

Looking after Yourself & Others

July 27, 2017

Close your eyes, watch your breath.

As you look after your breath, you're looking after your mind. In other words, you're getting it focused, you're getting it settled, putting it in a place where it can see things more clearly and can be more dependable for itself—and also more dependable for others.

As you develop good qualities of the mind, there are influences that spread out and influence other people too. When there's less greed, aversion, and delusion in your mind, there's less greed, aversion, and delusion that's going to go out and pester the neighbors.

But at the same time, the Buddha says, by looking after others you also look after yourself, through acts of kindness, through patience. You look around and see what other people are doing, see what they need. If there's any way you can help, you're happy to help. That attitude will be to your benefit.

As for the mistreatment you get from other people, the Buddha says to learn how to bear it with some patience and equanimity. Everybody has their moods. When you have your moods, you want other people to be patient with you. Well, you should be patient with them. And being patient like that and developing equanimity, developing a solid state of mind: that can maintain a sense of wanting to be kind, still, in spite of difficulties. You're going to benefit from that, too.

So look around you. See what ways you can help other people, because it's going to be good for you, in the same way that by looking after your mind the good influence is going to spread out.

Goodness is like this. It doesn't have clear boundaries. It overflows boundaries, leads the mind to being unlimited—especially if it's the goodness that comes from generosity, virtue, and developing good qualities of the mind. That's the kind of goodness that creates harmony in society. The goodness that's measured in terms of money, wealth, status creates a lot of divisions. When some people have, other people are deprived, and there's a division right there. But with the goodness that comes from generosity, virtue, and meditation, everybody benefits. This can be the basis for harmony in society.

So in looking after your true well-being, you're also looking after the well-being of others. And vice versa. Always keep that principle in mind.

So as you're living here in the monastery, as Ajaan Lee said, make your eyes as big as the monastery. Look around, see what impact your actions are having on other people and make sure it's a good impact. Make room for them, too.