

An Island in the Flood

July 6, 2016

It's a short time to meditate here right before the meal. But don't underestimate it. Every skillful intention you have is something that should be encouraged, because that makes it more and more a habit for the mind. You have a few little free moments here, free moments there, okay, put a little meditation in. Your mind gets to settle down. It gets to have something of solid worth.

As we go through life, there's so much that just gets washed around. Trends come, trends go. Ideas come, ideas go. Relationships come, relationships go. We need something solid that we can depend on. Otherwise, we get washed around with everything else.

You know what happens with water currents: Sometimes they get into whirlpools; sometimes they get into waterfalls. It's not a good place to be, getting washed around like that.

This is why there are a lot of images in the Buddha's teachings about an island rising out of the flood, or a tree with solid heartwood. You want something really solid inside that you can hold onto, that you can depend on.

If people accuse you of being attached to the idea of something solid, at least you're attached to something good. Otherwise, you get attached to things that flow around a lot. You get swept away. But being attached to something good and solid in the mind: That's actually your way to safety.

So, try to get the mind firmly planted in the breath and have a strong sense that you want to stay here in the present moment. If you're going to leave the present moment to think about something else, make sure you're leaving for a good purpose. But being established right here puts you in a good position where you can make the choice a clear-eyed choice.

All too often we just get swept away without even realizing it. Something comes up and we just go with it. We're like a little boat that just goes with whatever current comes our way. We don't have any rudder, we don't have any oars. We just get swept around. But as we meditate, we're getting a rudder, we're getting oars, and we're heading straight for an island, straight for something solid.

So remember, the ways of the world get washed around. There's gain and then there's loss. There's status and there's loss of status. There's praise and criticism. Pleasure and pain. These things come in pairs. And they alternate. They just go around and around and around like that. It's the whirlpool of the world.

So don't let yourself get swept into these things. Get a rudder, get some oars,

and get out of the whirlpool. Get yourself to a place of safety.