

All-around Practice

July 26, 2016

When we work on our minds, it's an all-around job. It's not just when we're sitting here with our eyes closed but also as we're going through life. We have to look at what we're doing, what we're saying, what we're thinking, making sure that we're not harming ourselves, not harming anybody else.

After all we're looking for a true happiness, and true happiness has to come from within. It also means that you don't want to prejudice other people's happiness either. You want to give space for their ability to find happiness within themselves.

This is what the principle of admirable friendship is all about. You want to be a good example to others so that your presence is actually helping them with their practice. And their presence helps you.

So, try to be sensitive all around to what you do, what you say, what you think. Because it's an entire practice.

Years back, I was reading a book by a sociologist who had studied a Thai temple outside of Philadelphia and then a meditation center in Boston. She was talking about how the people in Boston kept wondering about the Thai temple: The people there didn't seem to be meditating. What kind of practice did they have? But as the author pointed out to them, "Well, there's generosity and there's virtue, all these other elements of the path that are not encompassed simply by sitting with your eyes closed." Now, it is important that you get to know your own mind, but a good way to know your own mind is not just as your eyes are closed but also when you're dealing with other people.

So remember: This is an all-around practice. We're trying to develop all the perfections, all the factors of the path, because it's only when they're all developed that any of them develop properly.

Otherwise, you're the sort of person who exercises just one set of muscles in your body and the other muscles get atrophied. You get all out of balance. And the strength just in that one set of muscles is not really a well-grounded strength, either.

It's when all the elements of the path pitch together to help one another that they all become strong.

So try to maintain a sense of balance both inside and out. Or as Ajaan Lee would say, when you live in a monastery make sure your eyes are as large as the monastery. You look inside your mind: Make sure your eyes inside are as large as

the mind. Make sure that your vision encompasses everything so that everything has a chance to grow properly.