

Going Forth

July 16, 2016

Close your eyes and watch your breath.

Put aside all your other thoughts right now. See if you can stay focused on the sensation of the breath coming in, going out. Notice where you feel it.

And by “breath,” here, we don’t mean just the air coming in and out through the nose. It’s also the movement of the body that allows the breath to come in and go out. So wherever you feel anything associated with the breath and it’s clear, focus your attention there. See how long you can stay there.

Other things will come up, but you just want to just put them aside. You don’t have to think them right now.

Think of your mind as going forth. Today we’re having a ceremony where two members of the community are going forth, which means they’re leaving the values of the household life and taking on the values of finding true happiness in the heart. That’s what all of this is all about.

Even though you may not be able to go forth in body, it’s still possible to go forth in mind. Right now let everything in your household life be put aside. All your concerns and worries about the day—family, work, whatever: Give the mind some time to be by itself, to get to know itself.

That’s one of the advantages of a life gone forth: You really get to know yourself well. You get more control over the mind so that greed, aversion, and delusion aren’t allowed out to bother the neighborhood.

It’s as if we have tigers inside the mind. All too often we just let them out and they ransack the neighborhood, causing a lot of problems. As we meditate, we learn how to keep them caged up inside so that we can learn how to study them and eventually they’re going to die. This kind of death doesn’t matter. The death of your greed, the death of your aversion, the death of your delusion is nothing to be regretted.

The Buddha was once asked if there was any case where it was okay to kill. He said it’s okay to kill your anger.

So here’s an opportunity to straighten out something that you are responsible for. There are so many things in the world that we’re not responsible for, that we know about and we get messed up in, get involved in. Yet the things that we really are responsible for—our own thoughts, words, and deeds—tend to get neglected. Here’s a chance to focus on things that you really are responsible for, and to put aside your concerns about other things for the time being.

Let your mind go forth. Now, going forth doesn't mean it doesn't have a home. The home here now becomes the breath, the sense of well-being that you can develop with the breath inside. You can breathe in ways that are long or short, heavy, light. You can experiment with what kind of breathing feels good right now.

This is a potential that we all have and yet we tend to neglect it. The breath is just the breath—that's what we think—and it's going to do its own thing. But you can actually direct it in a good direction. When anger comes up, you can breathe calmly, and that helps to cool down the anger. When lust comes up, you can breathe through the different patterns of tension in the body, and that allows the lust to subside.

The breath gives you a handle on all kinds of things. So learn how to explore it.

That's what the life gone forth is all about: learning to explore what you've got inside: all these good potentials that you can use to counteract the bad potentials and come out winning. It's a victorious life as well.

Most of us, when we die, lose out to our greed, aversion, and delusion. We've lived a life and yet we haven't taken care of these things. But if you have the opportunity to clean out yourself inside, that's a victory. Then you have a lot to share with everyone else, much more than you would have otherwise.

This is why it's community event, not just the two people going forth. The whole community is involved: in supporting their decision, in supporting their desire to straighten themselves out and then be able to share what they've learned with all the rest of us. So we all benefit all-around.

The more of us who can go forth in mind, the better the place the world is going to be: good for us and good for everyone around us.