

Long-term Wisdom

November 13, 2018

Close your eyes. Locate your breath. Where do you feel the breathing right now? Allow your attention to stay right there. Don't let it go anywhere else. If it does go somewhere else, just bring it right back. If it goes off again, bring it back again. Don't get discouraged, don't give up.

Focusing on the breath is something that's good right now and good on into the future. As the Buddha said, wisdom begins when you ask, "What, when I do it, will lead to my long-term welfare and happiness?" And it's the "long-term" there that makes that wise, plus the realization it's going to depend on your actions. So the question is, what do you do in the present moment that would lead to good long-term results?

Some things you can do in the present moment that would have good long-term results are not all that pleasant to do, but meditation is one that can be very pleasant. It may not be easy, but once you get the hang of it, it's a really good place to stay, right here in the present moment watching the breath coming in, going out, developing good qualities of mind that you'll be able to use later on. So this is something that's good now and on into the future.

You always have to keep that perspective in mind, because there are a lot of things that are pleasant in the present moment but lead to bad results down the line. We can't live just for the present. We have to have some heedfulness, we have to have some concern for ourselves. After all, down the line in the future: Who's going to be receiving the results of our actions? We will. So if you really care for yourself, you have to look after both the present moment *and* the future.

Meditation's a good way of doing that—that, together with being generous and being virtuous. These three qualities, the Buddha said, are another word for happiness. They're pleasant as you do them and pleasant in the long term. When you're generous, there's a sense that your mind is expanded. You're not narrowly concerned about your own affairs. You start thinking about other people and their needs. There's a spaciousness in the mind that can think about those things, that is happy to help.

The same with virtue. Sometimes it may be difficult in the beginning to go against your old habits that the Buddha said you shouldn't be doing, but once you get the hang of it, you find that it really is a lot more comfortable living in a world where you're not causing anybody any harm.

And the same with meditation. Once the mind gets used to being here, you realize that this is one of the greatest forms of happiness that you can create for yourself. And you *can* create it for yourself. You don't have to depend on things outside, and it gives benefits in the long term. All these things give benefits in the long term. So they're happy and wise at the same

time, taking care of the present *and* the future in a way that provides happiness in the present and the future as well.