

## *Hurtful Words*

*March 11, 2018*

Close your eyes and focus on your breath. Try to stay with the breath all the way in, all the way out.

As for any distractions, just let them go, let them go. Don't react to them. Thoughts come into the mind: If you try to chase them down it's like chasing your shadow. The more you chase it, the more it runs away. So just stay with the breath. The thoughts can come, but you have to make your mind impervious to them, non-reactive, because you've got to stay with this one thing. If you're trying to accomplish something good, you're going to meet up with obstacles. It's normal. This is the way it is in the world outside as well. We try to do good but there are going to be obstacles. We have to learn how to be enduring.

The Buddha talks about having endurance in two things: one, in terms of physical pain; and the other, in terms of hurtful words. For many of us, the hurtful words hurt more, because we can stab ourselves with them for years afterwards. A physical pain can come and it goes. But somebody says something hurtful and we can stab ourselves day after day for a long time afterwards.

So he says you have to learn how to think in new ways about it. Try to make your goodwill as large as the earth, make your patience as large as the earth, and take it as something normal. He says to think about the way human beings speak: There are people who speak kindly and there's unkind speech; there's true speech and untrue speech; useful, useless speech. These are the normal ways of speech in the world. So when someone says something hurtful or untrue about you, say, "Well, this is just normal. This is the way it is in the human race. And who asked me to be born here? I was the one who wanted to be born." So here you are, this is what the human race is like. This is what comes as part and parcel of being part of the human condition. So you have to train your mind to not react.

One of the ways the Buddha has you think about this is that when someone says something hurtful, you say, "An unpleasant sound has made contact at the ear." And just leave it at that. You realize that the unpleasant sound doesn't really hurt that much, it's what we say to ourselves about it afterwards. Most people's minds, he says, are like gongs. You hit the gong and it rings for a long time. Someone says something harmful about you and it rings in your mind for a long time afterwards. So learn how to keep it right there at the contact at the ear and just drop it right there.

And again, try to make your endurance, your goodwill as large as the earth. People can come and they can dig in the earth and they can spit on the earth and do all kinds of things on the earth, but the earth still is earth. It doesn't change because it's so much bigger. Make your

attitude of patience bigger than the events around you. Make your goodwill for other beings and goodwill for yourself bigger than the events around you. Then it's easier to take.

Or you can think about your mind as like a large river, and someone comes with a torch and they try to burn the river up. Of course, the river puts out the torch. It gets warm a little bit but then the torch has to be extinguished. In the same way, they can come and say horrible things about you, but as long as you're not picking up what they've said and using it to stab yourself, the words have to just disappear.

If you're afraid of what other people might think about you, if you're the sort of person who runs around trying to clean up your reputation all the time, they'll notice that more than they'll notice what the other person said. People who have eyes will look and consider for themselves. It's not like everybody believes everything that's said. So you don't have to worry about things that are said about you.

Take care of your own mind because that's the important thing. You don't want your mind to be upset by things or stirred up by these things. Otherwise they lie in wait for you when you're feeling weak, and that's the last time you need to be stirred up by stuff like this.

So strengthen your endurance, and also strengthen your wisdom around your endurance. Remember that sounds come, sounds go. You want to make sure that your mind stays the same. This is the normal way of the human race. If you don't like unkind speech, hurtful speech, untrue speech, find some other place to be born. But for the time being, you're here right now. So just take this as something normal. When you see it outside as normal, your mind can stay normal as well.

That's how your goodness doesn't get shattered, doesn't get wounded by these things. You can still make up your mind, "I'm going to do good in this world, regardless of what other people say." As long as you know for sure that it's good, stick with it. Don't let other people's opinions get in the way. After all, the goodness you do will be yours. The words they say are *theirs*, so leave them as theirs, and things are a lot more peaceful in the world.