

Keeping the Mind Cool

August 7, 2018

Close your eyes and watch your breath. Try to find one spot in the body where you can stay focused and watch the breath go past.

Ask yourself, does the breath feel good at this spot? You can change the rhythm, and see what that does. Make it heavier, lighter, deeper, more shallow, longer, shorter. But try to stay focused, keep the mind still.

When the mind is still, then it can cool down. You may have noticed on the afternoons when you go back to your hut, when you go back to your room, that the room may be cool when you first go in there but that by the time you leave it's getting hot and stuffy. Part of that problem, of course, is the heat coming in through the walls from outside, but part of the problem is just you: Your body's generating heat, radiating heat.

And the mind is the same way. The mind radiates heat. It radiates greed, aversion and delusion. Delusion heats up the world. The world is already hot enough as it is, not only in terms of the weather but in terms of people's attitudes. As we're meditating, we're learning how not to add any more heat—or at least to add the minimum amount of heat—to our surroundings. That way, we help the world cool down a bit. When the mind is still, it's a lot cooler than when it's running around.

So give the mind a place where it can be still and also have a sense of well-being. If you simply force it to be still without giving it something good, it's going to want to run away. So give it a comfortable breath. Once the breath gets comfortable, you can think of that comfort spreading out to fill the whole body, so that even though you're focused on one spot, you're aware of the whole body, and the whole body feels good. It feels nourished by the breath. That way, what you're radiating now is a sense of well-being all around. You benefit, the people around you benefit.

So in spite of the heat of the world, we don't have to heat things up any more than is already out there. And maybe we can have a cooling influence, so we help put out the fires of the world by putting out our own inner fires first.