

The Value of Human Life

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To meditate is to train the mind. We train it by giving it an object to stay with, to see how long it can stay, how long it listens to us when we say, "You stay here."

As you try to stay in one place, you're going to run into problems. But that's how the meditation helps give rise to discernment: allowing you to see the problems and figure out how to get around them. If there's pain in the body, how do you not suffer from the pain? Pain in the mind: How do you not get involved with the pain in the mind?

It's possible. These are problems we can solve. These are challenges we can meet.

This is what makes human life worthwhile: that we deal with the challenges. We don't run away from them. We take on whatever challenges we feel we're able to handle and sometimes push ourselves a little bit more than we think we're able to handle.

Otherwise, just life goes on, goes on, goes on, and then it stops. But if you figure out, "What's wrong with the mind? Why can't the mind stay in one place?" you learn a lot of valuable things.

As human beings we have this opportunity. There are a lot of levels of being where they don't have that opportunity. Even on the human level there are a lot of people who don't have time to sit very still and look at their own minds. Hunger and poverty push them, wrong views push them away from seeing their own minds.

But here we've got the opportunity. This is what makes human beings noble: We can look at our suffering and not have to wallow in it or get sucked into it. We can figure out a way out.

So as long as you've got breath, make use of it. Look to see what you can learn about the mind each time you breathe in, each time you breathe out.

It's in rising to challenges that we ennoble the mind, and this is an ennobling practice. We're looking for something of solid value, something where we don't have to keep on feeding off the world. In the course of that, we do a lot of good for the world. But what really makes it noble is the fact that the mind, when it reaches ultimate happiness, doesn't have to feed, doesn't have to take anything away from anyone else. There's no harm involved to anybody at all. As long as we have the opportunity to search for that and find it, that's what makes life noble.

So value your life because it gives you these opportunities.