

## *Burying the Mast*

*May 24, 2016*

We live in a world where the winds come blowing from all directions. There's gain and there's loss. There's status and loss of status. Praise, criticism. Pleasure and pain.

They're like winds from the eight directions. And our problem is that most of us have big sails. Our ears, for example, are huge sails. A little bit of praise, a little bit of criticism, and we get blown around. We like the praise, we don't like the criticism, but either way, when we get blown around like that we get turned around.

Sometimes we get so turned around that we forget what's right and what's wrong. People can praise us for doing the wrong things and because we like the praise, we continue doing the wrong things. Or they criticize us for doing the right things and we stop doing them. We're much too influenced by the wind of their breath.

So we've got to learn how to take down the sails and turn this sail mast into what the Buddha calls a stone pillar. The image they have in the Canon is of a stone pillar sixteen spans long, eight spans buried in the ground, so that no matter which direction the wind blows from and no matter how strong the wind is blowing, the pillar doesn't shake.

That's the kind of mind you want to have. It needs a good foundation for that, which is why we work with the breath so we can feel at home with the breath. That way, no matter what comes up in life, no matter what happens, you've got this place right here. This is your space. You can make this a *good* space for yourself. This is your safe place, your solid place.

As the winds come blowing by, you can just let them blow right past. Try to be as aerodynamic as possible. In this way, when the winds blow good things your way, you can make good use of them. And sometimes even though the things may seem bad, you can actually make good use of them, too.

As Ajaan Lee points out, when people criticize you and when you lose your status, there are good things to learn. When you're not wealthy, you see things that you don't get to see when you are wealthy. Look at people who are powerful and wealthy: Everybody's lying to them.

There's a case in the Canon where the king wants to come and discuss the Dhamma with the Buddha. All he knows about the Buddha is what he's heard in the palace, and the palace is full of lies. That's what it's like when there's a lot of

power, a lot of money. But when you're outside of that, you can see things more truthfully.

So learn to take the good and the bad, and get the good out of both the good and the bad. Otherwise, don't let them catch you. Keep your mind aerodynamic, keep your mind solidly based, firmly established, deeply buried down into the ground.

That doesn't mean you're all the way down so you don't see anything. A part of you is receiving all these things from the world but in such a way that you're not being pushed around by them. That's the kind of mind we want to develop. And this is why we meditate.