and wants
- **Question** your belief
 - Could it be fear? Insecurity?



Dighajanu Sutta (AN 8.54)

Happiness for Laypeople

Four requirements for a happy life

1. Accomplished in Effort
2. Protection of Properties
3. Good companionship (kalyana mitta)
4. A Balanced Life

Four ways to lose wealth

- Womanising, gambling, drinking, evil friends

Four qualities for happiness now and hereafter

- Faith, virtue, generosity, discernment (wisdom)

Dhammapada 204: “Contentment is the greatest gain”



2. Happiness and Health

- **Belief:** A healthy body makes us happy
- **Finding:** Happiness makes us healthy
- Mind is the **first** line of defense against both **physical** and **mental** illnesses



The Benefits of Happiness

1. Happiness (doesn't just) make you **feel good**
2. Happy individuals are **more successful** across multiple life domains – marriage, friendship, income, work performance
3. Happy people are also **physically healthier** – less likely to be diabetics, have better HDL, stronger immune system, live longer
4. They are also **more resilient** – less reactive to stressors, lower risk of depression



3. Happiness and Relationships

- **Finding:** Relationships give meaning & purpose to life
- **Kindness & generosity** are key traits to a happy relationship
- **Belief:** Other people can make us happy
- **Fact:** Only we can make ourselves happy



4. Happiness and Meaning (Purpose)

- **Finding:**
 - A meaningful or purposeful life is a happy life
 - Sense of personal achievements
- **Belief:** To be meaningful, the success must be big
- **Fact:** Little things mean a lot

- Question your belief:
 - Might it be about my ego?

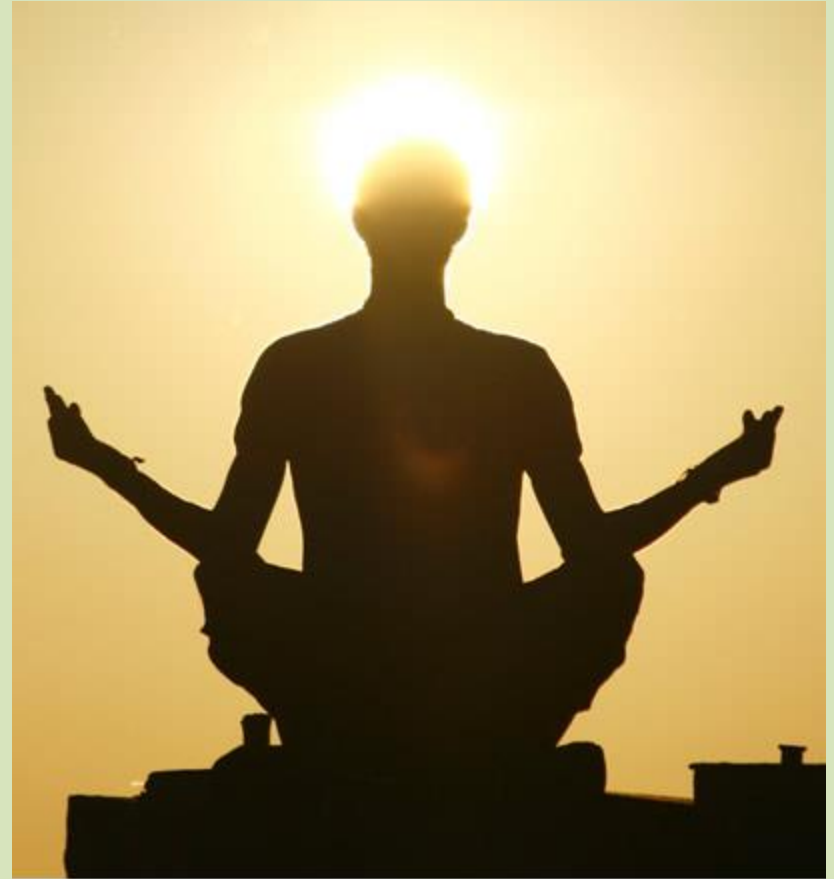


5. Happiness and Spirituality

Finding:

A moral life leads to happiness

- Moral conduct, altruism, generosity, compassion



Desirable Mental States

Positive emotions are conducive
to happiness

- Gratitude
- Kindness (generosity)
- Forgiveness
- Altruism

BRAHMA VIHARA

Metta
Karuna
Mudita
Upekkha



Why Spirituality?

1. It offers **psychological comfort** related to death and the questions of afterlife
2. It provides **social support**
3. It provides **meanings** and sense of belonging
4. It provides a **stable foundation** and good values for children
5. It encourages the experience of **positive emotions**



Power of Positive Emotions

- They are the **cause** of our success across multiple domains of life, not the result
- They make us more able to thrive, to flourish, to be more creative and resourceful
- Better at adapting to change
- More resilient in times of adversity



A Virtuous Cycle



Happiness is a SKILL

**You can always cultivate the
necessary skills to become
happier**



The Skills of Happiness

Right Focus

Mindfulness

Courage & Honesty

Letting Go



The Middle Path

The **Higher Science of Happiness**

What is Happiness?

- In simplest term, happiness is:
 - Getting what you want
 - Not getting what you don't want
- In highest term, happiness is:
 - Imperturbable peace [nibbana]

nibbānaṃ paramaṃ sukhaṃ

Types of Happiness (SN 36.31)

- **Sensual Happiness**
 - Physical pleasure
 - Mental pleasure and state of mind (Ordinary Mind)
- **Spiritual (Mental) Happiness**
 - Overcoming the Five Hindrances
 - First, second & third jhanas
- **Happiness that is more spiritual than Spiritual Happiness**
 - The Fourth Jhana
 - A mind that is completely liberated from greed, hatred and delusion (enlightened mind)

Wholesome and Unwholesome Happiness (MN 70 Kitagiri Sutta)

Unwholesome happiness

- Sensual happiness
- Leads to *increase in unwholesome* states and *decrease in wholesome* states (greed, hatred, delusion)

Wholesome happiness

- Spiritual happiness
- Leads to *increase in wholesome* states and *decrease in unwholesome* states

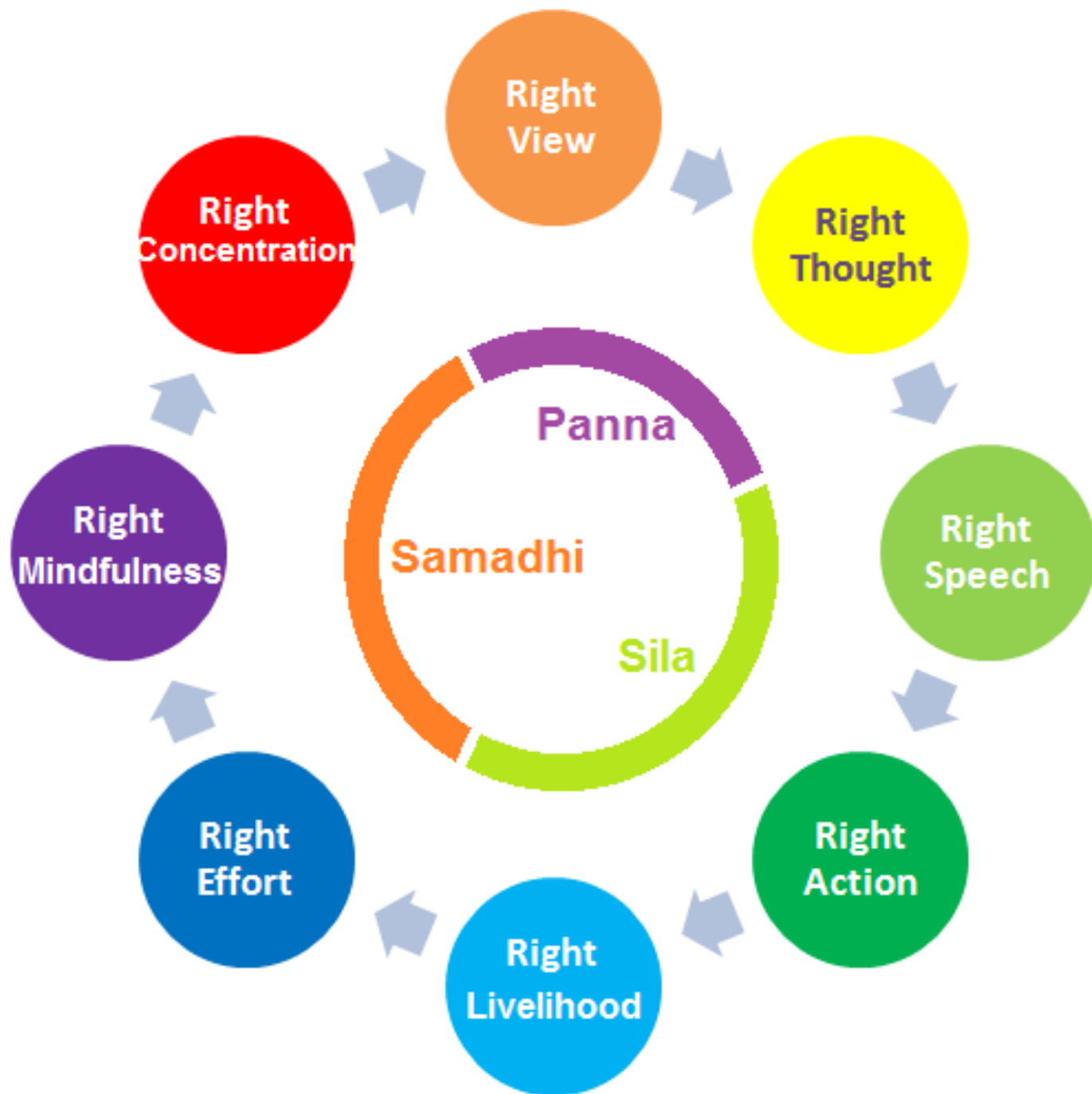
Magandiya Sutta (MN 75)

The Buddha compared the indulgence of sensual pleasure to a leper

- Sick skin – use hot iron or charcoal to burn skin to find relief, seen as desirable
- Sick mind – sees sensual pleasure as desirable

Cula-dukkhakhanda Sutta (MN 14)

- Our ordinary daily mind (conditioned by greed, hatred and delusion) finds itself difficult to be free from temptation of sensuality.
- The mind that knows pleasure (piti) and happiness (sukha) cannot be tempted thus.



The Middle Path to Happiness

1. **Saddha / Conviction**

- a) Belief in the Buddha, Dhamma and Sangha
- b) Take refuge in the Three Refuges
- c) Upholding the Five Precepts

2. **Dana / Generosity**

- a) Kindness in actions
- b) Kindness in words
- c) Kindness in thoughts

3. **Sila / Moral Conduct**

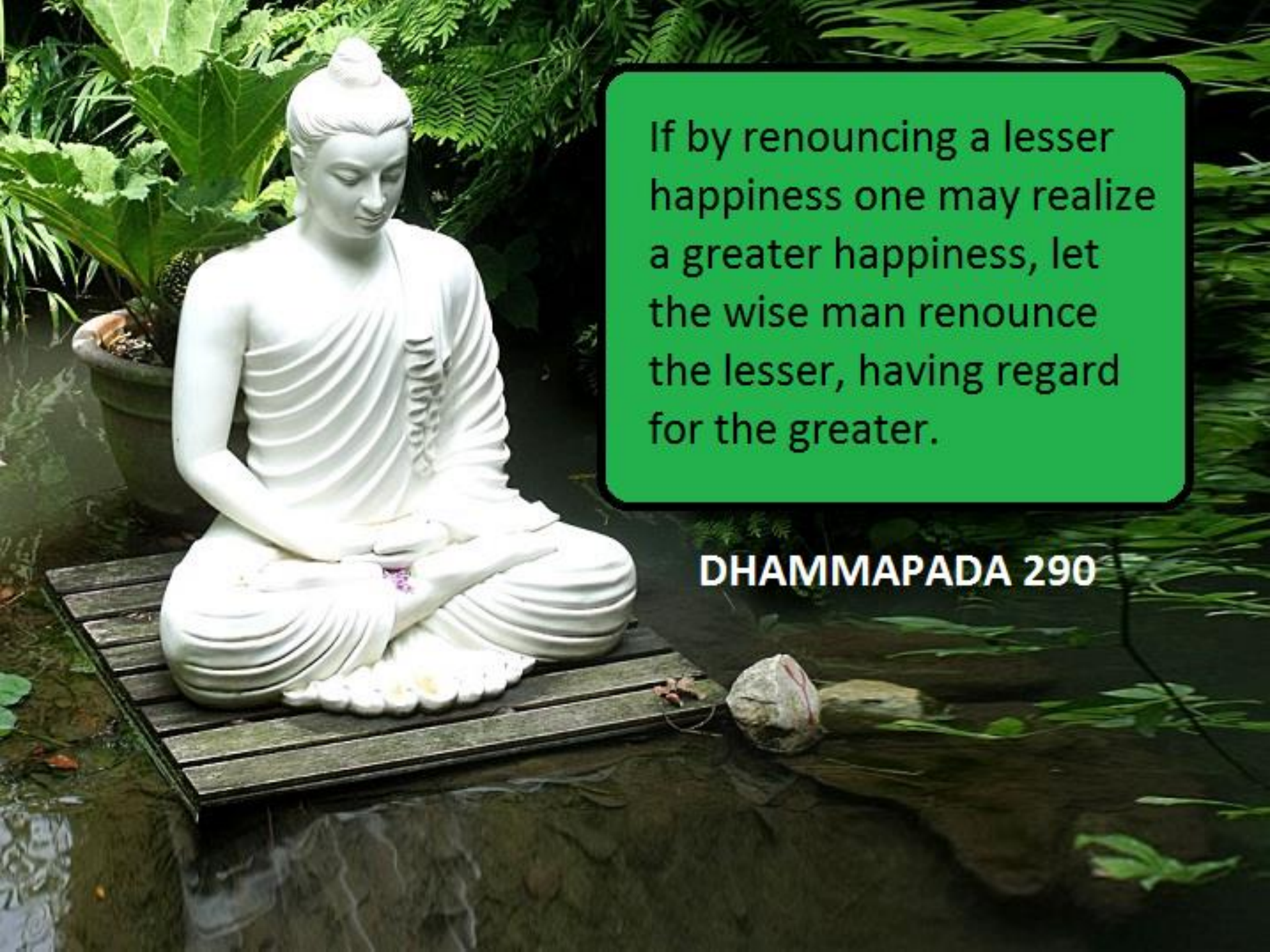
- a) The Precepts – Five, Eight and Ten Precepts
- b) Moderation in eating
- c) Restraint in senses
- d) Mindfulness and Alertness
- e) Devotion to Wakefulness
- f) Contentment
- g) Seclusion of Body and Mind

4. **Bhavana / Mental Cultivation**

- a) Overcoming the Five Hindrances
- b) The Rupa Jhanas
- c) The Arupa Jhanas

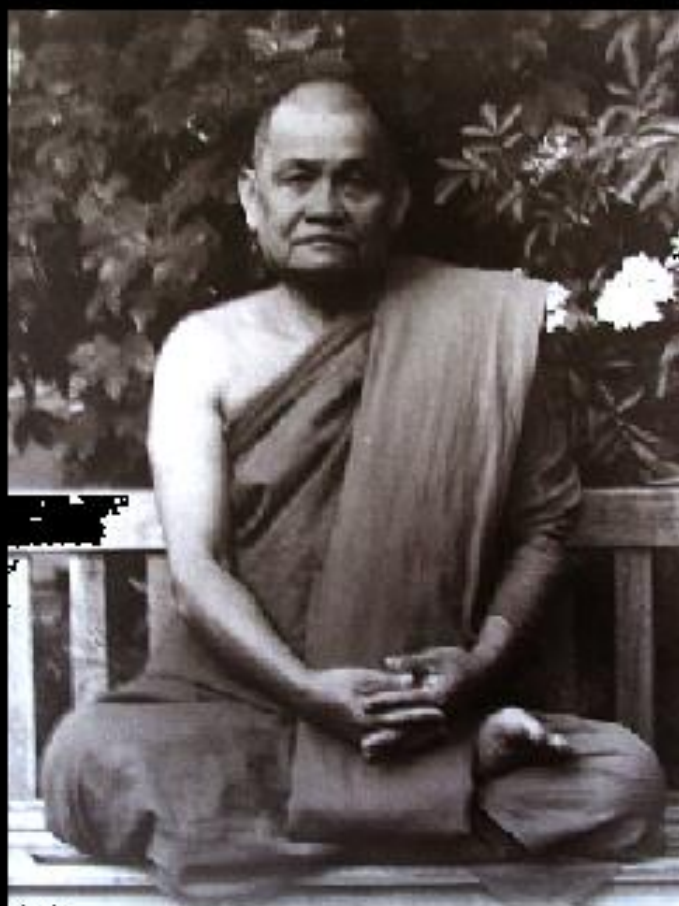
5. **Panna / Wisdom or Higher Knowledge**

- a) Mind-made Body
- b) Psychic Powers
 - i. One becomes many, many become one
 - ii. Ability to walk through solids
 - iii. Ability to walk on water
 - iv. Ability to levitate or fly in the air
 - v. Ability to touch the moon and sun
 - vi. Ability to reach the Brahma world
- c) Clairaudience
- d) Mind-reading
- e) Recollection of Past Lives
- f) Divine Eyes
- g) Destruction of the Asavas

A white Buddha statue is seated in a meditative pose on a wooden platform. The statue is positioned on the left side of the frame, with its hands resting in its lap. The background is a lush, green garden with various plants and a pond. A green text box is overlaid on the right side of the image, containing a quote. The text is in a bold, black font. The overall scene is peaceful and serene.

If by renouncing a lesser happiness one may realize a greater happiness, let the wise man renounce the lesser, having regard for the greater.

DHAMMAPADA 290



**If you practice a little,
you gain a little happiness.
If you practice a lot,
you gain a lot of happiness.
If you practice completely,
you gain complete happiness.**

AJAHN CHAH

Beyond Self

BEYOND SELF
BEYOND WINDS OF CHANGE



SIGNIFICANCE

Spirituality

Meaning of Life

Relationships

SECURITY

**Health
Wealth**

SUBJECT TO WINDS OF CHANGE