

Let the Defilements Settle Out

July 26, 2018

Try to let the mind settle down. It's been stirred up already for a couple of hours this morning. Let it settle back down again.

It's like water: You shake water around and if there's any dirt in there at all, it's going to get spread out throughout the water and you won't be able to see anything clearly at all. But if you let the water settle down, then whatever dirt there is settles to the bottom. You can see clearly where the dirt is and where the water is. They separate out.

It's the same with the mind. We have our defilements, we have our greed, aversion, and delusion. As you go around stirring them up through the day, then everything in the mind gets cloudy. Greed touches everything, aversion touches everything, delusion touches everything. But if you get the mind to be still, things begin to settle out. You can see that there's an awareness here that's somewhat separate from the dirt: the greed, aversion and delusion. And you can identify with that awareness. Then you can pinpoint exactly where the problems in the mind are.

Because it's in the greed, aversion, and delusion, the Buddha says, that the cause of suffering lies. And when you can see that not the whole mind is the cause of suffering, but specific events in the mind that are causing suffering, then you can do something about them.

This is why this is a path where we can help ourselves. We get advice from outside, we try to find people of integrity, we listen to their Dhamma, but then the next step is to develop appropriate attention: to look inside to see where you can find out exactly where the causes of suffering are. That requires concentration and discernment so that you can separate things out. When you learn how to see these things as something separate, then you can deal with them.

So allow the mind to have some quiet time where it can settle down. All the whirling around and stirring around of the world can fall away, and you find that you've got a clearer consciousness inside. Then you can use that consciousness to see exactly where you're holding on to things that don't need to be held on to—things that are actually causing you suffering—and you can let them go.

This is why we keep practicing concentration again and again and again. You can read about the different defilements of the mind, but to actually see them you've got to get the mind really quiet and get it used to staying quiet, ideally not only when you're sitting here with your eyes closed but also as you go through the day. But if you find that the events of the day stir it up, well, give yourself some quiet time to sit down again.

That's when you can see. It's only when you can see that you can do something about the problems in the mind. It's only when *you* do something about them that they're actually solved.

