Living in the present

"If we rest in the present with full mindfulness then there are no obstacles."

None of us lives in the present. We think of the past, and we always want to change the future. We live our life making plans, "This is what happened to me yesterday, so now I have to make plans for next year." You cannot solve your problems or make plans for the future if you are constantly making a new programme for your life, a new schedule. If you live fully in the present, the present will hold your future: you do not need to think about the future. The past is already gone, so there is no value in delving back or looking in your rubbish bin to see if you put something valuable in it. Going through it again and again every day does not solve any of our problems. The past: you can just leave it there. For the future: do not make plans, because plans do not solve your future. Your future depends on your present.

Put all your effort into living a happy life in the present. You must live in the present all your life. This means that when you accept everything in a positive way, you do not have to change anything. When you accept everything in a positive way, then you have a happy life because there is nothing to worry about. An unhappy life means you always want to change things, "I don't like this, I don't like that." Even for something simple like clothing, you say, "I don't like this white colour, I don't like this pink colour." The clothing that we wear nowadays and its colour has nothing to do with warmth or protection from cold, it is only some kind of belief that it is nice or not nice.

When you play these kinds of games all your life with clothes and food and everything else, not liking that particular taste or look, you are creating so many obstacles for yourself. Other people are not making obstacles; nobody else creates our obstacles, they arise in ourselves. The Buddhist teachings are about how to accept this. It is about not creating problems with our own emotional state or our own ideas. If we give up all our ideas and just rest in the present with full mindfulness, then there are no obstacles. You are liberated: you can sleep wherever you happen to be, you can eat whatever is offered, you can wear whatever is available, you appreciate life whether people are beating you up or being kind to you. You no longer have any enemies, everyone has become your friend.

We have to liberate ourselves not other people. We should not look to the outside for liberation, we must liberate ourselves. The way to be liberated is to live with a simple mind in the present. This is the main point of the teachings. The most precious teaching is to accept everything that is happening to you. Accept everything at that very moment. If you go to a restaurant, whether you like the food that is given to you or not, you accept that particular food. You need to give up the whole idea of not liking: whatever food is presented to you, edible or not, you accept it; whatever accommodation is offered to you, whether good or

bad, you accept it; however people treat you, whether kindly, softly, lovingly, or badly, you accept that. It is all about being non-judgmental: you do not judge the food, the clothing, what is right, what is wrong. You accept the situation, whatever you experience. You appreciate everything that is happening, not just the positive things, like when someone is kind to you, but also when someone is unkind to you and you do not like it.
The teachings say you should appreciate any experience. Whoever is presenting you with the experience, you should be thankful to them.

We live in a very strange way. The human mind is always playing games and saying, "I am a practitioner," and then, rather than accepting yourself, you tell other people that they should accept certain things in order to be good practitioners. You try to influence other people but you forget about your own actions and the things you are doing. That is a big mistake. Let other people do whatever they want to do, it is not your business. If they want to buy new clothing every day that is okay as long as they have the money to do that. You should hope that maybe they can buy even more clothes. You should not stop other people or try to educate them, we must educate ourselves. That is the most important thing. Spiritual people tend to forget that one has to train oneself. They are always worrying about others, saying, "You shouldn't do this, you shouldn't do things that way, you have to think this way, you have to speak that way?" We are responsible for ourselves and we should try not to forget our own training. Regular mindfulness is very important and of course you need to practise regularly with diligence.

Whether we talk of the Buddha's teachings or Guru Rinpoche's teachings or the Kagyu teachings it is all the same, but there are different ways of presenting the teachings. It is very important to apply these teachings in a compassionate way to oneself. Quite often one feels, "I have practised for so many years, but I don't get any benefit," or "my mind is worse than before, I have more negative thoughts. Practice actually causes me more suffering." You find many more negative things and feel that you must give up this practice.

You have to look at it in a different way. If you are doing the practice properly there is no need to give up anything, because you have not taken on anything to be given up. The practice is only about developing the natural purity of your mind.

It is important to live a very simple life and learn to be humble. Rather than practising ourselves we tell other people to be humble! We should instead learn how to respect others. When you are not able to achieve everything that you have learnt do not punish yourself. Sometimes we think, "I have done so much practice but now all these bad things are happening: I lost my money and my house, I lost my husband or wife." You spend your meditation time thinking about all the things that are happening to you. That does not make much sense, because so many people suffer loss anyway. Those who do not meditate have losses too: they lose their houses, their jobs, their husband or wife. It has nothing to do with the practice. You are only projecting, because if you look at the whole world, maybe half of the population has lost a job in one way or another. They may have lost their husbands or wives or their property. It has nothing to do with Buddhism or dharma practice.

When your difficulties are happening you should be appreciative. If you lost your husband or

wife it is good because now you are free. Why do you need to worry? If you lost your house, why worry? You can sleep in the street. You do not need to clean up, you do not need to earn money, you are free from many things. If you lost your friends that is also very good, because you no longer have to try to please everybody through friendship. You have gained many freedoms through your losses.

Where you place your values will make all the difference: if you look positively at all the negatives, it will appear as if the negatives become positive. Then there is not anything that can be called a negative. If you look at everything in a negative way, then even what you normally consider to be positive becomes negative too.

In order to develop humility one can think that all other people have the essence of the Buddha or Guru Rinpoche within. You try to see every living being as part of your practice in that way. If you keep repeating this you will become humble automatically because you will see people in a different way. We see some people as having some goodness, others as being somewhat bad. We think, "I'm much better than these people." We judge and give different labels. If you can break that habit and try to see the purity in each person, see the essence of the Buddha in everybody, then that becomes a good foundation for humility.

Whenever you become proud or have a feeling that you are better than someone else - for example if you have written ten books and you feel so proud because no one else has managed to do that - at that time you think that there are others who have written one hundred books. Tell yourself that many people write more than ten books, so that gives you much better grounding. Try not to look below, but above. See who has achieved more and bring this to your attention, then you will become humble. Humility helps you to become more mindful of your actions and become respectful of others. You may still be quite proud, but what you feel inside will match what you are showing on the outside.

The teachings say that if you stop putting labels on things you can simply be in the present. The main point is to live now and be happy with whatever situation you are in. That is the most difficult thing to practice, because we always want something different.

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