

What Does “Bliss” Mean In Your Faith?
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Question: What does "bliss" mean in your faith?

Answer: All beings experience some form of bliss. Even animals experience pleasure and bliss. The problem is that most of the bliss we experience is "conditional" bliss, that is, it is generated in response to some object of pleasure. For example there is the bliss of looking at beautiful objects or hearing beautiful sounds. We might experience the bliss of beautiful fragrances, tastes, and touches. This could include the bliss of food or physical sensations. However the one thing all of these "conditional" blisses have in common is that they are impermanent - none of them last. All of these are quite different from the Buddhist form of "non-conditional" bliss.

From the Buddhist perspective, enlightenment is the combination of bliss and emptiness. Not emptiness alone or bliss alone, but both combined. The bliss that the Buddha experienced upon enlightenment was non-conditional and therefore was non-fading. In other words, the bliss the Buddha experienced was not the result of external causes but rather was inherent, permanent and everlasting.

Conversely, conditional bliss is contaminated with feelings of craving, desire and attachment. These usually arise from being near the object of our desire. This type of conditional bliss is in reality a cause of suffering because it is contaminated with ignorance. Cravings, desires and attachments that originate in our mind are the source of our suffering. The Buddha taught that through the practice of meditation we can eliminate the clinging and grasping of our mind. And that each of us possess "Buddha-nature" the potential for enlightenment - a bliss that is permanent and non-fading.