

Harmony Inside & Out

November 29, 2015

Close your eyes and watch your breath.

Try to keep your mind with the body, with the breath: all the way in, all the way out. Don't go running off someplace else.

You want to bring the body and mind together on good terms.

We all want peace in life, but it has to start inside. If your mind and your body are not on good terms with each other, if there's no harmony between the two, then there's conflict inside. That conflict then tends to go out and infect your relationships with people around you.

So try to bring some harmony in here. In other words, you stay with the breath, watch over the breath and adjust it so that it feels good. Don't force things too much. If you force it too much, the body's going to react. But if you leave the body alone, then the body's going to be abandoned. So you want to keep them together on harmonious terms.

Once you've got some harmony inside, then it's a lot easier to find harmony outside because there's not that sense of conflict or irritation inside. So why would you go out and create a lot of trouble outside? The reason people create a lot of trouble outside is they don't have much inner peace.

Peace has to come from harmony. Harmony has to come from justice and fairness. You want to be fair with the body. At the same time, you want to be fair outside.

This is one of the reasons why the Buddha teaches the precepts as a basis for practicing meditation. If you've been unfair with other people—killing, stealing, lying—then when you sit down, you've got a mind that's been doing that kind of stuff. It's at conflict with itself because its normalcy is not really at normalcy. It's been doing things that are outside of normal.

As the Buddha said, *sila* means not only virtue but it also normalcy. You want this to be your normal state of mind. When you're not following this, it's abnormal. Of course, we look at the world around us and it's full of abnormalities of this sort. You wonder whose normal we're talking about.

Let's talk about the Buddha's normal. Let's take his standards for what's normal for the mind. He says we're not harming anybody. We're not harming ourselves, we're not harming other people. When you've lived your life this way, then when the time comes to meditate, it's a lot easier to settle down—because again, there's not a lot of conflict inside.

So if we want to overcome conflict, we do it first by observing the precepts outside and also by getting some peace between our body and mind inside. Get to know your breath, get to know your breath well. Notice what it needs and provide what it needs. It's not all that hard. Just give it some attention. Keep the attention continuous and you'll find that the breath smoothes out. Other parts of the body get nourished as a result.

Then you're at peace with yourself and at peace with people around you. If we wait for peace to come in from outside, we'll wait till our dying day and it's not going to come, because we can't control the activities of other people.

As Ajaan Suwat used to say, each of us has one person in this world. In other words, we have ourselves that we have to look after. If we have children, we look after them up to a point, but we begin to realize pretty quickly that they have minds of their own. You can't totally control them. But you should be able to exert some control over yourself. If you can't control yourself, what do you have left? Nothing.

So exert some control to the mind. Bring it into harmony with the body.

As for the world outside, whether it picks up the influence of your goodness, that's up to them. But you do your best to make sure that your goodness inside is solid.