

Decisions Informed with Purpose

March 23, 2017

Close your eyes and direct your attention to the breath. And don't let your attention go sneaking out in other directions. You want to be in charge of the direction that your mind takes.

There are lots of things coming up in the present moment that you could focus on, but you want to focus on something that's going to be useful, something that will give good results now and on into the future.

So any random thoughts that come up, you just let them go. The sounds outside, let them go. Just be with the sensation of the breath down into your body. Notice how far it goes. As you get more sensitive to the breath, you find that it goes all the way throughout the body. But for the time being, just focus on where it's clear. Make sure that this is your direction.

One of the things the Buddha realized on the night of his awakening was that the universe doesn't go anywhere. It evolves and then it devolves and then it evolves again and devolves. It goes back and forth, back and forth, around and around with the potential of never ending. Which means that there's nobody out there who's made up his mind that you have to fulfill his purpose in life or his purpose in directing the universe. You can have your own purpose.

So what is your purpose right now? It's good to stop and think about that. In the Buddha's case, it was a happiness that was blameless, a happiness that caused no harm to anybody, a happiness that would last. He realized that that kind of happiness was not just a hedonistic kind of pursuit. It required developing really good qualities of mind: wisdom, purity, compassion. Those are good things.

If you pursue your happiness in a wise way, then it becomes a blessing not only for you but also for the people around you. And a happiness like that is rare. For most of us, the things we gain in life, the way we take our pleasures, are just for us or for maybe a select circle. When you gain something, somebody else has to lose. But the pursuit of a true happiness, a happiness that's blameless, requires that you be generous, you be virtuous, and you train your mind to be discerning. And part of discernment is goodwill.

So these are all good things. They have an influence that spreads beyond you. It's the kind of happiness that spreads around, the kind of happiness that dissolves boundaries between people. So it's a happiness that's really worth pursuing.

So ask yourself, is that the direction you want to take or do you have another direction? The choice is yours.

The Buddha never forced anybody to follow his teachings. But he did note that there is suffering in life and sometimes the suffering forces us. We tend to look for happiness in things

that turn on us. Then the thought occurs to us, “Maybe there’s another kind of happiness, a happiness that doesn’t turn on you?”

Well, this is the path to that happiness. So it’s up to you to decide to direct yourself in this direction. If you stick with it, you find that it really does reward you—and that the happiness the Buddha talked about is real. It’s not just some pie in the sky. It’s an actual possibility. So let that possibility inform your decisions as you decide in which direction to go.