

The Buddha's Example

January 14, 2014

You may have noticed we do a lot of bowing around here. We try to develop an attitude of respect, because what the Buddha teaches us is to respect our own potential for true happiness.

That's something that the world tends to look down on and to deny. So when we're bowing down to the Buddha, we're bowing down to the fact that human beings can find true happiness, and he's a good example to take in that direction. You want to respect that example.

Otherwise, it's so easy to be taken over by the attitude of the world, which is that happiness is something that you can gain through possessions or status. In particular, they want us to buy their things, or to fight over the status that they offer.

But where does that get us? It's denying the possibility for a genuine happiness, because as everybody knows, things disintegrate. Either they go first or you go first. The same with status. It's all very fickle.

Yet somehow they say, "Buddhism is pessimistic." Well, it's not pessimistic at all. It's very optimistic about the fact that human beings have this potential where they can develop their inner qualities and find true happiness as a result.

That's what you want to respect. When you bow down to the Buddha, you're also bowing down to your own potential for true happiness. You want to look at what your attitude toward happiness is.

Happiness, of course, is not just running around grinning. It's a sense of deep well-being inside. This is why we meditate: to find that potential within each of us.

You look the story of the Buddha's life: He developed qualities that everybody can develop. That's how he gained awakening. That's how he gained release. So it's good to remember that story.

Otherwise, we tend to live by other people's stories. In fact, it's a good exercise to stop and ask yourself, "Okay, whose story am I following? Whose example am I following?"

The Buddha sets the example of someone who can find true happiness by digging within. Is that an example you want to follow? To what extent is your life following that and to what extent is it going after other ideas of happiness? It's good to reflect on this regularly.

You'd think that happiness would be something everybody would take seriously. We all want happiness of one kind or another. What kind of happiness is

genuine? What kind of happiness really gives satisfaction? Very few people stop to think about that.

So take the time, as you meditate, to think where your happiness lies and what your ideas of happiness are—and where you really want to invest your time and energy to get the best results.