

Protecting Your Actions

May 20, 2016

Close your eyes and watch your breath. Watch it all the way in, all the way out. Make sure your mind really stays here.

Put some extra effort in today. After all, today is Visakha Puja: the day we commemorate the Buddha's birth, his awakening, and his passing away to enter total nibbana.

As he said, the best way to show homage to him is to do the practice. So, sit down and practice.

We take refuge in the Buddha as an example. The real refuge is what we find inside as we practice. And while we're practicing, one of the things we have to protect with our refuge is our actions, in the sense that the Buddha gives a good example for how a person should act in life. The Dhamma gives instructions on how it's done. And the noble Sangha has shown that it wasn't just the Buddha who could do this. There were many people over the course of the millennia who've been practicing this and gotten good results. So that's the outside example.

But it's when you take it in: That's when the refuge becomes true. Because your most important possessions are your actions. Your actions are among the few things that the Buddha actually says are yours. Ajaan Suwat used to point this out. He said, "So many things the Buddha says are not-self, not-self, but then you get to your actions and he says, 'We're the owners of our actions.'" These are your real valuables.

So what's the shape of your valuables? If you took them out of a cabinet and put them out on the table, what would you see? You'd probably see a real mixed bag: good and bad, all kinds of things jumbled together. We've got to learn how to protect our actions. The bad ones we can let go, and the good ones we want to nurture, we want to protect.

We protect them by remembering the example of the Buddha, the Dhamma, and the Sangha, because they show us what human beings can do. They show us where real happiness lies: things of real worth, as the Buddha said. The real heartwood of the Dhamma is the release that comes inside as a result of the practice.

Now, that doesn't need protecting. That becomes your refuge. Ultimately that doesn't need protecting when it's done, but to get there you have to protect your actions. Because they're the things that make the difference between whether you're going to get anywhere in life or if you just going to be paddling around in a

little tiny puddle, going nowhere at all.

So ask yourself what you want out of life. What are you going to do with your life? Every year when events like this come around, they remind you: A whole year has passed since the last time around. What's changed in there? What's better? Has anything gotten worse? If anything's gotten worse in terms of your actions, you've got extra work you've got to do. If things have been good, try to maintain that goodness.

The goodness of your good thoughts, good words, and good deeds: Those things are your true valuables. You want to protect them as best you can.