

Escaping the Fires

May 15, 2014

Give the mind a little time to settle down. Be with the breath.

Because it spends so much of its time wandering around, it needs to rest, to gather its strength, in a place where it's not constantly being bombarded by things.

Yesterday we had fires all around us. But as the Buddha said, our eyes are on fire, our ears, our nose, tongue, body, mind are on fire all the time if we let greed, aversion, and delusion take them over.

So the problem comes not only from outside but also from inside.

Greed comes up in the mind: It burns our eyes and it burns our ears. Anger comes up, delusion comes up: These things burn us.

So we have to find a good cool place to rest. That's why we bring the mind into the breath, allowing the breath to be comfortable. There's no greed, aversion, or delusion right here—or if there is, it's very minimal. It gives the mind a chance to settle down, to escape some of the fires of the world if this is your safe place.

As long as your mind is still flammable, you have to be very careful. It's bad enough that we have these things coming up from within us but then there are things outside that we latch onto: This looks pretty, that looks nice, you want to get this, you hate this, you want to get rid of that. That's even more fire. It's like adding more fuel to the fires inside.

So this place where you can get away from the fuel, get away from the fires, allows you to see things for what they are. You can get a sense of what's actually going on. The worst part, of course, is that there's a lot of delusion involved in our fires. We don't even see them, don't even realize how much we're being burned by them.

But when the mind finally gets cool like this, settles down with the breath, that's when you begin to gain a sense of how normally hot and burning the mind is.

So give it this place to settle down and be cool for a while. Protect yourself from the fires inside and the fires outside. This is your safe place. It has to be taken care of, though. Be very careful around it.

Because the real place that's secure is something that's way beyond this. But this is the path there. So maintain this as carefully as you can.

It's like having your escape route and there's flammable material on either side of the route. As long as you stay focused on the route, you're okay.