

## *The Mind is the Forerunner*

*August 9, 2018*

Close your eyes and find something peaceful to think about. Like your breath: the breath is coming in, it's going out. There's no great excitement there. You *can* make it comfortable: You can make it more comfortable than what it is, so that it gives you something to get interested in.

Remind yourself that you have a choice: You can choose the way you breathe, you can choose what you're going to focus on. We're not totally at the mercy of things outside. In fact, as the Buddha said, *mano-pubbangama dhamma*, all experiences have the mind as their forerunner. Instead of thinking of yourself as being victimized by the weather, the smoke or whatever, think of yourself as more in charge. You can decide where you're going to focus, what you're going to do with what you're focusing on to give the mind something good to feed on.

It's as if we have a garden in the back of our house, with seeds that we've been planting over the years: Some of them are sprouting right now; some of them are not. You have to choose among the things that are sprouting and then from that you make your food. If you're good at making good food, even with bad seeds or bad plants, you can make something good, like the expert cooks who can take all kinds of weird things and make them into good food. You want to be a good cook of your experience. And for the time being, you want to choose the best that you've got coming up in your garden.

So what's the best thing coming in your garden? You've got the breath coming in, going out; you've got your determination to train the mind: Those are things you want to protect, and those are the basis of your skill as a cook of your present moment. So choose your ingredients well, choose your methods well. Even though the garden is producing weeds, you can still make good food of what you've got. You might find some plants in there that you'd forgotten about, some good things you'd forgotten about, so bring those out.

We can always think thoughts of goodwill: goodwill for ourselves, goodwill for all beings. When the Buddha was suffering from the pain of having his foot pierced by a splinter of rock, that's how he spent his time: with goodwill for all beings—not focusing on what was unpleasant, focusing instead on the good that he could create out of his mind. You've got good potentials inside. You can create something good out of them, too.