

SUFFERING IS ALSO YOUR LIFE'S COMPANION



We Make Our Own Suffering

〈Seikan Kobayashi〉

“When a glass is half full of water, how do you view it? How do you perceive it?”
Author Seikan Kobayashi says there are three ways you can view it.

1. With displeasure and dissatisfaction that it is only half full.
 2. With joy, feeling glad that it is half full.
 3. With gratitude, being thankful for the kindness of whoever left half for you.
- However you view or interpret a situation like this, you yourself are the one who is assigning it some sort of meaning.

〈Teaching expounded in the Heart of Wisdom Sutra〉

“All forms are, namely, emptiness” — show us that whether things are pleasant or unpleasant, we ourselves arbitrarily assign meaning to all phenomena

〈The phenomena we think of as the root causes of our suffering and anxiety〉

are often-times the seeds of suffering that we ourselves have sown,

arbitrary decisions, prejudices, preconceived notions, desires, doubts, attachments, and so on.

By changing how you view and interpret things, you can live with much greater ease.

suffering Also Provides Some of Life's Meaningful Moments

〈Dr. Ko Hirasawa〉

“Birth, aging, illness, and death are called ‘the four sufferings,’ but for me, they are not the four sufferings, they are the four joys.”

〈Poet Shinmin Sakamura〉

“Illness / Has opened up / Another world for me— / The peaches / Are blooming”

〈Novelist Kojin Shimomura〉

“The world I want to inhabit is one in which suffering is not the cause for despair, but rather the stimulus for courage”

〈The aforementioned Kobayashi says〉

of the teaching of emptiness that he illustrated with his glass-of-water analogy: “Perhaps what the Buddha wishes to tell you is that when you can find joy and pleasure in the same phenomenon, you are spiritually refining yourself”

〈Even those phenomena we think of as painful〉

can be viewed and interpreted in various ways that ultimately lead us to find the courage to live and to find a new way of life.

〈If you only view〉

something as one-dimensional—seeing it solely as full of suffering or pain—you are more likely to become perpetually obsessed with that “suffering” and lose an excellent opportunity to grow and mature.

〈That said,〉

I am not suggesting that you should force yourself to cheerfully accept painful phenomena.

〈Rather,〉

try to view things from multiple perspectives,

when seen in the light of the truth of impermanence and the teaching of dependent origination,

is itself an integral part of the unfolding circumstances and inevitabilities of life.

Moreover, such experiences are linked to a creative future,

even if it takes some time, we possess the power to transform our suffering into provisions for life and joy.

〈To quote a passage from a novel〉

“The good things, as well as the bad things—all of them, together, have made you who you are today.

Suffering and sorrow form meaningful moments in your life—they are also your precious life experiences.

〈Theoretical physicist Haruo Saji〉

“Since the present moment is formed by the accumulation of the past, by looking ahead to the distant future and carefully designing our actions from this moment forward, we have the ability to change both the future and the past”

〈In a similar sense,〉

it is essential—for the sake of our future selves, the adults of tomorrow, and the future of our planet—

that we live fully in the present moment by accepting as our life companions the suffering as well as the joy we have accumulated in the past.