

Unburdensomeness

December 23, 2017

It's always interesting every year to see the number of people who escape from the holiday season by coming here. You'd think a time of joy and peace, generosity and goodwill, would be a pleasant time to be in American society. But it's awfully stressful. You need to get away from the enforced cheerfulness to get some real peace inside.

So let the mind settle down. As for your concerns outside, concerns inside, just put them aside for the time being. Just be with the breath in the present moment. Put aside all your responsibilities.

It's not that you're being irresponsible when you do this. You're learning how to take care of your own mind so that it doesn't have to depend on things outside being a certain way. That way, when you approach the world, you can do it in a responsible way. In other words, you know that you've got within you the resources you need for your own well-being, so you don't need to take anything away from anyone else. You don't need to place demands on other people—that things have to be this way, have to be that way—because you've developed your own resources inside.

In that way, you place a lot less of a burden on others. This quality of unburdensomeness is one of the important things that lets you know whether an idea or a teaching is in line with the Dhamma or opposed to the Dhamma. You take on your own burdens without placing them on other people.

In this way, you're being responsible. They may want you to behave in a certain way to fit in with the season, but that's just their desire. Your real desire—the desire that deserves respect—is one to find true happiness inside, something where you can depend on yourself and you can be self-reliant.

That's what we come here for: this ability to train ourselves, to learn how to depend on ourselves, so that when we return to the world, we return with a sense of responsibility, knowing that we've taken care of our own business. And whatever extra energy we may have, we're happy to share.

In this way, we can go through the world without being a burden on anyone at all. Our mind knows how to pick up burdens and how to put them down. Even with your own burdens there comes a point where you put them down as well.

But when you start placing them on other people, that's not in line with the Dhamma. You're not really showing goodwill, or happiness, or all the other emotions that are supposed to be associated with this season.

You're learning how to show true goodwill for yourself, find some true peace in yourself. This is a generous gift, both to yourself and to the world around you.

