

Happy New Moments
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Time takes on new meanings in the Buddha Dharma. As Shakyamuni Buddha explained it, it sounds so simple, so logical and yet, we human beings want guarantees of our time. When we say “Happy New Year’s” to someone we’re not just saying Happy New Year’s Day, we are including the entire year in that greeting, which is a kindly thought, if unrealistic. We are wishing folks a happy future.

How can we wish happiness for something that does not exist?

The Enlightened One explained it in this way regarding time. Past, no longer exists, the future has not come into being yet so, what is left? If you look at that statement about the past, it is true depending on what kind of hold the past has on us. We can experience something really traumatic or profound things in our lives some of which we carry with us throughout our lives and we give them the power to affect us.

I recently had a visit from a gentleman and his wife who were friends of Rev. Takahashi. Mrs. Yamada explained to them that Rev. Takahashi had transferred to Headquarters and taken a new position. Then she was kind enough to bring them over to the office to introduce me to them. Miss Amy brought the folks over saying “Sensei, I want you to meet these two folks who are visiting. This is our new minister Shaku Art Kaufmann”.

After exchanging greetings I invited them to take a seat so we could talk story. It turned out that the gentleman was a Viet Nam Veteran who had served there the year before I did, 1965. Even though it has been 52 years after the fact, it seemed as if we had to talk about it, at the very least to thank each other for our service and share a hand shake and a hug in gratitude for our mutual survival. We both realized that we did not survive on ourselves; our survival was due to inter-relatedness and inter-dependency of all service members over there. It has been half a century since that war.

Any family, or anyone, is concerned about the future, especially families. We feel that we must prepare for the future, for our children, our careers, vacations or any number of events, without having any idea what is going to happen in our lives. This comes from a deep abiding hopeful anticipation of the future. I guess it is a pretty natural thing for us to do, however, it can be dangerous if we depend too rigidly on those future plans. In truth we have very little control over what will happen in the future because, as the Buddha related, the future does not exist yet. If we do not open ourselves to the reality of change and impermanence in this life, we could really create some hard suffering for ourselves and others.

So, again I ask, if the past does not exist and the future has not yet come into existence, what is left?

All we really have is this present, now!

We must take care how much time we spend in the past or future because if we spend too much time in either time frame, we will miss living our lives in the only time we really have, the present.

So, a sincere Happy New Moments to us all!