

Forgiveness

April 27, 2015

When you meditate, you have to keep the mind occupied. So keep it occupied with the breath.

If you just try to make it empty and open when it's not really ready for that level of stillness, it's like opening the door to your house: All kinds of things are going to come in—thoughts about the future, thoughts about the past. This person did that to you, this person is going to do this to you. Or things you did to other people.

So to keep that stuff from coming in, try to stay focused with the breath. Get interested in the breath.

After all, the breath energy is here to nourish your entire body. So you can ask yourself, "Is it doing its full job?" Probably not, so help it along.

Then sometimes you're with the breath but other thoughts keep coming back. That's when you have to use more than just your ability to replace them with thoughts of the breath. You have to think about their drawbacks—particularly with thoughts about what other people have done.

One of the basic forms of generosity is giving your forgiveness. Forgiveness doesn't mean that you have to love the person or that you necessarily want to have any more dealings with the person, simply that you're not going to keep planning revenge for whatever harm that person has done. You just want to leave that person be.

We've been in this world many, many, many times over. If you were to keep a scorecard of our rights and wrongs, who knows when you would start keeping score? And what's the use of that scorecard?

It's as the Buddha said: We have an arrow shot into us and then we turn around and just shoot ourselves with lots of more arrows.

All these thoughts of what this person did or what that person did: Those are like more and more arrows that we shoot ourselves with. They did the things, but we're shooting ourselves. Is this really appropriate?

Or somebody says something and you take it and you think it over, "That person shouldn't have said that." It might be true they shouldn't have said that. But what does that mean?

As the Buddha has you reflect, there are many types of human speech out there: Kind speech and unkind speech are everywhere in the human realm. So try to depersonalize the unkind things people have said to you. Things are like this all

over.

Which doesn't mean that you just roll over every time something happens. But it means while you're sitting here and dealing with your own mind, you don't want this sort of stuff to come cluttering it up. You want to be able to clear it away so that the mind has some space of its own. It helps you get some perspective.

So if simply working with the breath isn't enough to keep these thoughts away, start thinking about the drawbacks of thinking those things. The first drawback of course is that you're making yourself miserable. That thinking really doesn't settle anything at all.

There may be a little bit of pleasure that comes from feeling victimized, but that's a pretty bad pleasure. There's a lot greater pleasure that can come with getting the mind to be trained so that it can rise above things and be able to forgive people for what they've done, forgive yourself for what you've done.

That way we can live with ourselves and with one another a lot more easily.

If you want to go beyond just forgiveness, then there's the reconciliation. That means going and finding the person and sorting things out.

But for the time being on your side, you can give forgiveness as much as you want.

It's interesting: Forgiveness is cheap, it doesn't cost any money, and yet sometimes it's the hardest thing to give.

So do your best to uproot any thoughts of ill will toward people who've harmed you, or just the fact that you're constantly harping on people who've harmed you or whatever. There are a lot better things for the mind to be doing right now.