

Exercising Singleness

August 25, 2016

Close your eyes and gather your mind around the breath.

The mind tends to wander off in all kinds of places. Sometimes it's like a whole herd of minds with lots of different places to check out all the time. It's a real burden on the mind to have to be thinking about lots of different things all at once.

That's why the Buddha has you think about one thing as a way of resting the mind. Think about the breath. Any other thoughts come in, you don't have to pay them any attention. They're not your responsibility right now.

The mind has to develop this attitude of having some time where it doesn't have to be responsible. That's when it gets a sense of its own self. And you begin to see what's actually going on inside the mind. Otherwise our outside responsibilities come in and they overwhelm the mind, they obscure the mind so you can't really see what's happening in there. This issue has to be taken care of; that one has to be taken care of. You're responsible for this person and that person. The mind rarely gets a chance to know itself.

So let everything else go now. This is your time just to be right here, thinking about one thing. It's this one thing that gives the mind strength. The mind gets to rest, it gets to develop good qualities, strengthen good qualities.

Exercising the mind is the opposite of exercising the body. Exercising the body, you've got to move it around a lot. But with the mind, you exercise it by making it stay with one thing and then bringing all your powers of mindfulness and alertness to bear on keeping it with that one thing, keeping it still, so that it can gain a sense of well-being inside. If there's no well-being inside, we go looking for it outside. Outside has little bits and pieces to offer but nothing of any really solid value.

Even the members of our family can't offer us the happiness we want. We have to look inside to find that kind of happiness.

And it can grow as you get very, very still. This is what waters the quality of well-being in the mind: the stillness that you can develop.

So learn how to be a little bit irresponsible right now. Let the world go. It doesn't need you. After a while there will be a point where it's going to go on without you anyhow, so you might as well get used to that fact *now*, because when it's going to go on without you, you're going to go your own way. And what are you going to take with you? You're going to take the mind.

So you want to make sure the mind is in good shape so it's not scattered all

over the place in an event like that. If our normal, everyday mind is scattered, you can imagine what it's going to be like when you realize that you can't stay in this body anymore. You've got to get it so that it stays firm and solid and one, no matter what's happening outside or inside. That's when you can really begin to trust the mind.

So work on developing this sense of oneness. The world won't tell you to do this. Their education, their media, pull you out in all other kinds of directions. But for the sake of your own well-being, this is what you've got to do.

This is why this message that the Buddha gave 2,600 years ago is still being passed on. From generation to generation, people have found that this is the message that provides for your true well-being in spite of the demands of the world.