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# Happiness

by the 17<sup>th</sup> Karmapa Thrinle Thaye Dorje



Dear friends

**H**ow much do we really know about happiness? From a Buddhist perspective, all sentient beings, including animals, seek happiness. We have a subconscious instinct to seek happiness - even though many of us don't have a clear idea what it is, or how to achieve it.

From a Buddhist perspective, there are two types of happiness: Emotional Happiness and Timeless Happiness. *Emotional Happiness* could be described as seeking relief from the cold, or searching for sources of earning, position, or status. Although there is nothing wrong with this type of 'worldly' happiness, when we reflect on it, we might understand that all of these examples, by their very nature, are temporary. Emotional Happiness does not last. Therefore, *Timeless Happiness* becomes something very important to seek.

## Timeless Happiness

Timeless Happiness is gained from understanding our own inherent qualities, such as compassion and loving kindness, and gaining wisdom about our true nature. When we reflect on the nature of this type of happiness, we find something unchanging, permanent – and therefore worthwhile to seek.

We might find ourselves confused about 'Timeless Happiness.' We are, after all, so closely connected to Emotional Happiness, and get an instant reward from it every day. Timeless Happiness might sound noble, even wonderful, but is it visible, attainable in everyday life? Actually, yes.

## Happiness in Family

My late grandmother led a very simple life, as a mother to my father. But the way she lived her life is something that will stay with me always, and is perhaps my greatest personal example of Timeless Happiness. Without having particular responsibilities that one might consider 'amazing' or 'newsworthy' - but simply by being a mother, just practising loving kindness, and other basic qualities of life, and of herself – what I witnessed is, that no matter who approached her, no matter what kind of situations she was in, she had an unaltering attitude towards life. Whomever she met, she had the attitude of kindness and care – just like a mother. Visibly, you could see it, verbally, you could hear it. All of her words were extremely warm and gentle. And of course, all of these qualities stemmed from her own consciousness.

As Karmapa, I of course lead my life as a spiritual practitioner, but I learn so much from the way, she carried herself, the way she carried her attitude to life. This memory for me is very precious, because it helps remind me, that Timeless Happiness is visible and evident in all of us. The happiness we are seeking is already here. So this example always helps me, always puts a smile on my face, and in my heart.

## Buddha and Happiness

I am sure that every one of you have similar experiences, memories, that you can recall. From a Buddhist perspective, it is said that the potential, the seed and the quality of true happiness or enlightenment, are all there within every sentient being's centre.

Therefore, it is important not to consider Timeless Happiness as something that is distant or unattainable, or something to be celebrated on special occasions, and put on the shelf for the rest of the year. Instead, Timeless Happiness is something that we can really get involved in, take part in, no matter what type of life we are living, no matter what type of conditions we might have. But first we have to notice it.

The benefit from taking the first step of achieving Timeless Happiness is captured in the word 'timeless' itself. From a Buddhist perspective, the benefits are noble, decent and virtuous from the very beginning. It is noble, decent and virtuous in the middle. And it is noble, decent and virtuous at the end as well – not just in this life, not just later on, but until the end, until we have given full rise, full realisation to Timeless Happiness.

From a Buddhist viewpoint, the best example of this unchanging happiness would be none other than Buddha himself. Buddha means 'Enlightened Being' - a fully awakened being. Now, if we reflect on the way he sought and ultimately achieved Timeless Happiness, it is the same as we are doing today: reflecting on and examining the causes and conditions of happiness.

### The Happiness Exam

The only way in which we can truly examine happiness, is by looking deep into ourselves: our way of being; the way we carry ourselves; our everyday behaviour and habits. By doing so, it helps us understand more about ourselves. If we understand more about ourselves, we understand more about others.

All of us have the basic qualities to attain happiness, we all share the potential – simply because we all have consciousness. We all have the same wish and aspirations, as we are all searching for happiness.

If you look at Buddha's life story, it is clear, that he could have had, and indeed he did have, everything he could wish for from worldly life. But after examining it, he could see that – no matter how pleasant or satisfactory a feeling or situation he was experiencing – these were all temporary. He saw, that it was not the ultimate goal or priority to attain this type of experience, what we are calling Emotional Happiness. Therefore, he left that life in search of something that is lasting, something that is unchangeable. This is what students of Buddha's way and path are practising: the practice of Timeless Happiness.

Having said all of this, to seek happiness, do we need to suddenly change the way we live? Do we need to renounce and abandon things

from our lives? We may naturally have these kind of questions and doubts. I would say, that it is all about the attitude – how we want to live our lives. It all depends on our priority, our ultimate goal. If our priority is to seek Timeless Happiness, the first thing we must do is reflect.

#### Five minutes a day

It is beneficial to reflect every day on what we are really seeking, the conditions that we have been gathering, and the methods that we have been applying. There is no harm in taking a little time every day from our schedules. We can start by taking just five minutes a day – it is not much – and the practice itself does not need to involve intensive methods or rigorous procedures. All we need to do is sit, or stand in a place where we feel comfortable, quiet and peaceful.

Then, simply meditate and reflect, with a calm state of mind and body. Reflect on the past 24 hours – nothing more – reflect on exactly what has happened. Do this in an unemotional way, without judgement. By doing so, there is so much benefit. You will understand more about yourself, the various interesting aspects of your life. Not only will this help your memory, gain clarity, but it can truly help you understand yourself, and the true nature of happiness.

I encourage all of you to try this. I follow this practice as much as I can, and it definitely brings a lot of benefit. It helps me to understand exactly where I am, what I have experienced in the past, and by doing so, it also helps me understand what may happen, the possibilities. In this way, this simple practice can help us understand the past, the present and the future. We feel confident, and can gain an insight into happiness.

I hope this is beneficial to all of you. I offer my aspirations and prayers, that we all are able to achieve Timeless Happiness. I pray that we will all gain clarity, and that we will all find the conditions to appreciate the connection that we have. I pray that we cultivate the conditions to realise the potential, that we have, the bond, that we all share such as the bond of family, the bond of friends. And I pray that this will grow not just Emotional Happiness, but Timeless Happiness in our world.

This is an edited transcript of a live-streamed public talk by Thaye Dorje, His Holiness the 17th Gyalwa Karmapa, which he gave on the occasion of the United Nations International Day of Happiness 2015.