

## *Happiness Comes from Your Actions*

*January 1, 2021*

Close your eyes and gather your mind around the breath. All your thoughts, all your intentions: Make them relate to the breath coming in, going out right now.

Give the mind a grounding. Give it a good foundation. When the mind is well grounded, it can see things more clearly. After all that was how the Buddha found the truth: by grounding his mind, getting it solidly here in the present moment and then observing the mind, observing cause and effect.

One of the things he learned was that true happiness has to come from your own actions.

The beginning of the new year we want to find happiness. If we really want it to be a *happy* New Year, we have to realize that the Buddha was right, that happiness has to come from your actions, particularly your skillful actions.

He set out three: generosity, virtue, and meditation.

What's interesting with meditation is that he also defined it as a restraint, in other words keeping your mind under control, restraining it from doing anything that would be out of line with the qualities you have to develop for the mind to be really skillful. We start first, as he said, with heedfulness. That's the basis for all skillful qualities, realizing that our actions will make a difference. If we're careless, we can cause a lot of trouble. If we're careful, we can avoid a lot of that trouble. If we have goodwill for ourselves, then we want to avoid trouble. We care. In other words, you don't just say: "I want to do what I want to do and then who cares about the results." You care about the results.

That resolve is a form of goodwill. *That's* why we restrain ourselves.

So, all those concepts go together: development—that's the Pali word for meditation—goodwill, and restraint. It's a cluster that motivates everything else. Based on that we realize that Buddha was right: that acts of merit are another word for happiness. In other words, when you're generous, when you're virtuous, as you get your mind under control, this is where happiness lies. As you realize happiness is in your power, you don't have to go around begging it from somebody else or having to demean yourself.

As Ajaan Fuang once said, when we come to the practice, we're nobody's servant. We're here independently because we see that what the Buddha said was right, that it's our actions that will make a difference. So we take

responsibility. We assume that power and then we reap the rewards. That happiness is lasting: a happiness that doesn't harm anybody in anyway. That's the kind of happiness you want for a happy New Year.

As for the things outside, whether they're good or bad: A lot of that is beyond our control, but we *can* control our actions. We *can* make up the mind that we're going to do only skillful things. Anything that's unskillful, we stay away from it. That's a decision we can make—and a decision we can stick by.

If you're going to think about a happy New Year, look inside. Come and see what Buddha's recommendations are for trying to find true happiness, and you'll find that he's right: that it is possible to find a happiness that doesn't harm anybody. Your search for happiness can be a gift not only to yourself, but also to others when you search for happiness in a wise and responsible way.