

## *Choosing the Practice*

*January 16, 2013*

We're here because we're looking for a happiness that lasts longer than ordinary happiness. The pleasures of the world all have their ends, so you have to look inside to find something that's more lasting than that.

This is why we meditate: to look inside, to develop the strengths we need to look deeper inside, to find what potentials there are there that can give us a happiness that's not going to change.

This is one of the reasons why the Buddha has us reflect before doing concentration. There's a series of exercises that he taught to Rahula before he taught Rahula breath meditation, and a lot of them have to do with insight. It's a case of discernment fostering concentration, where you stop and think about all the places your mind could be going for the next hour and realize that they're all going to offer disappointments in one way or another.

That makes it easier to stay right here.

So it's good to reflect on these things every day. This is why the Buddha said you want to reflect on that chant that "Aging is normal, illness is normal, death is normal. We haven't gone beyond these things. We're subject to these things. We're subject to separation from all the things we hold dear." Then he has us conclude with that reflection on karma: that if we're going to find any happiness in life, it has to depend on our actions.

But our actions can also create a lot of trouble. So you have to be really careful about what you're doing, and this is another reason why you have to train the mind. After all, your actions come out of your mind. It's the intentions of the mind that determine what you're going to do and say and think.

So you reflect on these things to basically paint the mind into a corner: seeing that this is the one place where you're going to find any happiness. Fortunately, it's not a corner: It looks like a corner to begin with, but actually there's a big opening right there.

So when you find the meditation beginning to flag, remind yourself: What are the alternatives out there? Look at them in a realistic way. It's so easy to paint them as being pleasurable, "This is going to be a lot of fun, that's going to be a lot of fun." But then they all end. And what do you have left? And sometimes when they end, they don't end nicely, neatly. There are a lot of messy endings in the world.

So it's good to reflect on that—not to get you depressed but to remind yourself that you do have a choice. You could choose to go after those things or you could

choose to develop the mind so that it can find a happiness that's at a much higher level.

And here you've got the opportunity. Right here you've got the time, you've got the surroundings that are conducive. So make the most of the time that you've got.