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HAPPINESS – ALL YOU  
NEED IS LOVE – OR IS IT?

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## **WORLD HAPPINESS FORUM**

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In this contribution, the speaker will examine the importance of love for human happiness.

Love in a pure form usually exists between parents and children. Yet the law, until recently, treated children as a kind of chattel of their fathers. Love in the form of friendship can be sustaining and disinterested.

Love of a sexual kind is a very powerful force, motivated by complex feelings usually sourced in genetics. Because of the power of sex, the law steps in to prevent its manifestations on some occasions. Unwanted love is seriously criminal if it intrudes on another person's physical space. Illegal love will incur punishment, as when it is directed to the under-aged or disabled who cannot give a valid consent. In the past, prohibitions were imposed on love between same-sex partners even if they were consenting adults, acting in private. In recent decades, these prohibitions have fallen away in most Western countries. But not without a fight on the part of many religious leaders. That fight is still continuing in many countries of Africa and Asia.

Do we need to re-think some of our approaches to love as happiness from a legal and social point of view? A recent study at Harvard University concluded that atheists are just as ethical and have as strong

a moral compass as church-goers and religious people. Dr. Marc Hauser of Harvard University, one of the co-authors, concluded:

“For some there is no morality without religion, while others see religion as merely one way of expressing one’s moral intuitions.”

Are religious demands for pre-marital chastity sensible today, given the availability of contraceptive pills and ultra-fine condoms, advertised vividly on public billboards and television? On these issues, young people seem to be voting with their feet (or other parts of their anatomy). Surveys show the very high levels of pre-marital sexual relationships. In this respect, are ‘straight’ couples simply following the experimentation which Kinsey found was common amongst ‘gays’?

The speaker’s thesis is that there is too much hypocrisy in contemporary public discourse over sexuality. A lot of the blame for this lies in the power of American media to project US religious and social values on the rest of the world. Those values often reflect Old Testament biblical instructions that are disconnected from many modern practices in relation to human love and sexual activity. A prime example of the double standards of American society, inflicted on the whole world recently, has been the agonising over the sexual life of Tiger Woods. He is, after all, a golfer; not a moral philosopher.

Getting happiness in life is connected with, and often dependent on, sexual happiness. Yet this subject is commonly surrounded by hypocrisy, denial and a disconnection between what people say and what they actually *do*. A patriarchy exists, determined to control the sexual happiness of women and gays in particular. Until society

achieves harmony between its real values and its common practices, there will be a lot of guilt and unhappiness. The public media play a part in this disconnection which is vividly demonstrated by contrasting the Tiger Woods story with the huge industry of adult pornography that helped launch the internet.

What occurred to Tiger Woods was a matter between Tiger Woods, his wife and family and the other women involved. Instead, prurient interests that are invoked to sell media turned it into a global revival of the medieval stocks. The media jumped on the band-wagon of public humiliation and flagellation for poor Tiger. According to reports appearing at the same time, the late Pope John Paul II secured some happiness in his life from private self-flagellation in his rooms in the Vatican. There is no evidence that Tiger received any happiness at all from his ordeal. What a bunch of hypocrites the modern media are. The man is not even a Christian, but a Buddhist. Yet they would not be satisfied until Tiger accepted the party line of abject humiliation. Self-flagellation is no longer optional. Now, it seems to be compulsory. Tiger did his duty, mainly, one suspects, for economic reasons. But it is not everyone's path to happiness.

This contribution will be an appeal for less hypocrisy and more honesty over human relations. And an attempt to re-draw attitudes to sexual happiness in line with proved contemporary widespread adult behaviour, the new contraceptives, fresh dangers such as AIDS and a recognition that religions are today only one player in the modern discourse on this subject.

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