

A Safe Refuge Inside

January 11, 2016

We live in a world where there are a lot of dangers.

The only really safe place is inside the mind.

But for most of us we look inside our mind, and that's not very safe either, because it's been gathering up all kinds of garbage from the world outside. So you have to clean it out.

When you breathe in, think of the breath sweeping through the body, getting rid of the tension and tightness that you may have picked up going through the day. Then as new thoughts come in, you can sweep those out as well.

For the time being, whatever thought there is that's not related to the breath, just let it go, let it go. It's not what you want right now. You want a sense of stability and well-being inside.

Voices will come up in the mind, saying, "I want to think about this, I want to think about that." You have to say, "Nope, nope, nope." This is a time to give the mind some time to be on its own. It's the only way you're going to gain any refuge in this life.

You look around at what you've got outside: There's gain and then there's loss; there's status and loss of status; there's praise and criticism; pleasure and pain. That's pretty much all the world has to offer. It dresses these things up in different ways, so we think that we're getting new things, but it comes down basically to these eight.

And you notice they come in pairs. If you're not careful, you're going to get hit by both sides: the good side and the bad side. When the good side hits you, you start floating up. You forget yourself and get complacent. When the bad side hits, you get really depressed.

So you've got to learn how to find a refuge inside, because you can't take refuge in those things. You can, however, take refuge in the stillness of the mind, the clarity of the mind.

Then you have to use your discernment to fight off the tendencies to want to go back to your old ways.

So there's a little bit of a battle in here as you settle down, but the rewards are really great. At the very least, you can clear a little space for yourself inside so that no matter what comes your way, you've got a place where you can evade it. You don't have to get hit by everything the world sends your way—or by everything the mind sends up in response.

You can step back and watch and not get involved.

If something comes up that you really do have to deal with, you're coming from a position of strength: your quiet place inside, what Ajaan Suwat used to call "a quiet corner." Try and maintain that quiet corner in your mind, because that's your refuge, that's your safety, both in the face of dangers outside and of dangers inside.