

The Way Out

May 1, 2014

Try to take care of your little space right here. The human mind can know all kinds of things. Huge things. It can know all the way out through the Universe, all the way back almost to the Big Bang. Yet there's so little we can actually control. And there's a lot of suffering that comes with that if you're not careful. You can see all the suffering of the world, and it can get overwhelming.

But think about what the Buddha did. He saw beings dying and being reborn in line with their karma. In a lot of cases it was not a pretty sight: There are very few people who get to be reborn as devas and human beings, and an awful lot who go to the lower realms.

He did the best thing possible, which was to get himself out of that, and show other people that they can get themselves out, too. That's his best gift.

They say he could have been a king, he could have been an emperor. Kings and emperors have a lot of power, but not nearly as much power as a Buddha. Because kings and emperors reign for only a short period of time, and who knows exactly how much they can actually affect in terms of changing things. Then what they do gets wiped out: Think of King Asoka. He could see as he was dying that his heirs were not going to be able to maintain the goodness he had tried to establish.

But the Buddha had something better than just ordinary goodness: He had greatness, and he opened the way to greatness to others. Total release available to all those who want it—if you work at it. And in showing that this was the best way, that was his best gift to the world.

So when you think of all the things you can't change—like the wind out there, who knows how much longer it's going to blow and how much damage it's going to do?—what can you do? You take shelter and then when the wind is over, you come out and check out what can be done. In the meantime, you've got to develop a lot of equanimity.

Well, the winds of the world are even bigger than this wind. There's war, there's disease, there are all kinds of horrible things happening out there. The best thing we can do is find a way out and show others that there is this way out, so that they can take advantage of it, too. That way you keep your priorities straight, and you focus your attention on what really can be done: the most effective things that can be done, the best things, the most compassionate things that can be done.

Don't let your time and energy be wasted with things that you can't control. There's a lot we can know but there's so little we can control: So you focus on

what you can control and make the best of that—because that actually leads to a freedom that's even bigger than the winds of the world.