

## *Proper Looking & Listening*

*September 20, 2012*

When you meditate, you're making a home for the mind: a comfortable place inside where you're safe or you're protected from a lot of outside influences.

You fill the body with your breath. You fill the body with your awareness. As soon as the breath comes in, think of it going all the way through the body all at once. Don't think that you have to pull it from the head down to the waist halfway through the breath and then down to the toes by the end of the breath. No, it should go down all the way to the toes right at the very beginning of each in-breath. When you breathe out, think of the breath radiating out in the air in all directions.

This way you inhabit this space. Don't let anybody else get into your space. All too often our home is a home maybe for the hour when we're meditating and for the rest of the day it's a bus station: Anybody can come in and do anything they like in the bus station. Then you come in one hour a day and try to clean up. It's like a janitor coming in and cleaning up a mess that's been made by crowds of people. The janitor will have trouble keeping up with them.

What you've got to do is close off your ears, close off your eyes. That doesn't mean you don't look or don't listen. While you're doing meditation right here you don't look or listen, but the rest of the day when you have to look or have to listen, have some sense of what's proper in your looking and listening. Who are you letting in? When you look at something beautiful, are you letting lust into the mind? When you look at something you don't like, are you letting anger into the mind? Okay, you're leaving the doors and windows wide open: Anybody can come in.

So if you find that you're looking with lust... Sometimes it's not just the lust coming in, it's lust going out looking for the problem to begin with. As you give it a chance to do that, that strengthens the lust already there in the mind. The same with anger, the same with delusion. You've got to look very carefully: Why are you opening your doors and windows? What are you hoping to get out of looking outside?

And as for the things that are necessary, the things that are part of your work, the things that are part of your family relationships to keep everything going smoothly: You can still see, you can still listen, you can still deal with these things. But just be careful that you don't let a lot of strangers into your house. A lot of people are going to eventually evict you because they want to take over. So an

important part of the meditation is how you go through the rest of the day to protect this home in the mind you've been building.

Using the breath energy is one way of helping. The Buddha compares it to a post. When your eyes go out looking, you stay with the post right here at the body, and the issues of the eyes won't go very far. The same with the ears, the nose, tongue, body: Try to stay here with the breath, keep the breath filling the body so that it feels really good, so that you're less likely to get hungry and go looking for scraps outside. You've got good food inside here. After all, it is your home. It has a well-stocked kitchen. And as long as you appreciate it and don't let the greed, aversion, and delusion come in and eat up everything in your kitchen, you're going to be fine.