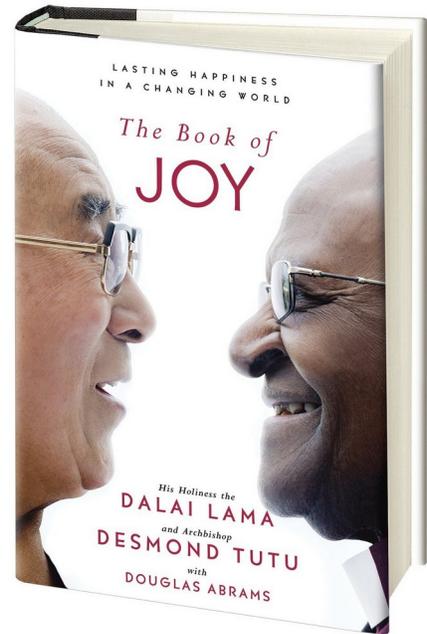


2.

Why Are You Not Morose?

Nothing Beautiful Comes Without Some Suffering

Have You Renounced Pleasure?



pp.29-30

Now we are in the twenty-first century. We are improving on the innovations of the twentieth century and continuing to improve our material world. While of course there are still a lot of poor people who do not have adequate food, generally the world is now highly developed. The problem is that our world and our education remain focused on external, materialistic values. We are not concerned enough with our inner values. Those who grow up with this kind of education live a materialistic life and eventually the whole society becomes materialistic.

p.30

we really need to focus on our inner values, our true humanity. [mind and heart]

We need, ultimately, to have a greater concern for others' well-being.

p.31

over one billion people on the planet are nonbelievers... They also have the right to become happier human beings and to be good members of the human family. So one need not depend on religious faith to educate our inner values.

p.34

Joy can span from the pleasure in others' good fortune, what Buddhists call *mudita*, to the pleasure in others' misfortune, what the Germans call *schadenfreude*. ...lasting joy – joy as a way of being – that one witnesses in the Archbishop and the Dalai Lama is probably closest to the “shining contentment” or the “spiritual radiance” born from deep well-being and benevolence.

p.36

when you experience some tragic situation, think about it. If there's no way to overcome the tragedy, then there is no use worrying too much.

p.37

not a denial of pain and suffering, but a shift in perspective – from oneself toward others, from anguish to compassion – seeing that others are suffering as well. The remarkable thing about what the Dalai Lama was describing is that as we recognize others' suffering and realize that we are not alone, our pain is lessened. [...] He was not contrasting his situation with others, but uniting his situation with others, enlarging his identity and seeing that he [was] not alone in his suffering.

pp.38-39

There's a Tibetan saying: 'Wherever you have friends, that's your country, and wherever you receive love, that's your home.' [...] Also, whoever gives you love, that's your parent.

p.43

One of the good things is realizing that you are not a solitary cell. You are part of a wonderful community. That's helped very greatly. As we were saying, if you are setting out to be joyful you are not going to end up joyful. You're going to find yourself turned in on yourself. It's like a flower. You open, you blossom, really because of other people. And I think some suffering, maybe even intense suffering, is a necessary ingredient for life, certainly for developing compassion.

p.45

It's one thing to understand the value of suffering, and quite another to remember it when you are angry or frustrated or in pain.

p.47

Too much self-centred thinking is the source of suffering. A compassionate concern for others' well-being is the source of happiness. [...] By simply shifting my focus to another person, which is what compassion does, my own pain was much less intense. This is how compassion works even at the physical level.

p.48

In fact, taking care of others, helping others, ultimately is the way to discover your own joy and to have a happy life. So that is what I call wise selfishness. [...]

All dharma teachings agree on one point – lessening one's self-absorption.

The text clarifies that when we focus on ourselves we are destined to be unhappy: "Contemplate that, as long as you are too focused on your self-importance and too caught up in thinking about how you are good or bad, you will experience suffering. Obsessing about getting what you want and avoiding what you don't want does not result in happiness."

p.49

According to Sonja Lyubomirsky, the three factors that seem to have the greatest influence on increasing our happiness are our ability to reframe our situation more positively, our ability to experience gratitude, and our choice to be kind and generous. [...] central pillars of joy.

p.51

while temporary enjoyment can come through our senses, it is inevitably fleeting and not the source of enduring satisfaction.

p.53

Tibetan Buddhist prayer said before a meal: Viewing this meal as a medicine, I shall enjoy it without greed or anger, not out of gluttony nor out of pride, not to fatten myself, but only to nourish my body.

[two different kinds of happiness]

enjoyment of pleasure through the senses... we can also experience happiness at the deeper level through our mind, such as through love, compassion, and generosity.

p.54

Even in the time of the Buddha, people would fall into the trap of thinking that sensory experience would bring them happiness.

That is the value of compassion, of having compassionate feelings for others. Even, you see, ten minutes or thirty minutes of meditating on compassion, on kindness for others, and you will see its effects all day. That's the way to maintain a calm and joyous mind.

p.55

In many ways, hedonism is the default philosophy of most people and certainly has become the dominant view of consumer "shop til you drop" culture.

pp.56-57

[Neuroscientist] Richard Davidson...has drawn together the neuroimaging research into a unified theory of the happy brain. [...] four independent brain circuits that influence our lasting well-being... "our ability to maintain positive states," "our ability to recover from negative states," "our ability to focus and avoid mind-wandering," "our ability to be generous." ...we come factory equipped for cooperation, compassion, and generosity.

Questions for reflection:

1. How might we focus on mind and heart over materialistic pursuits?
2. Can you describe when you have you experienced happiness, or joy, from concern for others?