

## *Cleanliness*

*May 8, 2021*

Breathe in, breathe out. Think of the breath sweeping through the whole body, cleaning everything out. All the cobwebs, all the little patterns of tension: Sweep them all out.

The Buddha talks about making yourself clean, and it's not so much making the body clean—although he does advise the monks to keep their huts clean and keep their places clean. But the important cleanliness is the cleanliness of your thoughts, your words, and your deeds.

Cleanliness in your deeds is not killing, not stealing, not having illicit sex. Cleanliness in your words is not speaking falsely, not speaking divisively, not speaking harshly, not engaging in idle chatter. And cleanliness in the mind is not giving in to inordinate greed, not harbouring thoughts of ill will, and trying to develop right view: that your actions really do make a difference, that the quality of the action will determine the quality of the results you're going to be experiencing.

When you think this way, your mind is clean. When you speak this way, avoiding those wrong forms of speech, your words are clean. And when you follow the three precepts that have to do with the body, your body is clean, your actions are clean. When they're clean, they're not the place where germs can thrive.

The “germs” here are greed, aversion, and delusion. If you engage in actions that are not skillful and you take that as normal, then that condition allows germs to thrive. Greed has lots of room to thrive here; anger and delusion have lots of room to thrive. Then, of course, when you sit down to meditate, you've got a diseased mind.

So, as you go through the day, remember that the way you live your day is going to determine how well your meditation is going to go. And the way you meditate will, in turn, have some influence on the events of the day. So, try to get a sense of well-being right here. It's a lot easier to be clean in your thoughts and words and deeds when the mind does have a place to rest. And of course, you can rest easily when everything is clean.

So, as we keep the place clean around here, remember it's not just the place, we are trying to keep clean. We're trying to keep our thoughts, words, and deeds clean as well. That way, the germs of greed, aversion, and delusion won't have a chance to thrive. When they show up even a little bit, we can recognize them for what they are. The problem with having a lot of dirt in your mind—a lot of dirt in your thoughts, your words, and your deeds—is that germs are there and it seems perfectly normal. You look around and everyone else is that

way; so that *must* be the way it should be. But just because everybody else is that way doesn't mean that it should be that way.

That's not how the Buddha defined normalcy. Normalcy is the mind that doesn't engage in activities like that. It's a mind at peace. That, for him, is the mind at normalcy. When you're speaking to one another, if you speak in harsh ways, if you speak in ways that are divisive, that's abnormal. If you make it *your* normalcy, then greed, aversion, and delusion will have better chance to thrive. So, keep your place clean.

Remember Ajaan Fuang's analogy: If you keep your thoughts, words, and deeds clean, then if the slightest bit of dust or dirt comes in, you're going to spot it immediately. And you're going to see: "That is dust, that is dirt, that is new, that was not there before, it's here now, I have to get rid of it." But if you don't keep things clean, then layer after layer after layer, dust will come in and you won't notice it at all, because it's just added to what's already there.

So this matter of keeping clean is something you do all day long, every day. Clean your words, clean your thoughts, clean your deeds, and the mind will be able to be here in the present moment with a lot more comfort and ease.