

Looking for Safety Inside

February 19, 2015

Close your eyes. Think of the qualities of mind you want to develop.

You want to be alert, so try to be really clear about the breath coming in, the breath going out.

You want the mind to be still. You want it to be at peace, which means that whatever else comes up, you don't have to pay attention to it. You can cast aside all the noise outside. Just let it go right through you without having any impact on you. Like the breeze going through a screen on a window: The breeze goes through, but the screen isn't affected by it.

And you want the mind to be at ease with itself. So if any other conflicting thoughts come up, you don't have to deal with them at the moment. Just give the mind a chance to settle down and have its own sense of safety right here inside.

Because you look at the world outside and there are a lot of things going on that are not really all that safe. People say, "Well, if everybody got together and we were all nice to one another, everything would be fine."

But as the Buddha pointed out, even if it rained gold coins there wouldn't be enough for the sensual desires of the human heart. So if your desires go out in that direction, you're bound to get disappointed.

So you look for safety inside. As long as you open yourself up to wanting this and wanting that out of the world outside, it's going to do you a lot of harm.

It's not that we don't realize that we have responsibilities out there, but we do realize that our first responsibility is to our mind. You have to look after that first.

If your mind is in bad shape, then everything else is in miserable shape. If your mind is in good shape, then even when things outside don't go the way you want them to, you've still got your mind inside. That's what's really yours.

As the Buddha said, the things of the world belong to the world. They don't belong to us. But your actions do belong to you.

Ajaan Suwat used to point this out. He'd comment on all the things the Buddha talks about as being not-self, but then he says that your actions are yours, you're the heir to your actions.

So focus your attention on your actions. What kind of actions is your mind doing right now? Make sure that those actions aren't causing you any trouble.

If you let your mind go wandering off in all kinds of moods, then you're taking the one thing that you should be able to have some control over and you're using it to cause yourself suffering.

So try to get some control over the mind so that it stays with an object that's really good for it: the qualities of the Buddha, the qualities of the Dhamma, the qualities of the Sangha that you can build inside.

That's when you've got something you can really depend on. That's when you've got something that's really safe.