Trust

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The human world is a difficult place to live, largely because it has a lot of human beings. In other words, there are people you can trust, there are people you can’t trust. And you look inside yourself and you realize there are things inside yourself you can trust and other things you can’t. And it’s in learning how to figure out which things inside we can and can’t trust that gives us some guidance in how to figure out who outside to trust and who not to trust. We’d like to be able to trust everybody. We’d like to be able to trust ourselves in all situations. We could put down some of our guard. But remember, as the Buddha said, skillfulness is based on heedfulness, and heedfulness is based on the realization that there are dangers. And the dangers outside are nothing compared to the dangers inside. So you have to learn how to sort things out inside your own mind. Once you’ve done that, then it’s a lot easier to sort things out outside. One of Ajahn Suet’s tests was, when you’re getting the mind still like this, anything that disturbs the stillness is something you have to write off as either stress or the cause of stress. So use that for the time being as your deciding principle, as your standard. Anything that comes in weighs down on the mind. Anything that disturbs the stillness of your concentration or the breath is something you don’t want. In the beginning, that means you have to clear out a lot of stuff, because the mind is going to be full of all kinds of thoughts. You cut things down and something else grows up in their place. Like the bamboo outside of Tendan’s hut keeps sending out little shoots. We thought we had it taken care of this evening. I walk past and there are two more little bamboos coming up. And the mind is a lot more insistent than bamboo. It keeps coming up with this idea, that idea. So for the time being, you use this as your standard to get the mind to settle down with the breath. Anything that disturbs that stillness, you want to put a question mark next to. You don’t know how to step back from it. As the Buddha said, and as a lot of the ajahns have confirmed, it’s only when you step back from things and see them as something separate from your awareness, that’s when you can see them as they really are, for what they really are. See where they come from, see where they’re going. We tend to take these things on as costumes or masks. It’s like getting into a car and driving around. When you’re inside, you can’t see. You can’t see what it is you’re in. So try to see these thoughts coming from a distance so that they don’t spring up on you suddenly and engulf you, where there’s a little bit of disturbance on the edges of your awareness. Extend out breath energy. Think of the breath all over the body. Do a quick check to see which part of your body is not being nourished by the breath. Is there any part of the body where you can focus your awareness and not have a sense that there’s some movement as you breathe in and breathe out? And as you get really sensitive, you see it’s all over the place. It’s even in your bones. So try to occupy the body as much as you can because the bigger your sense of awareness occupies the body, then the less likely you are to shrink down and slip into some little thought world that would pull you away. And when you can step back from things like this, you see where they’re coming from, see where they’re going, and you realize that this larger sense of awareness is a lot more trustworthy than most of the stuff that comes through the mind. This gives you a sense you can stay here and not be threatened by the thoughts that come up. Now, occasionally you’ll forget and find yourself back in France or Thailand or wherever. But as soon as you are aware of that, just drop it and you’ll be back here with the breath. This present awareness is good. It’s always there, just like there’s always a part of the mind that’s not affected by things. It can just watch, watch, watch. But it’s obscured by the other parts that want to get worked up about things. So try to get in touch with that sense of just being able to watch what’s coming in and what’s going out, or that you’re going in and going out with it. That’s when you begin to see the comings and goings of the different thoughts in the mind as something separate. Once you’ve learned this skill inside, in other words, learning to be a little bit skeptical about your thoughts so that you can see which parts of your awareness you can trust, then it’s a lot easier to deal with other people outside. Because you’re not feeding off of them, that way you get to see them as something separate as long as you want something out of them. You’re feeding off of them and you’re trying to engulf them, and you get engulfed. And you can’t easily see them. And you can’t see the fact that they really are separate. You’ve got your area, you’ve got your space that you inhabit, and they can’t come in. It’s you who’s been pulling them in. But you realize that you don’t have to. They can be there, you can be here. Then you’ve got your energy field in here that repels things so you don’t have to put up so much body armor. You’ve got good energy in here and that has an energy. It’s like a force field that protects you from their invasion of your space. And when you’ve learned how to sort out in your own mind the signs of what’s a trustworthy thought and what’s not a trustworthy thought, you begin to see them more easily. And again, that sense of a position of strength. This is where the teachings on karma come in. You realize that living in the human world, there are going to be all kinds of people, and you’ve got all kinds of karma yourself. So it’s bound to be some people who are going to be taking things from you. Jon Furon was a very astute observer of human karma. He had cases where he got hoodwinked by people. One guy came one time and was offering the opportunity to help with the King’s project of building hospitals. So Jon Furon came for a donation and found out later that the guy had taken the money and used it for himself. So you expect that there are times when you will be fooled by other people. But you have to realize that what they can take is nothing of any real value when you realize that you’ve got your goodness as your treasure. And nobody can take that. You might be the person who squanders it, but nobody else can squander it. Nobody else can even touch it, unless you let them come in and talk you into doing something unskillful. But as for the things they might take, as the Buddha said, you kind of suffer loss. You can suffer loss of wealth, loss of your health, even loss of your relatives. But that’s nothing compared to loss of your virtue and loss of your right view. As long as you maintain your virtue and maintain your right view, you’ve got the treasures you need. So dealing with untrustworthy people outside, one, is a matter of learning how to sort things out inside yourself. So which thoughts inside you can trust and which ones you can’t, and how you can learn how to see an untrustworthy thought coming from a mile away. So you can separate yourself out. And then two, having a sense of what you can trust inside as being something unassailable. And you can start applying that same principle outside. You’ve got your space. But you’ve also got your treasures that nobody else can touch, and you have to remember that those are your important treasures. As for monetary loss or other loss, that’s a common part of the human world. So sort out inside what you can trust and what you can’t. And it’s a lot easier to deal with this human world as a whole.

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