

The Energy You Broadcast

November 2, 2020

One of the distinctive teachings of the forest tradition is their emphasis on how proactive the mind is in its engagement with the senses and with the world. We're not just on the receiving end of sights, sounds, smells, tastes, tactile sensations coming in. We don't simply respond to the stimulus of other people's actions. We're proactive. We go out looking for things. This is in line with the Buddha's teachings on intention.

Our experience of the present moment is made up of the results of past actions, but also our current intentions and the results of our current intentions. When you look at the way the Buddha lines things up in dependent co-arising, our intentions come before our engagement with the senses. We *intend* to engage the senses, and that's how we meet up with the sensory material that's coming in. What this means is that our intentions don't have to be shaped by what's coming in. They don't have to be pushed around by what's coming in. We can be more skillfully proactive.

Now, a lot of people don't take advantage of this fact. They simply let themselves get pushed around by the world. When the events in the world are good, they're good. When the events in the world are not good, their minds get upset. But when you're practicing the Dhamma, you don't let yourself get pushed around. You set your mind on a goal: true happiness. You want that intention, that resolve, to stay in place. And you want it to inform the way in which you engage with the senses.

Like what you're doing right now when you're meditating: You set up the intention that you're going to stay with the breath. Other thoughts will come in, the result of past karma, but if you spend all your time dealing with those, getting engaged, you've thrown away your original intention.

So you've got to hold to the intention regardless, and use the energy of that intention to repel any thoughts that might come in. This is related to the Thai word for what they call currents of the mind, *krasae cit*. These currents come out of the mind. Ajaan Lee has a long explanation in *Frames of Reference* of how these are related to the effluents. But they're also related to the path. That's what we try to take advantage of.

Now, these currents can be experienced two ways. One is how *you* experience the currents of your mind. The mind flows out to its objects, and you have to ask yourself, "What kind of energy is flowing out?" You can determine the energy. It

could be greed flowing out, or anger flowing out, delusion flowing out. Or it could be mindfulness and discernment flowing out. That's the choice you can make. It can be compassion flowing out, goodwill flowing out, or equanimity. Again, that's your choice.

The Buddha gives an extreme example. You're pinned down by bandits who've taken a two-handed saw, and they're sawing off your limbs. You could simply react to that event and get upset, give rise to anger, ill will, frustration: all the unpleasant emotions that would come from reacting to that fact. Or you could make up your mind, "I'm not going to react that way. I'm going to have goodwill, starting with the bandits, and then for all the universe, because I have to protect my mind. If I die now, I want to make sure that my mind doesn't get fixated on the bandits. I want to lift the level of my mind."

And in lifting the level of your mind, you're improving the quality of the current that comes out of the mind. If it so happens that current leaves the body and goes to another body, then if you're going with good energy. You're protecting yourself.

This relates to the other meaning of *krasae* in Thai. They use it both for the current of in a stream of water, but also for a signal sent out by a radio station. That's also called a *krasae*. And it has an electromagnetic field.

Other people will pick up on that—that current, that signal—if their radios are tuned in. And this is the other context in which the ajaans talk about this current of the mind—the influence it has on the world, how the currents of your mind are experienced by others. As you're sitting here meditating, if you find yourself involved in thoughts of anger, you could ask yourself, "Okay, what kind of message, what kind of signal, am I sending out into the world?" We look all around us, and we can sense that the signals being sent out right now are pretty extreme, pretty negative. Do you want to add to that negativity, or do you want to send out something positive? You may say, "Well, the negativity out there is so overwhelming." But that's no reason for letting it invade your mind, or for thinking that the positive nature of the current of your mind doesn't accomplish anything.

At the very least, it gives a you protection. Think of that electromagnetic field. The more goodwill you radiate, the more protected you are. Think about the Buddha when those hired killers tried to kill him. They felt the current of his goodwill, and they just couldn't bring themselves to do it.

There's that instruction that Ajaan Fuang gave to the woman who was seeing visions of spirits harassing other people. She tried to stop the spirits from doing that, and the spirits turned on her. She got sick. He told her, "You've got to

protect yourself. One, fill your body with light if you can experience light, fill it with breath energy if you can experience the breath energy, and then send thoughts of goodwill.” That’s your protection, because there’s a field that goes around goodwill. Some people are very sensitive to this. They can tell what kind of thoughts you’re sending out. Others are not conscious of the fact, but they can pick up on the fact that something positive is coming from your direction.

There are many tales from the ajaans dealing with animals out in the forest: of the way in which dangerous animals can pick up on the goodwill that meditators are spreading in their direction, and they change their behavior. Even if they don’t change their behavior, the fact that you’re sending out good energy still is a protection because it goes along with your intentions. And your intentions are what shape your life.

So you have to ask yourself, “What kind of energy am I sending out?” This is one of the reasons why, as meditators, we don’t take in that much information from the world outside. We’re going to spend more time focusing on what we’re generating from within.

We develop this ability not to simply be reactive. We can respond. The Romantics used to talk about this, of how the way the nervous system works. It’s not simply atoms coming in hitting your nerves, and then your nerves sending atoms bounding back out, like billiard balls hitting other billiard balls. You organize a response. There’s something inside you that’s taking in this information and organizing a response. You’re not just acting as a material thing.

This is what the mind does. It organizes a response based on what it wants. So you have to ask yourself, “What do I want? Do I want happiness? How consistently do I want that?” If you really have goodwill for yourself, you want the happiness to be consistent, so you have to be consistently aware of what kind of energy you’re sending out, how you engage with the world. That first current, the current that you experience as you engage the senses, is directly related to the current that other people are picking up. The quality of the current is what makes all the difference.

So you want a current that’s motivated by renunciation; non-ill will, i.e., goodwill; and non-harming, i.e., compassion. Keep generating that as much as you can. As you’re focusing on the breath, that’s a current of renunciation. In other words, you’re basically saying, “I don’t want to get involved in sensual thoughts. I want to get involved with the happiness of form, the body as I feel it from within.” Try to keep that particular current as consistent as you can, and the mind can’t help but get into concentration.

So keep your determination strong. Keep the quality of your determination as consistently wise, discerning, compassionate, and benevolent as you can. That way, you protect yourself; you protect others. You provide a good energy inside. You realize that you have the resources within you not simply to be reactive. You can provide a good energy inside and you can spread it around. It can be your gift to the world. But always keep your focus not on what other people are doing, and how that's hitting you. Instead, your focus can be, "What can I generate inside? What's the best thing I can generate inside?" And then send that good current out in all directions.