

## *Enlarge Your Mind*

*September 23, 2009*

One of the terms for a mind in concentration is *mahaggatam cittam*, the expanded mind or the enlarged mind. You want to expand your mind so that your ordinary pleasures and pains start to seem a lot smaller in comparison. Pleasure and pain are big issues when your mind is a little tiny mind—narrow in its concerns, narrow in its perspective—and it's going to be overwhelmed.

The Buddha gives the image of a lump of salt. If you put the lump of salt in a little tiny cup of water, the water is going to be unfit to drink; it'll be too salty. If you put the it in the River Ganges, assuming that the river is not polluted, then even though it may be a big lump of salt, the water is still drinkable because there is so much more water in comparison. It's the same with the mind. You can enlarge your mind, expand your perspective, and a lot of the pains and discomforts that you ordinarily complain about will start to seem smaller and smaller.

There are different ways to expand the mind. One is to expand it throughout the body. Once you find that the breath is comfortable, with breath sensations that feel really good and satisfying in one part of the body, start thinking of that sense of comfort streaming throughout the rest of your body. See where it can go. Just tell yourself open up all the channels, wherever that refreshing sensation can go. Then maintain the whole body as your frame of reference. This way, even though there may be pains and aches in some parts of the body, you realize that you don't have to focus all your attention on the pains and the aches.

There are some parts of the body that may be feeling the heat. Here it's well after sunset and it's still hot outside. But if you look carefully in your body, you'll realize that not all parts of the body are equally hot. Some parts are cooler. Focus on the cooler parts and maximize those. This is one of the advantages of having an enlarged mind. You see that there's more to choose from. You can take whatever sense of comfort or relative comfort there may be and you can make the most of it. Because your frame is larger like this, you're not overwhelmed by any particular sensation.

Another way of enlarging your mind is through developing goodwill for all beings. It helps to take your mind off your personal pains, your personal problems, and no matter how big those problems may be, it helps to see them as little. You think about all the human race and all living beings beyond the human race, how

they all want happiness. A lot of them are worse off than you are right now. That thought helps to put your own personal problems into perspective.

When you have this enlarged awareness, you begin to see that the way you suffer from physical pain or mental pain is not just the individual sensation of pain. It's the whole state of becoming you've been constructing around it: the identity based around the desire to have the pain go away and your sense of the importance of that pain in the world of your experience. This is why you want to enlarge your mind: to get a different sense of the world, to put your pains into perspective.

In other words, you're creating a different state of becoming around a different desire, around a different sense of the world and a sense of yourself. From this new perspective, you can look back on the old states of becoming that you created around the pain, the old states that really were totally absorbed in the pain, and you can start taking them apart to see: Where is the actual suffering here?

You look at the physical pain and on its own it turns out it's not all that much.

There's a cryptic statement in the Canon that says, with regard to becoming, that by whatever means you construe it, it becomes otherwise than that. In other words, whatever you take as the raw material for your state of becoming, as soon as you're created a state of becoming from that, the raw materials have already changed. Things change that fast.

So, one of the skills in learning how to get past any state of becoming that weighs down the mind is to look for those raw materials. As the Buddha says, becoming is based on clinging, clinging is based on craving, craving is based on feelings. You want to chase it back to those feelings. What is the actual sensation that provoked you into creating that state of becoming to begin with? If you can track it down, you'll find it's a lot more ephemeral than you originally thought. Mental pain, physical pain: These things arise from moment to moment to moment. If you create a state of becoming in which you're on the receiving end of these things, it's as if you've got a big basket that's collecting all those little pains and keeping them all together. Or you're stitching them all together.

That's another image from the Canon. Craving is the seamstress that stitches all these little sensations into one big clinging or one state of becoming. You've got to learn how to cut the thread. Instead of seeing yourself on the receiving end of these things, sometimes it's helpful to watch them receding away. Think of yourself as sitting in the back of a station wagon facing backwards, and as soon as you notice the pain, it's already going away from you, it's going away from you, going away from you. You begin to realize that you've been creating all these humungous states of mind—states of becoming that seem so solid, and so real and

so important—on top of sand that’s just flowing away, flowing away, flowing away all the time.

Now, to see this clearly requires that you get the mind good and settled. This is where the enlarged mind comes in. This is why you want to enlarge your awareness so that you can have a much more encompassing view of what’s happening, so that you’re not totally surrounded by that state of becoming. And you’re not buying into the idea that there’s this huge pain just constantly weighing down on you, that’s so oppressive. As the mind gets more enlarged, these things get to seem a lot smaller.

There’s that line in one of Ajaan Lee’s teachings he says, “Pleasure and pain, don’t give them a thought. Think of them as things people speak in jest.” Now, to see your own pleasures and pains in that light requires that your mind gets really large, your perspective gets large, with the sensation of your awareness filling the body, your sense of awareness extending goodwill to all beings in all directions. It’s not confined to the pains you’re feeling right here, right now. Your awareness spreads beyond them. That really changes the perspective. It changes the balance of power. That’s why you want to work on enlarging your mind.