

Treasured Possessions

November 9, 2014

Close your eyes. And keep your mind focused right here in the present moment. Don't lean to the future; don't lean to the past. In other words, don't try to anticipate what's going to happen and don't dwell on what's happened in the past. Try to focus on what's actually happening right now, what you're doing right now.

This is called sitting up straight in the present moment without leaning in any direction. Because the mind does tend to lean: not only to past and future but also toward lots of unskillful thoughts.

After all, sometimes it is okay to think about the future. You have to think about the future, you have to plan: That's what our sense of heedfulness is all about. And you learn by looking at the past regarding your past actions, seeing what you did that was skillful and what was not, and trying to figure out how you can improve in the future. That kind of leaning past and future is okay.

But there are other kinds of leaning that we do as well. We lean toward the things we desire and away from the things we hate. We also lean through the power of delusion; we lean through the power of fear.

Of the four ways of leaning, the last is the probably the most dangerous. As they say, people in an insane asylum who are motivated by fear are the most dangerous ones. The ones who are angry are not nearly as likely to do something destructive as the ones who are afraid. When you're afraid, you can't think straight at all. All you can see are enemies all around you. You feel that you're being threatened by something, and as a result you can do and say and think all kinds of things for what you feel is your own preservation.

As the Buddha said, there are lots of things in life that we try to preserve. We try to preserve our wealth, we try to preserve our health, we try to preserve our relatives. But, he says, when we lose those things it's not nearly as bad as losing your virtue or losing your right view.

So we can't let these things pull us in their direction. We can't lean in their direction. We've got to learn how to keep the mind sitting up straight, to see that what you do is the most important thing and if you act in a way that's unskillful it's going to have lots of bad consequences down the line: some of which you can't see yet but they're going to be there.

So you have to remember, of the things that you have, that the ones most worth preserving are those that nobody else can take away. You have your right

view. You don't have to give in to other people's wrong view. You have your virtue. You don't have to give into someone else's request or encouragement that you break the precepts. These are things that you keep that nobody else can take. But if you don't keep them, then they're not going to stay.

So keep this in mind, that you've got to preserve your virtue and your right view as your most important possessions. As for the other things in the world, even though we may love them, there are times when we have to leave them. That's the way it is in the world. If we don't leave them while we're alive, we leave them when we die. So don't try to hang on to them in ways that cause you to lose your most important possessions, the possessions that keep your mind sitting up straight.

Your right view: as the Buddha says, "views made straight." And your precepts: precepts that are appealing to the noble ones. In other words, if they looked at your behavior, they'd be pleased by your behavior. That's the kind of treasure you have that you want to hold on to above all else.

So don't let the power of fear or desire or anger or delusion pull you away from these things. You want to keep your mind sitting up straight and right view sitting up straight in the virtues of the noble ones.

That way, you're on the path, on the path to true freedom, the path to true freedom from suffering, the path to true happiness. You want to follow that path straight all the way through.