

Peace & Goodwill Start Inside

December 25, 2017

Close your eyes and watch your breath. Breathe easily coming in. Let the breath go out on its own. You don't have to force it out.

There's a tendency when we're focusing on the breath to try to control it too much. If the breath is not comfortable, just think, "Maybe longer might be good," and see if the body responds. Or shorter. Deeper. More shallow. Heavier. Lighter. Just pose that thought in the mind. You don't have to put a lot of effort into the breathing. Whatever effort there is goes into the in-breath. Let the out-breath go on its own.

You want to learn how to be on good terms with your breath. After all, it is the force of life. So see what it needs; see what the body needs right now in terms of the breath. This way you give yourself a good place to stay inside. You can be at peace inside.

This is the day when they keep announcing, "Peace and goodwill. Peace and goodwill." Well, the peace and the goodwill have to start inside first. So try to bring the body and the mind together on good terms.

The body may not be perfect, the mind may not be perfect, but at least have them get along. If we wait for perfection there's never going to be any peace in the world at all. This is why we have problems outside. People want things to be "just so" outside, and if they're not that way, then they get upset. And then there's no peace.

This is why peace has to come from contentment. There may be some limits to how far you can improve it, but learn how to be content with what you've got. Because it's good enough. If we wait for perfection, you're in the wrong world. Peace in the human world means learning how to find some contentment and how to develop your own inner resources. The more you can develop your inner resources, the less you're going to need outside. So work on these.

In this way, instead of struggling and fighting over the world outside, you learn how to find some peace inside. Then the peace begins to spread out. This is where peace comes from.

At the same time you're showing goodwill, both for yourself and for the people around you. Goodwill means wishing for true happiness, and realizing that it has to come from your actions. So you work on your actions: What are you doing? What are you saying? What are you thinking?

And you meditate on the breath. This gives the mind a good place to stay so that you can watch things. If you make a mistake you can realize, "Okay, this was a mistake," and then you figure out, "What can I do next time around not to repeat that mistake?" When your mind is in a good mood like this, it's in a much better position to figure out what needs to be done and be willing to do it.

So give the mind a good place to stay, so that you can have some peace and can spread goodwill, and have your actions actually be in line with your goodwill. As the Buddha said, spreading goodwill depends on having a sense of enough, along with a sense of patience, a sense of endurance.

In this way, our goodwill spreads around, our happiness spreads around, because the happiness that comes from practicing the Dhamma is a happiness that doesn't have any boundaries. It's a goodwill that's universal. It's a sense of peace such that, even though not everybody in the world is going to be peaceful, at least the people who are touched by your life are going to find peace from your source.

This is how peace gets spread around in the world, so that the message of peace and goodwill actually does become a reality, and not just a few words.