

Hotei - Laughing Buddha



Hotei is the god of happiness, laughter and the wisdom of being content. Because of his constant good nature, he has become the symbol of philosophical contentment. He is the patron of the weak and the children..

Hotei is depicted as a very fat man with a big belly symbolizing the largeness of his soul, happiness, good luck, and plenitude. The stomach is also considered the seat of the soul in Chinese mythology and so the large stomach can be taken as an allegory for Hotei's open heartedness. One belief surrounding the figure of Hotei in popular folklore is that if a person rubs his belly, it brings forth wealth, good luck, and prosperity. This belief however does not form part of any Buddhist doctrine, but more of a pseudo-Chinese practice.

He carries a linen bag over his back, ("Ho Tei" is Japanese for *cloth bag*) one that never empties, for he uses it to feed the poor and needy. It is filled with many precious items, including rice plants, sweets for children, food, small mammals, and the woes of the world. Sometimes it can be filled with children, as they are seen as some of those precious items of this world.

Because he represents prosperity and happiness, statuettes are often found in homes and businesses in China and Japan.. He is often admired for his happiness, plenitude, and supposedly wisdom of contentment.

For us, the Laughing Buddha image is a reminder of our own capacity to achieve happiness and life satisfaction of our capacity to achieve and enjoy the good life.