

Truthfulness

January 3, 2018

Make up your mind that you're going to stick with the breath and really stay with it.

This quality of truthfulness, *sacca*, doesn't mean just saying true things. It also means when you've made up your mind to do something, you really stick with it. The things that you have to do you don't like to do, you learn how to talk yourself into *wanting* to do them. This is an important part of the practice. You can force yourself against your will to do something, but it's a lot more intelligent to make yourself *want* to do something that's good, because force can last only so long. When there's an understanding, when there's a desire to stick with something, then it's a lot easier. As for things that you like to do that are going to give bad results down the line, okay, you have to learn how to talk yourself into *not* liking them. You have to see their bad side. This way it makes it a lot easier to stick with your determination.

The new year's celebrations are over, and now there comes the job of living in the new year. The days are not that much different from the old year, but there should be a sense of a fresh beginning. That helps to clear the air and remind yourself that you have made some resolutions for how you want to improve the year—in particular, to improve your own actions: Where are you still causing unnecessary suffering to yourself, unnecessary suffering to others? What can you do to change? When you see there's something you *can* change, you do your best to do it, and don't just sit there and say, "Well, maybe someday it'll happen," or, "I'm not ready for that yet." That's one very easy way of putting things off so that they never get done.

The things the Buddha asks you to do, the things he asks you to give up, are not all that hard. It's simply a question of whether you *want* to or not. So make sure that you train yourself to *want* to do what's skillful and *want* to abandon what's unskillful. Learn to have some conversations and negotiations with the different committee members in the mind that are being recalcitrant. That way, this quality of truthfulness really does become one of *your* qualities.

You look at the ajaans. All of them made up their mind to do something and they did it. They didn't talk about the difficulties involved, but they would talk about how to get your energy up. When you see how they encourage other people to practice, you can see how they would probably encourage themselves to do it. In some of the cases, they just roused up their fighting spirit. In other cases, they said to themselves, "We can learn to use our defilements in a skillful way." For example, your desire for pleasure. You can use that desire to want yourself to have a pleasure that lasts. Your desire to be free from suffering is a really useful desire. Even though it may be desire and someday you're going to have to abandon that, you abandon it only when the suffering's actually gone. In the meantime, you use it.

You learn how to use your sense of humor, learn how to use your sense of shame, your sense of heedfulness: all the things in the mind that can be used to learn how to persuade yourself to *want* to do what you know is skillful and to *want* to abandon what is unskillful.

In that way, not only the causes for happiness that you want, but also the results will become true, as you develop and strengthen this quality of truthfulness.