

You Can Take It With You

December 28, 2012

Close your eyes and watch your breath coming in, going out. This is the breath of life. So allow it to come in and out comfortably.

Because this is the basic force in your life, it only stands to reason that if it feels good for the body, feels good for the mind, it's going to be good for their health. So try to breathe in a way that feels really good for the body and allows the mind to be soothed. The mind needs a good place to stay like this.

The mind is what shapes our life. If it's coming from a good place, then it's going to act and speak and think in good ways. If it's coming from a place of disease, then it's not going to be so inclined to speak skillfully, act skillfully, or think skillfully. So try to focus on creating this sense of well-being in the present moment because it's good for you and for the people around you. When you come from a good quiet place, when you come from a good sense of well-being, the things you say to other people, the things you do with other people, the things you think about them, are much more likely to be done with goodwill, done with a sense of care.

When people say that meditation is selfish, they don't know what they're talking about. It's a gift. Because you have to train the mind. We're born into this world and what do we have to depend on? We had our parents to begin with, but then they grow old and pass away. We've got this body, which also grows old and is going to pass away. What can you depend on aside from the qualities you build into the mind? Those are the things you can take with you all the time. So look at what qualities you've got in the mind.

There's a whole list of what the Buddhist tradition calls *paramis*, perfections. There's generosity, virtue, renunciation, patience or endurance, truthfulness, effort and energy, determination, goodwill and equanimity. These qualities are good for the mind. These are qualities that keep it strong. You carry them with you wherever you go, even as you leave this life. When you come into this life, you bring them with you; when you go on to the next life, you take what you've got. There's nothing else you can take with you, so make sure that you develop these qualities as much as you can.

And this is a good place to start: getting the mind in the right place, with a sense of well-being, so that when you're acting, you're not acting out of frustration, you're not acting out of fear. You're acting out of a sense of solid security inside. That's what you can build by developing the mind.

This is the treasure that you *can* take with you, so make sure that this treasure is good. You don't want to get to the other side and open up your suitcase and find nothing but junk, nothing but rocks weighing you down. You want good things that'll help you.

Particularly the quality of discernment: If you have discernment, as Ajaan Lee says, then even if you have nothing but a machete to your name, you can still set yourself up in life. So work on developing your discernment as to what's skillful and what's not skillful, what's worthwhile and what's not worthwhile, because that's the knowledge that will take you far.