

## Letting go of our Attachments

Buddhism teaches a life of non-attachment. The opposite of non-attachment, is “attachment,” which leads to many problems in life. If we become attached to money, we become greedy and selfish, and will never be satisfied, no matter how wealthy we might become. We can become attached to relationships. When our children grow up, we have to let them go into the world and live their life. I remember when we took my daughter off to college. They had an orientation for the parents. They told us, “Please do not call your child every day after they start college.” I thought, some parents call their kids every day when they go off to college? When we lose a loved one through death, at some point we have to let go. We cannot remain in grief forever. We can become attached to the future. What will happen if they don’t find a cure for the virus? What will happen if the economy doesn’t come back? We can become attached to the past. We think, “I am never ever going to forgive so and so for what they did to me.” But, if we stop and think about it, who is the one who suffers when we hold on to bitterness about the past? *We* are the one who suffers.

We can become attached to our anger. We can carry it with us for weeks, months, even years.

As a minister, you really try not to get into an argument with a member, but sometimes you can’t avoid it. I once had an argument with a member. He said this, I said that. He said this, I should have said that, but I held back. Fast forward maybe 10 years later. I was taking a shower, and in our house, my wife made a rule, that after you take a shower, you have to use this squeegee to wipe the shower stall so that the hard water film doesn’t build up in the shower. As I was taking my shower, somehow, this argument with that member came back to my mind. I recalled every word of that argument. As I was recalling that argument, I was squeegeeing the shower stall, but I was pressing so hard on the squeegee, that it snapped in two in my hand.

I thought to myself, “What is the matter with me? This was an argument easily ten years ago, but I was still holding on to it. I hadn’t let it go. I was still angry about it.

I told this story at the Vista temple one day, and about a month later, a member there gave me a gift. When I opened it, it was a plastic squeegee, framed in a nice frame. It said, “Just in case you might need this someday in the future.” What a wonderful gift. I will cherish that gift as a reminder to me of how I was attached to and holding on to my anger.

When Buddhism teaches us something like “non-attachment,” it is not a philosophical or academic teaching. Buddhism is trying to awaken us to our own troubled life, our own attachments that bring us pain, suffering, misery, and unhappiness. We only have ourselves to blame.

But how wonderful to have a teaching like non-attachment, to teach us that we are attached, that we cannot let go of possessions, we cannot let go of relationships, we cannot let go of our anger, we cannot let go of our past. Without the teaching of non-attachment, how would we ever come to see our attachment?

Rev. Kubose, in his book, *Everyday Suchness*, writes, “When the sun shines, enjoy it; when it rains, enjoy it. All things in life, let them come and let them go. This is a secret of life that keeps one from getting upset or being neurotic. The Buddha says that all things in life and in the world are in constant change, so do not become attached to them.”

Namuamidabutsu

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