An Infinite Perspective

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start with thoughts of goodwill we spread thoughts of goodwill at the beginning of the meditation for two reasons one is to establish our motivation to remind ourselves we’re looking for happiness that is blameless happiness that is harmless both for ourselves and for everyone else around us and that’s going to require a special effort harmful happiness is everywhere easy to find happiness is harmless for some and harmful for others is also relatively easy to find it’s a happiness that’s totally harmless that requires an effort because it has to be found totally within when we read about how it’s found sometimes it seems almost impossible very far away but then that relates to the second reason why we spread thoughts of goodwill it’s good to think about all living beings in all directions before you focus on your own issues you’re you as a living being right here think about the Buddha on the night of his awakening if you think you’re bringing stories to the meditation of your daily life think about all the stories he had as he was able to remember all his many many lives back for many eons the one thing that’s struck him about it was the pointlessness of all the ups and downs as he said for each life what did he remember such as his appearance such as his name such as food his experience of pleasure and pain such was his death the most lives are like that name, appearance, food, pleasure, pain, death it goes up and it goes down it goes up and goes down and we’re going to find any substance there that was the first knowledge that gave him a sense of samvega and the second knowledge he saw all the living beings in the universe all going through the same process he was able to see though that was based on their actions their intentions based on their views that was the process that kept the whole show going but it was again the pointlessness of it all the fact that it was not going anywhere people go up and go down the universe itself goes up and down and then it comes back and then it goes away again and there’s a lot of suffering and getting that larger perspective helped him gain his proper focus that given that the universe has no point means that your suffering doesn’t serve any purpose no one can tell you you have to suffer to serve the larger purposes of some creator being or some organic purpose of the universe the universe has no purpose which means that you’re free to find your own purpose so you have to ask yourself, is your purpose simply to come back again and have another name, another appearance another kind of food other pleasures, other pains, other ways of dying or do you want out? it’s by focusing in on the mind that the way out lies and it’s important not to think of awakening as far away because the prospect of true happiness in the cycle is even further away it’s just not there so here is a path and it does lead to true happiness we don’t know that for ourselves yet until we follow the path but we have good examples people have not only found that path but also been very willing to teach it for free and you compare that with the people who would pull you off the path some of the people who would pull you off the path are your dear loved ones and those relationships end as well we leave this life and it’s like shuffling a deck of cards someone who was your daughter suddenly becomes your father someone who was your son becomes your brother or a stranger the roles get shifted around so often that it’s hard to find any substance there so these are thoughts for you when you’re having your private moments when you put aside all of your responsibilities outside and you ask yourself what do I really want out of this life what do I want to accomplish you look at the accomplishments of the world and they seem to be designed to wash away as the forester johns always like to say the work of the world is never done what work you have done gets erased if you’re looking for a purpose out there and it’s hard to find but you can create a purpose inside you can decide I want to put an end to suffering put an end to all harmful behavior that I’m responsible for both inside and out and however long it takes doesn’t matter because the other path the path to looking for happiness inside the world is a lot longer and it doesn’t arrive it has way stations but as we try to find security in those way stations they get destroyed even though the path itself the path to awakening is fabricated and it comes together for a little bit and then it falls apart but there will come a point where it finally does come together and it yields its fruit and that is a moment of real meaning it means that something’s been accomplished at least one being has found the way out and continue to show the way to others as the Buddha said the Dharma lasts as long as people are practicing it when they stop practicing it they have a memory but then after all the memory goes so as long as you’re practicing you’re not only helping yourself you’re helping other people around you and you’re helping the Dharma be maintained so when you think thoughts of goodwill at the beginning of the meditation may all living beings be happy remember that it serves these two functions one it establishes your motivation and two it puts things into perspective that the times you’re able to put aside for meditation in your life are the times of real meaning and real direction which means that they should take priority over your other responsibilities your other duties don’t let your daily duties crowd out something you’re doing that does have real meaning something that can reach conclusion can reach completion so it’s good to think about these things on a regular basis and then focus back on your breath as the breath is the way out of course the breath itself has been coming in and out all along but it should bring this new relationship and this new understanding to your breath this simple process which in and of itself has no meaning can take you to something meaningful the fact that your breath is coming in going out it’s hard to interpret that as a sign of any accomplishment in the world or whatever kind of person you may be the breath just comes in goes out but if you bring the right relationship the right understanding to it this meaningless process can become the most meaningful thing you can do

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