

Go Ahead and Rain

January 8, 2018

There's a passage in the Canon where a monk is in his hut, and it's beginning to rain. He says, "My hut is well-thatched, closed against the wind. So if you want to go ahead, rain-god, go ahead and rain!"

Of course, the hut here stands for your mind, its ability to not be disturbed by things outside, or even things in the body, anything exterior to the mind. You have to have a place within the mind where you're safe from the effects of things outside. As for the hut, in the original image that monk is an arahant, so his mind is totally safe. Our minds are not totally safe yet, but at least we can provide some shelter for ourselves as we get a place inside where we can be still, and the voice that says to drop all thoughts really is control.

If you're going to think, think about the breath, think about being here in the present moment. But as for the things that come up, good or bad, you have to learn how to look at them with some sense of distance, to be protected from the effects they can have on you. Otherwise, they can ravage your mind, ravage your health, create all sorts of trouble. And, of course, the trouble doesn't just stop with you. It starts spreading out to other people. As you feel troubled, it's very easy to spread the trouble around.

So for your own safety, for the safety of others, you want to provide yourself with a little hut inside—a place that no matter how bad the storms outside get, you've still got your space. That way, you can learn how to trust yourself and you'll have a safe place from which then your actions can come.

Usually, it's from a sense of being threatened that we often do really unskillful things. When we're feeling weak in the face of something that we find is overpowering, we lash back. But if you've got your safe space, you can say, "I don't need to lash back, I can just stay in my safe space." That way, you're protecting yourself at the same time that you're protecting others.

So this practice of meditation is not a selfish process. It's not just for you. When you've got a safe place inside, you can also start giving safety to other beings.

The Buddha talks about this in terms of the precepts. When you hold to the precepts in all circumstances, no matter what, you're giving safety to everybody. In other words, at least from the quarter from which you're responsible, no danger is coming. And in that way, both sides get a share in that safety.

The same principle applies to the meditation, but the other way around. In other words, by providing yourself with safety, you then start giving safety to others. In terms of the precepts, when you give safety to others, that safety then reflects back on you. But the point is that whichever direction it's coming from, the safety is all-around, and it's a gift to everyone.

So pay a lot of attention to the breath, because this is where that safe spot is going to be found: right where your mind and the body meet at the breath. You have a sense of comfort, a sense of ease inside. That's the beginning of your safe space. Because this comfort and ease don't have to depend on things outside, they can be totally independent.

Like the springs of water that are found in certain places around the world, that are totally independent of the rainfall. We've got one here, the one that forms the creek in front of the monastery. Whether it rains or doesn't rain, the water always flows.

So you can find a safe spot inside from which goodness always flows. Then your goodness doesn't have to depend on the goodness of other people. That's how goodness gets maintained in the world.