

Free from Your Burdens

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If someone could take a picture of the mind, often it would be like a person just weighed down with luggage: carrying things in your hands, under the arms, on top of your head, on your shoulders. Then you complain that the world is heavy. Well, what's heavy are the things that you've been picking up, the things that you've been weighing yourself down with: That's what's heavy. If you didn't hold on to them, they wouldn't weigh you down.

This is the basic principle of freedom. Even in the Buddha's image of nibbana: The fire is attached to its fuel. It can't get away from its fuel as long as it holds on to the fuel.

So freedom comes from letting go. It's not that the other things are holding on to you. You're holding to them. So you have to learn how to see this. As you're sitting here and the mind feels burdened with something, ask yourself, "Why am I holding on to that?" The mind doesn't have hands to hold on to things with, but it does repeat things over and over and over again. It has this feeling of compulsion: That's the holding on.

So how can you learn to let go of that? You don't have to think the thoughts that weigh you down. You don't have to worry about the things that weigh you down.

See if you can get the mind still enough to see that the world isn't weighing on you. You're picking up the world and trying to carry it around. But when you can put it down, you find that you're free. You can stand tall.

It's like those workers they used to have on the docks in Bangkok. They'd carry loads all day, all day. Then when they stopped carrying the loads, they would walk around all bent over because that was the posture they were used to. But we don't have to walk like that. We can learn to stand straight. Yet we have to recognize again that it's not the world that's weighing on us. We're picking it up. And then we complain that it's heavy.

So try to see where you're picking it up and realize that you can free yourself from a lot of burdens if you just put them down. Even areas where you do have a daily responsibility: You don't have to carry the responsibility around all the time. When there's work to be done, you do it. When the work is done, put it down. That way the mind can get accustomed to standing up straight.