

Two Eyes, Not Just One

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One of the epithets of the Buddha was that he had an all-around eye. He saw things from all sides, from all angles, and so he was able to see a lot of things that most people miss. What we're trying to do as we meditate is to develop that all-around eye as well.

It's easy to focus on one problem in the mind, solve that one, and discover that lots of other problems have developed as a result. Yet we may hide those other problems from ourselves, which, of course, then becomes still another problem.

This is one of the reasons why we're trained to be patient and not jump to conclusions. As Ajaan Lee said, if some insight comes up in your practice, ask yourself to what extent the opposite is true so that you don't look at things with one eye or listen with one ear.

Upasika Kee Nanayon has a good warning as well. Whatever comes up, she says, look at what comes up right after that. There may be a little bit of pride or a little bit of assumption of one kind or another. So even if something really good comes up, don't let yourself get carried away with it. Watch. This is one of the reasons why we try to develop steady powers of concentration: so that we can see the insights and then see the things that the insights may hide.

Throughout the texts, the Buddha talks about how it's important to develop the qualities of tranquility and insight together. Tranquility is what allows you to abandon passion. This is what develops into what the Buddha calls awareness-release. Insight is what allows you to develop the knowledge that cuts through ignorance. That's discernment-release.

There are a couple of passages where the Buddha does talk about discernment-release on its own, which has led some people to think that you can just gain insight and not have to worry about too much concentration. But where he actually defines discernment-release, it means the release of people who haven't attained the formless jhanas. Now, those are the *really* refined states of concentration. But those people still have to get the four jhanas, or at least one of the jhanas, for their discernment to be solid.

For just this reason, if you're still weak in concentration, it's so easy to see things from one side. The insight may seem to be penetrating, but it penetrates only one part of the mind and can leave a lot of other things in the dark. The quality of concentration we're trying to develop, after all, is full-body awareness that trains us to look all around. When you're looking at the breath—say, the

breath in the nose—how's the breath going in the back of the neck? If there's a problem in the front, you might ask yourself, "How's the breath flowing down the back?" or vice versa. You've got a backache or back pain of some kind? Ask yourself how the breath energy is flowing in the stomach.

You can find all kinds of interesting connections this way. I've been working recently on a tendon on the right side of my right leg. I've discovered that when I think very consciously of letting the breath flow there, it also changes the flow of breath in the head. So there are all kinds of connections all around. And this is just in the body. It's even more so in the mind. So you really do want to develop this all-around eye that comes with concentration.

It's ironic that people think of concentration as being very narrow and blocking out. Now, there is that kind of concentration, but that's not what the Buddha's talking about. As he says, when you settle down, there's a sense of ease and well-being with the breath. You let that flow through the body. And if it's not flowing immediately, he says you knead it through the body in the same way someone would knead water through a ball of dough.

In other words, help it along a little bit. Open up the channels, and when the channels are open, simply maintain them. That allows you to get into a deeper state of concentration with more refined pleasure, a more refined sense of rapture, where you really do become one with your object.

But remember, the object is the whole body—the breath throughout the whole body. You're learning to be centered, but centered *with* a broad range of awareness so you can see all around. Things may not come up as quickly as you'd like. But part of learning how to see all around and to see continually is to be patient. So you encourage yourself. You don't just grit your teeth and say, "I've got to stay here and be still." You encourage yourself to *want* to stay still. Regard this as a skill. Regard this as something you want to develop.

It's like a kind of gaze that they say hunters have where they're aware all around. Someone was writing about his time with the Inuit. He was saying that when he was with the hunters, he felt like the hunters were wearing the landscape like clothing. They were sensitive, sensitive all around. That's how they could sense what the animal population was doing.

They were clearing out their minds as much as possible to sense the animals all around in the same way that you want to sense the animals in your own mind—the animals of greed, aversion and delusion—because they may show up first in just little, tiny hints that there's something going on. If you're not really quiet, you're not going to see the hints. You'll see something only when it's full-blown,

and by that time, it's often too late. You've started acting under its influence, and the range of your awareness has gotten restricted.

So try to look out for the little animals—little signs and hints—so that your tranquility and your insight go together. They are qualities, you know. There's no such thing as a tranquility practice or an insight practice. The practice is jhana practice: right concentration. And to master it, you have to bring a quality of tranquility to it, along with the quality of insight.

Look at the instructions for breath meditation. They talk about seeing your breath as a bodily fabrication. Well, that's an insight aspect right there, seeing how you're fabricating things. You look at your feelings and perceptions as mental fabrications to see what influence they're having on the mind. And then in both cases, you try to calm the effect. Try to fabricate more tranquil states in the body; try to fabricate more tranquil states in the mind. That's tranquility. So you're developing insight *and* tranquility at the same time.

This way, your gaze is all around and it's steady. That's the kind of gaze that can make a genuine change in what's going on in the mind. It yields greater insights—insights that go deeper.

So be a person with two eyes, not just one. You'll see things a lot more clearly.