

## *Determination*

*July 28, 2018*

Close your eyes and watch your breath. Make up your mind you're going to stay with the breath all the way in, all the way out, and stick with that determination.

Other thoughts will come and propose themselves, but you have to say No, you've got something good you want to go develop here. You want to develop concentration; you want to develop mindfulness. You can do that by staying with the breath and fighting off everything else that would come your way, or at least not paying attention to anything else.

Tell yourself that the breath is the most interesting thing in the world right now. Notice that it does have an effect on the body, and that you can change the effect that it has. This gives you something to explore.

What we're doing is making up our mind to do something good and then figuring out how to stick with it, and then being really true to what we've made up our mind to do. We use our discernment to figure out ways to stick with that determination, and we keep the mind at peace, so that it's not worked up by the fact that it's not getting to go out and nibble on the other things it likes to feed on.

All these qualities are good qualities for what the Buddha calls determination. Today is a day of determination. The monks are determining that they're going to enter the Rains here, they're going to stay here for the three months, meet dawn here every day for the next three months until the full moon in October – except if they have business, and even then they can only go away for seven days at a time.

Otherwise, they're going to stay right here and make up their minds to do something special with this time. When you enter in the Rains like this, it gives you time to be more concentrated: You're not thinking about where you want to go, what this trip might be like, what that trip might be like. You say, "I'm going to stay right here and stick with it."

It's also a time when laypeople decide that they're going to do something special for the Rains as well. We don't have that much rain here in California during the Rains, but here we have three months when the monks are here. You can take advantage of the fact that we've got a more stable community for the next three months than you normally do. Decide what you want to do with this time to make it special. It's a good time to test out certain things of ways of increasing the time you meditate, or looking at your precepts and seeing where your precepts

are not quite as strong as they could be. In other words, learn to look at yourself and see what needs to be done.

Because time is slipping away. As the clock moves forward it doesn't necessarily mean that our life is moving forward, simply that we're getting older and there's less and less time remaining. So what are you going to do with that remaining time? How do you get the most use out of it? We hear about people who find out they have only three months left to live and they suddenly get their lives in order. Well, live these next three months as if it were the only three months you had to live. What would you do? What would you change in the way you live to get ready for the fact that at some point we all have to go?

Look at your precepts, look at your meditation, look at your practice of generosity: See areas in which you might be able to improve yourself. This is called *attaññuta*, having a sense of yourself, where your strengths are, where your weaknesses are, realizing that you don't want to go through life just leaving your weaknesses as they are. You want to find some ways of compensating for them, to strengthen those areas of your life. And here's a chance: these next three months.

So think about what you would like to do. Use discernment in deciding what your goals should be, and discernment in figuring out how to stick with it. Be true to your determination. Be willing to give up anything that gets in the way and keep your mind calm through all of this.

Then at the end of the three months, if you realize that what you've done was a little bit too much, you can back off then. But if you realize that your life has improved, you can keep on with whatever you've determined. This way the next three months can be a real positive addition to your life, not just three more months tacked on. They're three months where you've actually made a difference.