Giving Weight

February 26, 2005

One of the terms for concentration is aticchitta, which means a heightened mind. Not heightened in the sense that you’re physically above something else, but heightened in the sense of heightened importance. You’re trying to be very clear about where you’re aware and focused. You make that point the really important issue. Because normally you’re focused on one thing, and something pulls your attention away. You run after it. The mind becomes a slave. It’s like a dog running after whatever captures its attention. It’s under the power of all the things around it. And as a result, the mind never gets any rest, never gets any sense of its own importance, because it’s constantly being a servant to this, that, or the other mood, or notion, or desire, or just whim of the body. So try to give the mind importance. Look at what you normally let it feed on or run after, and you’ll notice many times that if someone can take a picture of your mind, it’s not the kind of picture you’d want to have people pass around. So try to focus on being still right here in the present moment. Stay with the breath coming in and going out. See how still you can make the mind. And be conscious of anything that might come in to make your awareness waver. Resist the temptation to go running after this, that, or the other thing. Try to give the mind some weight. That chant we had just now on respect. The word for respect in Pali also means weight. You give weight to the mind. You give weight to your practice of concentration. You don’t toss it away in favor of other things. You want to try to maintain this center no matter what, not only while you’re sitting here and meditating. While we’re sitting here, we’re just practicing. But you also want to be able to take that sense of a firm center out. Wherever you go. So that even when you’re with other people, having to interact with them, your center doesn’t go drifting out to focus on them. You want to keep the center inside. And you notice a lot of resistance. Because most of the time when we deal with other people, our mind is focused on what their reactions are, what their thoughts may be. But think about it. How much do you know about another person’s thoughts? You’re trying to read all the signs, what they may be thinking. But that’s not much of a center at all. It doesn’t have any good support. In the meantime, you’ve abandoned your own center, which means that you’re out of balance. All the weight goes outside. And there’s nothing inside to hold you down. So try to give some importance to having this center stay inside. This is why we work with the breath to make it comfortable. Give the mind a good place to stay. A place where it likes to stay. So that when you’re pulling it back into its inside center, it’s not a question of dragging it off to its execution. You’re bringing it back to a place where it really is good to be. That way, it’s a lot easier to resist the temptation to go flowing out the eyes, the ears, the nose, the tongue, the body, out to the past or the future. That word asava, which literally means effluent or fermentation, you can sense it. Simply as you try to go through the day, keeping your center inside, and look for the things where your mind’s focus goes out, there’ll be a sensation of flowing out. If you try to resist the flow, you’ll really feel it. That’s so much of the time we place our center of awareness outside. Try to provide it with a place where it can stay outside, thinking that it’s going to be safer out there. You can keep track of what other people are thinking or saying or about to do, and maybe influence it in the direction you want it to go. But if you really look at it, you see there’s an awful lot of conjecture and an awful lot of uncertainty in that kind of knowledge. And even though you tend to give it weight, it can’t support the weight that you want it to hold. It doesn’t provide any real security. It doesn’t provide any real happiness. So you want to give weight to this focus inside, give importance to having your center stay inside the body, with the breath, where it’s comfortable, where it really can have a good, solid foundation, a good, solid support. As for what other people are thinking, or doing, actually, you find that once you keep your center inside, you see more clearly what’s going on. And however you have to maneuver through the day, you’re coming from a position of strength, a position of solidity, not starting at the least little thing. And this is why the mind gains a sense of its own importance, that by staying safe inside, it really can function a lot better. And if you look after the mind, then it really can help you in lots of ways. In other words, most of the time we don’t take much care to look after the mind. We think, “Well, the mind can take care of itself. It’s got to do this work right now.” But when you begin to see that taking care of the mind is what enables you to do that kind of work, that the mind should always come first, then you get your priorities straight. As for what other people are thinking, or saying, or doing, just remember, they can never take you to hell. If you’re going to go to hell, it’s your own doing. They can’t take you to heaven. If you’re going to go to heaven, it’s your own doing. You don’t have to worry about heaven and hell and the afterlife right here and now. You can see it. Other people can do horrible things, but it’s only when you let it get into your mind, and then you start doing horrible things along with them, that’s when it really gets better. At the same time, no matter how good other people may be, you can always be worried about how much longer is this goodness going to last. Sometimes the better the person is, the more you’re worried. It can’t last. Something’s going to have to happen. So the issue isn’t what other people are doing. It’s how you’re managing your own mind. This is why you have to give it importance. Give weight to this. Give it an ability to stay centered right here inside. Because when you’re operating from here, you can see things a lot more clearly. With less worry and flurry cluttering up your mind, you can also get better ideas of what you can do to respond to any given situation in an appropriate way, without having to pre-plan it. Don’t worry about it too much. It comes because the mind is in a spot where it sees things a lot more clearly. With less a sense of being under the power of other things. Remember, that power is something you give to the other things. And you can decide not to give it. Try to keep this strength inside. Give first priority to tending to your mind at all times, even when you’re looking and listening. This is why restraint of the senses is so important. Try to notice, when you look at something, how your focus—not only the focus of your eyes, but also the focus of your whole consciousness—seems to go out to that object. Okay, you’ve lost your center. You’ve lost your concentration when that happens. Pull it back in. If you get used to doing this, then you’ll find that when you sit down to meditate, it’s a lot easier for the mind to stay in place. When you deal with other people, it’s a lot easier for the mind to stay in place, because you’ve made it a habit of giving the weight to your inner focus. Give the mind weight when you give it importance like this. Then it’s going to start showing what it can do. If you don’t, it’s always going to be a slave to things outside, operating under their power. Ask yourself, which state of affairs do you prefer? And then remember, you’re making this choice all the time. Every time you look, every time you listen, where does the weight go? Where does the importance go? Make it a habit. Make it a skill that you’re going to give the weight to the mind. You’re going to keep the importance. Set it right here inside, because that’s where it really belongs. And when it’s right here, then it can function in the most skillful, most appropriate, all-around the best way.

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