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In the book â€˜The Art of Happinessâ€™, Dalai Lama explains that happiness has four levels of stages according to Buddhist texts.

The very first level is about having wealth. Many would say wealth does not cause happiness but unless one has self sufficiency, it is difficult to be happy in life. The basic needs of food and shelter should be met in life in order to progress further. It was Swami Vivekananda who pointed out that a person hungry stomach can not sit to meditate. Many would believe that money is the cause of all troubles. But actually, it is not money but how one earns, spends and gets attached money is the real cause of misery. This observation leads to the next point.

The second level of happiness is the worldly satisfaction. It might be possible for some one to derive worldly satisfaction using the wealth. However it may not be so straight forward as it seems. Some one who got wealth by illegal means will not be able to spend it openly. Or some one who followed dishonest means in gaining wealth will not get the desired reputation in the society. So along with wealth, a fair code of conduct in the society is required for deriving the worldly satisfaction, which is the second stage of happiness.

However, having wealth and good achievements in life does not ensure complete happiness. Here comes the next level of happiness which is spirituality. One needs to put effort and understands the spiritual nature, in order to derive a higher level of happiness. Spirituality does not necessarily mean God and religion, but in terms of understanding the unifying nature of creation.

The fourth or final stage of happiness is enlightenment. When the spiritual efforts become fruitful and lead to self realization or enlightenment, the happiness comes from within. In this situation, external wealth and social satisfaction do not matter. This is the ultimate level of happiness.

It is interesting to note how the levels of happiness work out in actual life. For example, if you have great wealth, can you just sit and pass time without doing anything? You want to achieve some thing in life, not just sit, eat and sleep. Similarly after a good achievement in life, normally people want to help others. While in the initial stages, there might be selfish motives, later on people who achieved well in life, want to help others as well even without any expectation. Similarly after all the worldly satisfactions are reached, one wants to explore higher nature of creation, which is spirituality. So we can see that even if we may not be deliberate, there is a natural inclination inherent in us, seeking higher levels of happiness all the time.

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