

Goodness

August 5, 2016

When you make up your mind to focus on the breath, you're creating goodness in the mind.

This goodness is what we take as our refuge. When the Buddha says that the self is its own refuge, you can be your own refuge only when you can depend on yourself by developing good qualities inside. So that's what we're doing right now: developing good qualities inside.

It's kind of a shame in our society right now: When they talk about goodness, they usually think about good cakes and good pastries. I did a search one time in Amazon and just typed in "Goodness" to see what kind of books would come out. It was all about recipes. The word has lost its meaning in our society.

But even though it's abused in our society, we want to make sure that genuine goodness of the heart is what we develop inside. That's our refuge. That's what we can depend on. You want to make it solid, so that it really is dependable even in times of hardship.

The thing about this goodness is that it doesn't hold its goodness only for you. You learn to "look after yourself with ease," as they say in the chant that we repeat every day. It means you're less of a burden on other people. People who can't look after themselves are heavy on other people. They don't have the ability to help other people when they're going through their hardships.

So think of this as something you do for yourself *and* for other people. It's one of those rare forms of happiness that doesn't create divisions and it's not limited. The goodness spreads around. The happiness spreads around.

And it starts right here, as you focus on the breath and make up your mind to stay right here. Once you're true to that original intention, that quality of truth is what makes your goodness solid and reliable. Without it, it's just a nice idea but then it just washes away. So try to stick with it. Be true in your good intentions and true in carrying them out.

And also be true in gauging the results. Sometimes we think something is good but then we discover, after we've acted on it, that it's not quite as good as we thought. Well, you can go back and make adjustments. You can learn.

This is how the Buddha gained awakening. He knew how to learn from his mistakes. So we take his example, one, to avoid the mistakes that he made, then two, to take that principle of how to look at your actions with a fair state of mind and decide what needs to be improved so that the goodness becomes stronger and

more reliable still.

So when you're sitting here with your eyes closed and someone asks you, "What are you doing?" you can say, "I'm doing good, creating goodness." Because that's what you're actually doing.