

Towards the Greatest Happiness

Bhante Bodhidhamma · Tips of the Day · 2 min read

Very occasionally when I talk to someone about the Buddha's teaching and how it's all about bringing an end to suffering, they will say, 'But I am happy!' What they don't see is that their happiness is dependent on conditions and circumstance. Someone said to me once, when we were talking about spiritual happiness, that he got it all from music. I didn't ask at the time, and I regret not doing so, 'What happens if you go deaf?' The Buddha points to a way of being which is a happiness not dependent on conditions or circumstance. He calls this Nibbana (in Sanskrit Nirvana). And he says we are in its presence or in its vicinity when we are mindful! In other words, Nibbana is staring us in the face, but we don't see it. This is the importance of vipassana practice. Every time we sit in meditation in this way, we make an object of everything we are experiencing. This means the locus of the self, that self-awareness, feels itself to be other than what it is experiencing. If it is other than what it is experiencing then it can't be the sensations and feelings that come from the body, nor the emotions and moods the heart offers, nor the thoughts and images that pop into the mind. What's it like when we are hovering like this amidst the all – all that we are experiencing? This is something we can reflect upon within a sitting and at the end of it. What we might say to ourselves is, 'So what?' It's not pleasant or unpleasant. It's not exciting in any way. It's dull. In fact I don't want to be like this all the time. I want to have some fun! These thoughts belong to Mara, the Enticer. This is our delusion in action. We are still bewitched by the kaleidoscopic pleasures of the sensory world. We still don't see the danger of it and the consequent suffering of attachment and indulgence. In order to wean ourselves off the intoxication of 'the world', we need to develop a taste for stillness, for peacefulness – for silence. In the country, nature is the great teacher, but in the city we need to make do. Sit by the window and watch the clouds, or take a walk at a quiet hour in the park or even down a road. Or just sit in position for no other reason than to allow the sensations of the breath to calm, to quieten, to develop our taste for serene stillness. When that also loses its taste, we shall naturally seek the greater happiness – Nibbana.

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