

Interconnected Suffering

October 11, 2012

Last week the weather was hot; this week it's cold. It's supposed to get hot again this weekend.

The world changes so much, so quickly. That's why we need to train the mind, because otherwise our happiness goes up and down with the conditions of the world. And the conditions of the world just do that: They don't really go to any one place and stay there. They keep spinning around. If we don't have a good solid center, we spin around with the world and get dizzy and have no idea of what's right and wrong, what's skillful and what's not skillful.

That's when we need to take the mind out of the world for a bit and bring it here to the breath. Be right here with the breath in the present moment because this is your anchor in the present moment. It gives you something to work with in the present moment as well.

Otherwise you get bored. We're used to the ups and downs, so when there aren't so many ups and downs, we get bored and then we go out looking for some more ups and downs outside.

So realize when you're looking at the breath coming in, going out: There are a lot of different ins and outs to the breath. And you want to explore them.

At the same time, you want to get to know your mind to see exactly why the mind wants to go out. When the breath is comfortable and you have a sense of well-being with the breath, then it's a lot easier to see that the going out is not so attractive. You go out because you think you're going to get some pleasure and usually it's because you're hungry for pleasure. Well, you've already got something good right here. It's actually okay. Be here with the breath.

It may not be exciting, but still it gives you a sense of well-being from which you can notice the hunger that pulls you out to go spinning around with the world again. But you know what hunger is like: You take food in and then it goes out. You take more in and it keeps going out. There's no real sense of satisfaction there. And the same goes for the things we try to feed on for emotional hunger or mental hungers. These things keep leaving us as well.

So you want to look inside to see: Is there something that doesn't have all these ups and downs? Something where you can really arrive, that really does have long-lasting value? That's what we're looking for inside, so that the mind's well-being doesn't have to depend on the ups and the downs of the world outside.

They talk about how everything is interconnected out there and how wonderful that interconnection is. Well look at the weather: Sometimes it's nice here and it's miserable someplace else or it's nice there and it's miserable here. Those things are interconnected and they're all very unstable.

Just because things are interconnected doesn't mean that everybody in the interconnected parts loves one another, or what's good for one side is good for another side. As the Buddha pointed out, these interconnections are actually the cause of suffering.

So we want to get to a place where the mind doesn't have to be interconnected like that. That's what we're looking for. This goes against our nature in a lot of ways because we're so used to the ups and downs and the instabilities.

But when you get a taste of that unconnected, unconditioned side though, you realize that there's nothing out there that can compare.