

Sincere Goodwill

April 6, 2017

The Buddha recommends spreading thoughts of goodwill every day. It helps to remind yourself why you're here practicing. You want a happiness that spreads around.

Because most pleasures in the world are consumed. When they're consumed, they're used up. The consumer gets them but nobody else. But the happiness that comes from generosity, the happiness that comes from virtue, that comes from meditation: that spreads around. You can consume that happiness and yet they don't get use up. There's plenty left over for other people, too. This is one of the few areas where your well-being doesn't conflict with somebody else's.

They talk about interconnectedness a lot. Well, interconnectedness is inter-eating. Inter-being is inter-eating. We have to take things from the world in order to survive. Otherwise we'd die. It's just built into the fact that we've got this body. Then on top of that the mind has all these desires that we're feeding on as well. And the Buddha said that that's suffering.

So we want to find a happiness that doesn't require feeding. When we're on the path, we can feed off of generosity, feed off of virtue, feed off of meditation. It's good feeding. It helps wean us away from the other ways we have of looking for happiness in feeding off the world. Because as I said, the happiness spreads around. When you're generous, you benefit, but the people who benefit from your generosity: They gain as well. When you're virtuous, you're giving yourself safety and you're giving safety to other beings. When you meditate, you're giving them even greater safety: You're trying to get your greed, aversion, and delusion in line, under control, so that they don't go prowling around the neighborhood. In that way, other people are less likely to suffer from your greed, aversion, and delusion, too.

So there you are: a happiness that spreads itself around. It's the best kind of happiness there is. In most cases, the pursuit of happiness is a hedonistic thing but this is not. This is actually a process that gives rise to noble qualities in the mind.

So remind yourself of that every day as you spread thoughts of goodwill: that the only way to be sincere in spreading goodwill is if you really practice. Otherwise, you spread goodwill and then you turn around and you feed off of somebody. But here you're spreading goodwill and you learn how to feed inside. Everybody benefits. So this is goodwill without hypocrisy, goodwill without any conflict. That's the best kind of happiness and the most sincere goodwill there is.