

Making Up the Lack

October 23, 2013

The weather can change pretty dramatically—and this is in the range of relatively mild changes. Sometimes the changes are a lot more extreme.

This is what happens when you have a body. You're subject to the elements outside. So you have to realize that a happiness that depends on the body is not one that you can really trust.

For that kind of happiness, you have to look inside the mind. You have to develop the qualities you need in the mind to be happy whatever happens to the body. That's a really necessary skill.

If they taught necessary things in school, this would be one of the number one things we'd need to learn: how not to suffer from the changes in the body. But in school they're not concerned with teaching us the things that we really need to know for the well-being of the mind. They have other agendas, other priorities.

But we can make this our priority. We've got to learn this skill, so that when the body ages, the mind doesn't get upset. When the body gets ill, it doesn't get upset. When it dies: If you can be in a good mood when you die, you're in a much better position than most of the world.

So look into these qualities. How strong is your mindfulness, how strong is your alertness, how strong are your concentration and your discernment? These are the things that will carry you through. These are the things that will protect you.

After all, when the body's born, it's not only exposed but it's also got a lot of lack. We need food, we need clothing, we need shelter, we need medicine: all the more reason that we need to find something inside where there is no lack, where the mind has a sense of enough.

When you can develop that skill, then you've got something that can protect you wherever you go.

So it's not just a matter of outside dangers. There are the dangers in the body and even the dangers in the mind: These are the things we've got to watch out for.

This is why the Buddha's last teaching was to be heedful. Notice he didn't say, "Accept." I don't know how many people say this is Buddha's main teaching: Just to accept the way things are. That's not the way he was. He basically railed against the way things are, he wanted to go beyond the way things are, but to get there he learned how to make use of the way things are.

The way things normally are is that people have just birth, aging, illness and death, over and over again. There's a lot of suffering right there.

He wanted to find a way out of that suffering. So his last teachings were to be heedful: to be "heedful in achieving completion."

In other words, you realize that there's still something lacking here and you need to make up the lack.

So always keep that thought in mind. It's what motivates us to look into the present moment. We're not looking into the present moment because the present moment is okay. It's because this is where the work needs to be done, and where there's an opening to something much better.

The results of looking here will come now and on into the future.