

## *Developed in Body & Mind*

*October 27, 2019*

Today was a big day for making merit. We saw a lot of generosity: people giving of their wealth, their time, their energy. People took the precepts. But merit is not complete without meditating. So we now have an hour to be quiet. Let's try to make the most of it.

The word for meditation, *bhavana*, means to develop. We're here to develop good qualities in the mind, which of course means that the mind needs more good qualities. As the Buddha said, as long as you haven't reached the end of suffering, don't be satisfied with your level of skill. See what you can do to learn more.

We're practicing mindfulness, alertness, ardency, trying to bring them all together at the breath. You're trying to bring the mind into concentration, but you don't think the word "concentration" while you're doing this. You think "breath." That should be what you're totally interested in. As the Buddha said, you want to focus on this in and of itself, with no reference to the world—just the sensation of breathing coming in, going out. Make that enough for the mind right now.

The mind is hungry, and it tends to want to feed in all kinds of places. It nibbles a little bit here, and says, "Well, how about over there? How about over there?" The Buddha's image is of a cow in a meadow. She already has grass and water. But she sees another hill across the ravine. It also has grass and water, and she wonders, "What's that grass like? What's that water like?" So she starts down the hill. But because she's a foolish and inexperienced cow, she gets stuck in the ravine, can't get up the other hill, can't get back to where she originally was. In other words, now that you're practicing concentration, don't let yourself get waylaid by other thoughts about what might be a nicer place to be. This is the place you want to be right now.

Make the most of what you've got right here. There's the breath coming in, the breath coming out, all the different breath energies in the body here right now. Are you here for them? In other words, to what extent can you sense breath energy in the body? To what extent can you see if it's uncoordinated? And how can you get it back into coordination so that all the breath energies seem to be flowing together, helping one another along? Think about how good the breath energy is for you, why you would want to maximize this sense of comfort and well-being right here, not only for the pleasure it gives you right now, but also for the benefits it's going to give to the body. And when the body benefits, it's easier for the mind. But you want this to be the total world of your interest right now: the body as you feel it from within.

On the night of his awakening, this is where the Buddha placed his interest. After ranging around previous lifetimes, seeing all the beings in the universe dying and being reborn in line with their kamma, he realized that the best use to make of all that extensive knowledge was to bring it back into the present moment: What were his

intentions right now? What were his views right now? He anchored the mind to the breath to keep it in the present moment, and then from the breath he was able to see his intentions clearly. As soon as they moved away from the breath, he would know.

The mind needs something like this, a frame of reference, so that when it moves, you can see it move relative to the frame. If your frame is moving all around, then it's very easy for the mind to slip in some extraneous movements and then suddenly be off, hopping from one train of thought to another train of thought, like a hobo. So you want to be right here, anchored.

And ask yourself, how can you give rise to a sense of fullness? What are the parts of the body that feel empty right now, that could use some fullness? Or they feel depleted, and they could use some energy. Especially after a day of work like this, what can you do to energize the body, to feel refreshed? What parts of the body right now are feeling frazzled, tired? Think of the breath energy going right there. It might be your eyes. Think of the breath coming in and out the eyes. It might be in the area around the heart. Wherever the body's feeling frazzled, allow that part of the body to be nourished with the breath. As you do that, the mind will get concentrated naturally without you having to think about concentration.

There's a passage where the Buddha mentions that when he was a young boy he spontaneously got into the first jhana, sitting under a tree. And he probably wasn't thinking, "jhana," and wasn't even intending to get the mind into concentration. He just got really interested in his breath. He didn't have to think of all the different factors of jhana, he just got really really interested in the breath, sticking with it, watching it, evaluating it, seeing what kind of breathing felt good. When you do that much, you've got all the factors of jhana there. Just maintain them so that they're steady.

Watch out for the part of the mind that wants some variety, that wants something new. It says, "Okay, we've seen that, we've seen a couple good breaths coming in and out, what's next?" That's the part of the mind that you've got to let go of. If we think of the breath as a medicine, it's like a cream you put on your skin. You don't put it on and then wipe it right off. You put it on and you let it stay there. The longer it stays there, the more it can seep in and do its work. In the same way, the more the mind stays with the breath, the more the breath seeps into the body, the mind seeps into the body, until everything becomes one. The breath fills the body, your awareness fills the body, a sense of well-being fills the body. And then try to stay balanced right there.

And don't ask where this is going. As soon as you think about where it's going, you start leaning into the future and you lose your balance. You want to stay upright here in the present. And what you've got right here, right now, is enough to give the mind some rest, to give the mind some energy.

In Thailand, when people talked about making merit, Ajaan Fuang would ask them, "Where is your merit?" Well, the merit is in the heart. It's in the mind. We

make merit through generosity, we make merit through virtue. What we're doing is developing good qualities in the mind. And as we're meditating, we're focusing more and more directly on the mind. With generosity, you're thinking about this person, that person, what object you want to give. With virtue, you've got to think about your dealings with other people. But when you're practicing meditation, it's exclusively the mind dealing with itself. You're taking on the big issue directly instead of indirectly. It's good to have those indirect ways, because they develop a lot of good qualities in the mind. But then those good qualities in the mind *really* pay off as you're meditating.

You realize that it is possible, just sitting here breathing, to develop a sense of well-being. And then you can ask yourself, "Why don't I do more of this?" In some cases, it may be because of pressing responsibilities outside. But there are a lot of other times when you have free time in the mind and you don't make the most of it. If you really want to get good at the meditation, try to stuff the meditation into all those little empty spaces. Because after all, wherever you go, the breath is right there.

That way you can tap into this sense of well-being whenever you need it. The mind gets developed so that, as the Buddha says, the mind and the body get developed together. And his meaning of that term is that you get so that you're not overwhelmed by pleasure, you're not overwhelmed by pain. And concentration helps you with both of those things. When you're focused in on the breath, you realize that there are pains in different parts of the body. But you make up your mind that you're going to stay with the breath and make at least some parts of the body comfortable. That's your skill in learning how not to be overcome by pain.

Otherwise people sit here and all of the sudden they see a pain here and a pain there, "I can't stand the present moment, it's uncomfortable," and they leave. That's being overwhelmed by pain. But here we tell ourselves that we can work around the pain. Through the pain. We're not afraid of it. It doesn't become our sole preoccupation. It doesn't push us out of the body right here, right now.

Similarly with pleasure: As you focus with the breath, work with the breath through the body, a feeling of well-being comes up. Some people will leave the breath and just wallow in the well-being. And either they lose concentration or else they go into a state called "delusion concentration," where the mind is still and it's pleasant but very unfocused and very un-alert. Why is that? Because you drop the perception of the breath. You were overcome by pleasure.

What we're trying to do here is to give rise to a sense of pleasure, let it spread through the body, nourish the body, benefit the body, but keep our attention anchored with the breath. The pleasure will do its work. The sense of fullness will do its work. You don't have to go wallowing in them to get the most out of them. Just make sure that you stick with the breath coming in, the breath going out, because that's the foundation for the pleasure: your steady attention to the breath. Even if the

breath seems to stop, stay with the idea of “breath energy filling the body.” That way you become developed both in body and in mind.

So when the Buddha talks about developing, these are some of the things he means: Are you getting developed in your dealings with pleasure and pain? That’s so that you can learn how to use them, so they don’t drive you around. Ajaan Lee’s comment was, “Learn to see pleasure and pain as words that people speak in jest.” In other words, they’re not that important, but they are useful as tools. Don’t make them ends in and of themselves. Otherwise it’s like having a hammer, putting the hammer up on the altar, bowing down to the hammer, and letting the hammer rule your life, forgetting that it’s basically a tool.

Pain is a tool. Pleasure is a tool. Pain gives us our opportunity to understand how the mind can make itself suffer over unpleasant things coming in through the senses. To learn, to watch the mind as it deals with physical pain, you begin to see how it creates a lot of unnecessary mental pain around it. In that way, the pain becomes a tool for understanding your mind. The pleasure of concentration is a tool for giving the mind energy, so that it can keep up its work. We don’t go running for pleasures for their own sake. There is one pleasure we go for, for its own sake, and that’s nibbana. Everything else has to be viewed as a means, as a tool.

So when the pleasure comes up in the meditation, you don’t simply satisfy yourself with it. You ask yourself, “What’s the best use of this?” And here you use it to get the body refreshed, get the body energized, so that you’re in a better and better position to actually do the work that needs to be done to understand your mind.

So when we talk about developing the mind, this is how it gets developed, so that it’s no longer a slave to pleasures and pains. It can’t be pushed around by pleasures and pains. People can’t use our pleasures and pains to make us fear and do what they want. That way, as the mind gets more and more developed, it becomes more and more free. And that’s what we’re after. That’s what merit is for: to free the mind of its bad habits and give us something solid in return.