

An Attitude of Respect

July 30, 2016

We've come here because we're looking for a special kind of happiness: a happiness that doesn't change, a happiness that harms no one.

That kind of happiness is hard to find in the world. There are lots of ways you can find happiness that change and happiness that harms other people or harms yourself, but the causes for a true, harmless happiness: Those are special.

So when you come to be generous and observe the precepts and to meditate, treat these activities with respect because they show a respect for your desire for a happiness that's not going to let you down.

When you're generous, be careful in how you're being generous. In other words, give in a way that you feel that the gift is going to be well-used—and you're not harming yourself, you're not harming others in giving the gift. Sometimes you borrow a lot of money to give a gift and that doesn't help you. Give in a way that's not going to harm anybody.

The same with the precepts: You want to be very careful about the precepts. They have lots of implications for areas of our lives where we tend to be sloppy. So be very careful about your precepts, even with little tiny animals. They have their lives. They don't want their lives snuffed out. They're just like you in that way. Show a little respect for that. In other words, be circumspect in what you do, in how you interact with other people, other beings.

The same when you meditate. Give your whole attention to the meditation. Focus right on the breath and let the breath have your full attention. It's this quality of attention that allows you to see things you didn't see before.

Otherwise you just go through life just seeing things that you expect to see. You see something and you immediately file away in some area where you've already got a little file. Actually, there are plenty things in life that don't have a file yet. You should be open for that.

As you learn how to ask questions and look carefully at what you're doing as you focus on the breath, the breath coming in, going out, there are lots of things to see here, both in the breath and even more so in the mind. As you're trying to get the mind to settle down, you come to a lot of understanding by being very careful.

So treat the meditation with respect; treat generosity, treat virtue with respect, because these things are our lifeline for a genuine happiness. Without these things, the pleasures of the world really have no meaning or substance. But with generosity, with virtue and with meditation, things begin to have meaning, they

begin to have substance. They become something you can depend on. So, show them the respect they deserve.

This is one of the reasons why we bow down to the Buddha, because he teaches us to respect the good things in life, the things that respect our desire for happiness.

There are so many voices in the world that tell you, “Don’t look for true happiness. Look for the pleasures we’re going to sell you.” They’re basically telling you to forget about your desire for true happiness and look for other things.

But here the Dhamma’s saying, “Hey, respect your desire for true happiness and respect the things that will give true happiness.” If you go through life with a sense of respect like this, that’s genuine intelligence because you’ve got your priorities straight. You know the things that you have to give yourself extra for. And the happiness that comes from that is going to be extra, too: extra special.