

Focus on the Good

October 23, 2014

Every day, the Buddha has us ask, “Days and nights fly past, fly past. What am I becoming?” We should try to be able to answer, “I’m becoming a better person.”

How do you become a better person? By doing good every day. Each morning, you’ve got an opportunity to do good. Think of that as what the day offers.

As for what you did yesterday, put that aside. Or what you did last week, last year, whatever: Put that aside.

You’ve got the opportunity right now to do as much good as you can. You want to make the most of that opportunity because our human days are numbered. It’s not as if we have an infinite number of days on this Earth. The problem is we don’t know the number, but we do know we’ve got today.

So ask yourself, “What qualities of mind do you need to develop so that if you did have to leave today you’d be able to leave without any regrets?” Go work on those qualities.

There’s a whole list of paramis, the perfections that the Buddha himself worked on to become awakened. You can ask yourself: Which of those qualities are you lacking in? In generosity, virtue, equanimity, renunciation, goodwill, discernment, endurance? There are lots of good qualities to work on.

Not all of them are fun to work on, not all of them are enjoyable, but they’re good qualities to be able to build within yourself, because that’s what you can take with you when you go. And that’s what you can depend on when you look after yourself.

We’ve all made mistakes in the past, but we’ve all done some good things, too. Focus on the good things. Those are what give you strength to keep on doing more good things. If you focus on the bad things you’ve done, you just start spiralling down and it’s hard to pull yourself up.

So focus on the good that you’ve done. Dedicate that to your future, dedicate that to the people you’ve harmed in the past, so that you can live in this world without a sense that you’ve got a big debt. You’re working on paying off your debts, so work at it every day, every day.

Each day is an opportunity, an opportunity to do good or evil. People are doing all kinds of evil out there. But you want to make it your opportunity to do good because you don’t know how many more opportunities like this you’re going to have.

So make the most of this opportunity while you have it.