

Karmapa's message for the UN International Day of Happiness

March 20, 2018

Thaye Dorje, His Holiness the 17th Gyalwa Karmapa, shares the following message on the occasion of the United Nations International Day of Happiness:



Dear all

Today is the United Nations International Day of Happiness.

I would like to start by offering my wishes for the happiness of all of you, and to invite you to reflect on the nature of happiness itself. After all, all of us are searching for 'happiness' in one way or another.

From a Buddhist perspective, while everyday matters are beneficial to celebrate, they are temporary by their nature. Therefore, it is important to reflect on what is timeless, and how a truly lasting happiness may be experienced.

Last week, I led a public meditation course based on an ancient work of literature 'The Way of the Bodhisattva', written by an Indian Buddhist called *Shantideva*. One of the main themes of this great text is awareness. As we were reflecting on the text, and trying to comprehend our many innate qualities, we came to a simple but powerful understanding:

Simply through the practice of awareness alone – without having to actually aim for happiness in any way – we were somehow able to experience, and realise in our own way, how we arrived at this thing we call the present. And through this experience, it gave birth to a timeless state: free of the burden of the past, and free of fear and expectations of the future.

Perhaps this is the happiness that we have been searching for? Due to this realisation, time seemed to disappear – it became almost irrelevant and, paradoxically, timeless.

It's quite possible that for some, this experience was so momentary, so short-lived, that the moment when we left the comfort and environment of the meditation hall, we were right back to where we started.

However, if I dare say so, in that moment we did see a glimpse of what Shantideva was trying convey through the technology of his teaching. Even though 'The Way of the Bodhisattva' was written at the beginning of the eighth century, the practice of vigilant introspection or awareness felt most relevant for us all. Through the practice of awareness, we were able to appreciate even our most basic functions, such as breathing, blinking and thinking. No matter how mundane or ordinary they might seem, this vigilant introspection brought very grounded experiences and an understanding that we are *here* in this very moment. We are not somewhere 'out there', in the far reaches of the universe in some insignificant place, like a blue dot around some other bright dots. We are here. We have arrived in this present moment.

Perhaps this is an amazing discovery. Perhaps not! But in any case it was a grounding experience, and it feels only appropriate to share this on the United Nations International Day of Happiness.

May this simple sharing of a moment, bring forth a certain sense of awakening to each and everyone, and help you to arrive in this moment we call 'now'.

With compassion

Thaye Dorje,
His Holiness the 17th Gyalwa Karmapa.