

Overflowing Happiness

October 8, 2016

Close your eyes and watch your breath. Watch it all the way in; watch it all the way out.

When you meditate like this, it's called *bhavana*, which means to develop. You're developing good qualities in the mind. It's a way of making merit—in other words, finding a happiness that doesn't cause any harm: doesn't harm yourself, doesn't harm others. In fact, the goodness of this happiness actually spills out and helps other people.

It's not like a lot of the sensual pleasures in the world. You eat something, nobody else gets to taste it. You use something, nobody else gets to use it. But with the happiness that comes from generosity and virtue and meditation, other people benefit, too.

Your generosity: They receive gifts from you, and you gain the perfection of generosity. With virtue: Other people don't have to be afraid that you're going to harm them, they benefit. With meditation: You get some control over the greed, aversion, and delusion in your own mind. That means there's less that's going to spill out into your actions, so the people around you are safe from that as well.

So we try to find this kind of happiness as much as we can. All the conflict in the world comes from people looking for the kind of happiness where one person gains, other people have to lose. No wonder people are constantly fighting all the time. But when you develop the qualities where everybody wins, there's no need for conflict. So you dedicate this merit to others, and there's no conflict. It comes out of a good quality of the mind.

So try to develop these good qualities of the mind as much as you can. As when you're meditating like this: You're developing mindfulness, i.e., your ability to keep something in mind; alertness; and ardency. Alertness is when you know what you're doing. Ardency is when you try your best to do it well. You can take those qualities and bring them into the rest of your life as well. Whatever you see that you've been doing that's not skillful, you can change.

That's one of the pieces of good news in the Buddha's teachings: We're not stuck the way we are. We can change the way we are, change the way we act, so that we create a better world around us.

So when you're making merit like this, you benefit, other people benefit, too. Other people who see the goodness of what you're doing: All they have to do is encourage you or appreciate what you're doing and they gain benefits as well. They

begin to see there's a good example here in the human race. And it spreads not only to people who are alive but also to people who have passed away.

So this kind of goodness spreads around, so we try to create as much of this goodness as we can. It's a happiness that's good, in the sense that it has no drawbacks. And everybody benefits. That kind of happiness is rare.

So try to create as much of it as you can, because that's your protection now and on into future lives. That's what makes the world a better place to be.