

## *The Control of Nature*

*February 3, 2021*

When you're having a short meditation like this, you want to get the most out of the time you have got. So, where is your spot?—the spot that, when the mind settles down, it likes to be there. Go straight there. Breathe in a way that feels really good right there. As for the next breath, and the next breath, it's the same thing—right there at one spot, one spot. You don't have to do a lot of thinking or a lot of evaluating. You know your spots; you know your body. You should know how much pressure to put on a spot so that your mind can stay focused there but you're not putting so much pressure that you're disturbing the blood, disturbing the breath flow.

They talk about having beginner's mind, but it's also good to have an experienced mind when you come to meditate. Go right to what you know is best. Now, if you have any trouble staying there, then you can make adjustments. But, take what you have learned and put it in practice right away.

Some people say you shouldn't control the mind, just allow whatever to come up, to come up. But that's not concentration practice. It's not even mindfulness practice. Mindfulness is keeping the mind established in one frame of reference, like the breath. And concentration is when you're doing your mindfulness successfully. So, you do exert some control. You're developing a skill here, because you want to be able to watch the mind as it engages in focusing on something. What is the need to focus on something? What is the need to pay attention to something? Here's a good place to watch. It's like having laboratory. You do your experiments here and you learn a lot about the mind. You can be very clear about when the mind is moving, where it's moving, how it's moving, why it's moving. You really get to know the mind this way. And you're on the path. It is a path that you put together.

On its own, the mind wouldn't find the path. It's not a natural process. We're going against a lot of natural processes, because greed is natural, anger is natural, delusion is *very* natural. But we learn how to steer these natural processes in the right direction—the processes of fabrication, the processes of perception, attention, intention—and clear away the defilements. Basically, we're making nature do what we want. This is the control of nature. If you learn to do it skillfully, nature complies.

What you find as a result of this is not going to be something that you made up. It *is* in the nature of things that if you develop skillful qualities in the mind to the ultimate degree, you open up to something that's beyond skillful, something that's not fabricated. That is a possibility. But to get there requires that you direct things.

Keep yourself rightly directed, as the Buddha said. Make use of the natural things that are good and let go of the natural things that are not. That's how you exercise your discernment.