Fabrications of Exertion (2)

October 4, 2017

Today we talked about how the Buddha, when he was talking about the bases of success, said that they had to be accompanied by what he called the fabrications of exertion. In other words, fabricating right effort. These fabrications are related to his teaching on the three kinds of fabrication. There’s bodily fabrication, verbal, and mental. Bodily fabrication is how you breathe. Verbal fabrication is how you talk to yourself and direct a thought evaluation. Mental fabrication is perceptions and feelings. These things can be used to deal with, say, physical pain in the body. You breathe around the pain. You talk to yourself about the pain in a new way. You don’t complain about the pain. Complaining doesn’t solve any problem. You talk to yourself about how you want to comprehend the pain. Then you look for the perceptions you have around the pain. Is the pain as solid? Is the pain the same thing as your body? Is the pain coming at you? Does it have evil intentions towards you? Learn how to change those perceptions. You find that the pain can be there, but you don’t have to suffer from it. The same three perceptions can also be used for emotional pains. These are the ones that go deeper. But learning how to analyze them in terms of the three kinds of fabrication and then create new fabrications around them can dig them out as well. For example, when you’re angry, you find that you breathe in a way that’s not really good for the body. When you’re afraid, it’s the same sort of thing. Your breathing changes. Often it’s because of the way you’re breathing that you feel that you’ve got to get it out of your system. It’s under the influence of that feeling that we often say and do things that we later regret. So your first line of defense is to change the way you breathe. Try to breathe in a way that’s calming and breathe in a way that’s regular. Breathe in a way that feels like it dissolves the tension that may be in your chest, that may be in your stomach, and you feel a great sense of relief. Even though the issue is still there in the mind, at least it hasn’t taken over your body. You don’t feel the need so much to get it out of your system. You can actually start thinking about what should be done. That’s your verbal fabrication. Say that someone has betrayed you. Someone that you love, someone that you trusted, they’ve turned on you. You realize that your self-esteem has been wounded. You can tell yourself all kinds of things that make the pain even worse. So you have to remind yourself that just because someone has not appreciated your goodness doesn’t mean you have any less goodness. The fact that someone has abused you doesn’t mean that they’ve won out over you. So you don’t need to go back and get any revenge. At the same time, you don’t have to beat yourself up. As the Buddha said, all kinds of behavior in the world is normal. Good behavior, bad behavior. People saying well-meaning things, people saying things meaning to hurt you. This is a normal part of human life. Maybe the part of the mind that says, “Well, you were stupid to open yourself up to them.” Well, everybody has to learn from mistakes. There’s a saying that good judgment comes from experience, and experience comes from bad judgment. So it’s only normal that people make mistakes. So you learn how to take them in stride. Even though some of the lessons are hard, they’re good lessons to learn, good to know. And then you can look at the mental fabrication, the perception you have in your mind. Again, the sense of your self-esteem being wounded. That’s often a picture you might hold in your mind or just a background idea. You have to question that. The other thing you have to question, though, is sometimes we find ourselves liking to go back to these really bad moods. It’s like liking rotten food. We just keep going back, going back. You have to ask yourself, why? What do you get out of this? What do you think you gain from going back and thinking about these hurtful things? If you don’t see what you like about it, it’s hard to get past it. So there will be a perception someplace in the mind that makes you want to go back. Once you clearly see what that is, then it’s a lot easier to let it go. Compare that with the real drawbacks of the hurtful emotion, and you can see that it’s not really worth it. You have many better things to do. So thinking in these ways, using bodily fabrication, verbal fabrication, mental fabrication, you get the mind in a place where it’s ready to drop the mood. Then get back to its center. This is why when the Buddha taught the Basis of Success, which were all about concentration practice together with discernment, he said these fabrications are also useful. They’re a protection for your concentration so that you’re not wounded by the world. It’s not wounded by your own stupidity. And taking on the emotions of the world, it allows your mind to rise above the situation. That’s another perception that’s good to hold in mind. That when you withdraw into concentration and you’re not running away, you haven’t been beaten or defeated, you’re rising above things. In the Buddha’s image, he said that this kind of discernment is like climbing up in a tower and looking down on the people below you. When you’re up in the tower, they can’t wound you, and it’s a lot easier to have compassion for them. So if you find your concentration being wounded by the world, try to rise up to this tower of discernment, understanding how you’re the one that’s allowing these things to wound you. You’re the one who’s contributing to the wounds, but you don’t have to. That way your mind can be safe and whole. [BLANK\_AUDIO]

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