

Insight Journal Winter 2008

Post Copernicus
Editor's Essay

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Ajahn Sucitto

Breaking Free with Creative Awareness
Martine Batchelor

Poems from the Community

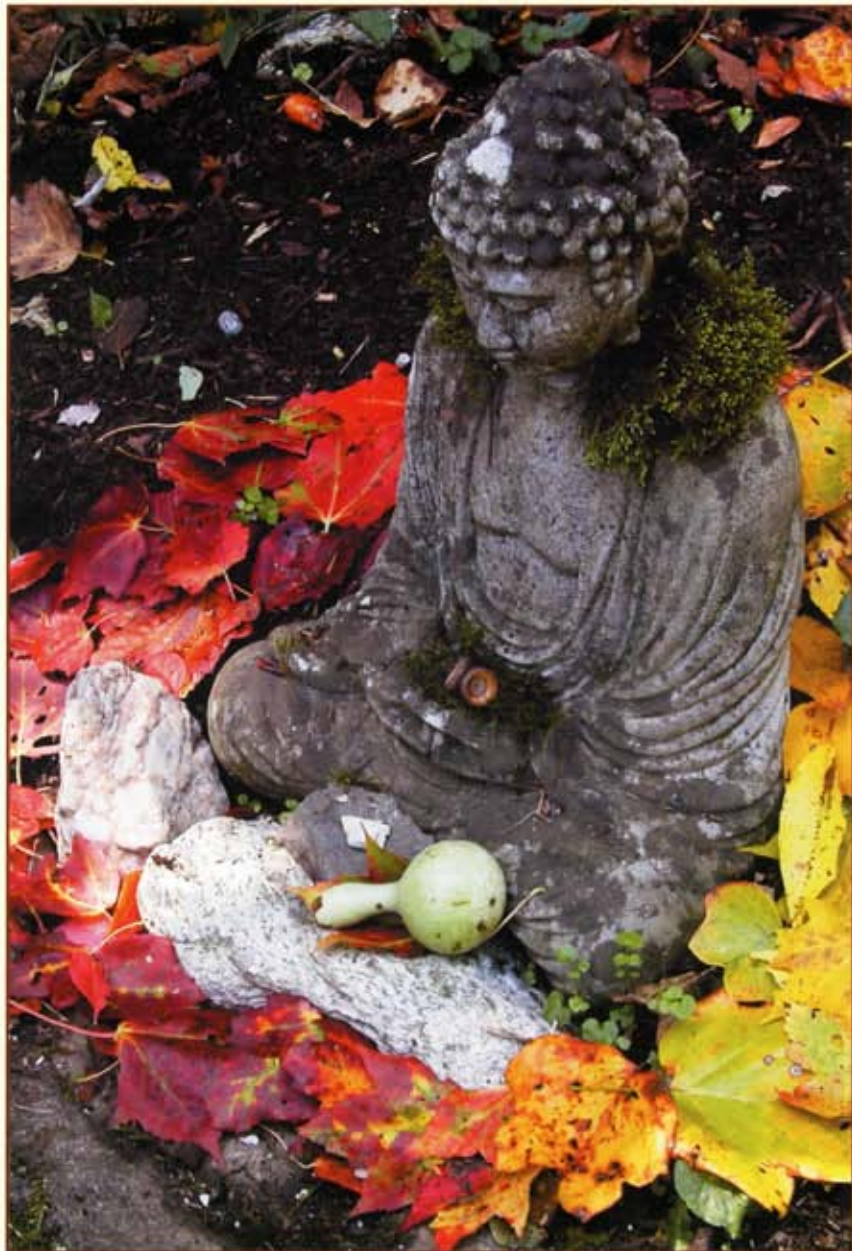
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2008 BCBS Courses

Māra Rebuffed
Pali Poetry



For Not to be taken
from the room.
reference

Barre Center for Buddhist Studies





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Insight involves an intuition
of mind and heart that takes
us beyond knowledge toward
wisdom. It has to do with deeply
understanding the nature of
things, rather than with knowing a
lot about them.

In the Buddhist tradition
wisdom is nurtured by the deep
investigation of experience. This
involves the careful integration
of both study and practice—the
study of dharma (the Buddha's
teachings), coupled with the
practice of meditation.

This journal is dedicated to
exploring some of the insights that
such a balanced inquiry uncovers
about ourselves, our world, and
our fellow beings. We welcome
you to the discussion.

Post Copernicus

Remember how people used to naively think the earth was at the center of the universe, and that the sun and all the stars revolved around us? And then Copernicus came along and declared the radically counter-intuitive truth that the earth in fact orbited the sun. This launched a scientific revolution that focused on studying everything from an objective stance, as if we could hover outside ourselves and get a disembodied perspective on it all. This way, as the story goes, our view is not cluttered by all that messy, subjective stuff that only distorts reality according to our petty likes and dislikes and confirms our personal illusions.

Well, it's been a pretty good run for the objective sciences, but the cutting edge of all our post-modern understanding is putting us right back where we started—at the center of the world. It turns out that the non-personal "objective" perspective on everything cannot be sustained except as a sort of thought experiment. We are embedded in the world, whether we like it or not. All views are a view from somewhere, and we are discovering again and again that where you are looking from makes a big difference to what you see.

The Buddhists realized this a long time ago. They begin their take on things from the inside out, so to speak, rather than from the outside in. We are used to starting with a grand explanation of it all, from the big bang to coagulating stardust to roiling primordial soup, from life to monkeys to digital watches, and then, almost as an afterthought, trying to figure how we—that is you and me—fit in to it all. The ancient contemplative traditions of India started with the empirical phenomenon of consciousness—the capacity we each have for awareness—and developed a model of existence flowing out from that. The view they built their understanding around is one becoming more familiar to the contemporary cognitive- and neuro-sciences, namely that each individual mind and body system constructs meaning as a synthetic momentary act. Each one of us, in other words, is planted squarely in the center of a virtual world we create for ourselves every moment.

The implications of this are remarkable, but let's first dispatch a few mistaken ideas about what this means. It does not imply that oddity of philosophy, the solipsistic idealism that nothing exists outside myself, or that my mind is creating all the physical universe at my whim. Nor does it mean that I have a lot of power to control things, or even that I am the most important thing there is. It also does not mean that other people don't matter,

or that my pursuit of pleasure and avoidance of pain is the primary purpose of the universe. One might be forgiven for thinking so from time to time, but none of these views are conducive to sustainable well-being. At the same time, we need to be careful not to draw mistaken conclusions in the other direction. My life is not necessarily absurd, pointless, or without intrinsic value. It need not be the case that without reference to a transcendent reality greater than myself, for example, or without an agenda created by others, my life has no meaning.

As I understand the post-modern revolution, meaning is something constructed locally. The implication of being at the center of our world, in the Buddha's estimation, is that we have both the freedom and the responsibility to influence how it all unfolds. The pivot point around which the world of our experience turns is the node of conscious awareness manifesting in this particular body at this particular moment. An episode of consciousness arises again and again, like the firing of a spark plug, and interacts with sense objects and sense organs, perceptions, feelings and attitudes, to shape a glimpse of a meaningful order. With innumerable glimpses strung together in a stream of consciousness, the view of a coherent narrative unfolds.

The mechanics of this process are mostly hard-wired, thank goodness, but we have direct access to the very best part of it: we have the privilege of paying attention to all that is happening, and for it to be illuminated with mindful awareness. Being at the center of the world, we have pretty good seats for the show. It's all flowing around us and through us; it's all happening for us and by means of us. And when we decide to participate, by deliberately and whole-heartedly attending to the details of arising and passing phenomena, it can become a transcendent experience. Regarded objectively, this individual fountain of consciousness might not seem like such a big deal, compared to the other splendors of the universe, but when entered into subjectively, with direct awareness, it can become the most splendid of all things.

The Buddha invites us to move beyond the limitations that come from allowing ourselves to be defined by external conditions, a lump of earth orbiting some other sun, and to embrace the central source of our existence. By opening our awareness to what is pouring out of us each moment, and moreover by intentionally shaping what unfolds in wholesome and altruistic ways, there are few limits to how bright we can become—in this very life.

—Andrew Olendzki

Dhamma as Skillful Kamma

Ajahn Sucitto

There is a rather humorous text in the Middle Length Discourses called the *Kukkuravatika Sutta*, or 'The Dog-duty Ascetic' (M 57). In the Buddha's time, the so-called spiritual scene was full of people who did extreme ascetic practices. In this text, we're told of an ascetic who likes to practice like he's a dog. He walks around on all fours, traipsing in and out of puddles, and will only eat food that is thrown on the ground. And he has an ascetic friend who likes to practice like he's an ox. This one stands around and lies down in straw. They both have been doing their ascetic practice for many years.

They come across the Buddha and the dog-duty ascetic asks him something like, "What is the result of my practice as a dog ascetic? Have I burned off a lot of bad *kamma* [action]?" And the Buddha says "Don't ask me." The dog ascetic says, "No, tell me." And the Buddha says, "Don't ask me." This goes on for three times, until the Buddha finally says, "Okay, you've asked me three times. Having been asked three times, I cannot refuse, so I'll tell you. Since you've been practicing like a dog, and have developed the dog-mind fully and without interruption, your

destiny is to be either reborn as a dog if you've done it well, or to be reborn in hell if you have messed up." Maybe the Buddha is being slightly humorous here, but he says that rather than do all these silly things and think you're wearing out kamma, there's a better way to do it.

Four Kinds of Kamma

At this point the Buddha goes into a brief exposition on four kinds of kamma. The first of these kamma is called "dark action with dark result," which is to say it is negative action producing negative results. Here one takes life, abuses living beings, takes intoxicants, and so forth. The results of those actions are dark and negative—one is heir to one's actions. It seems appropriate to call it "dark" rather than bad, because it is more like a feeling tone. The mind feels dark when it does these things, and it leads to darker feelings in the future.

The language of the *sutta* may seem unnecessarily cluttered here but it says, "one generates an afflictive bodily formation." What it means is that in any action you're creating a *sankhāra*, an intention, volition, or formation. It may seem like just one moment's blip—you've had a naughty thought and it is gone—but there's actually more to it than that.

This article is drawn from a course offered by Ajahn Sucitto at BCBS this past June.

The process of dhamma involves a transpersonal causality of conditions. It is not me doing it.

These formations add up over time and create a kammic tendency, a kind of habitual track down which one's mind will run. This will determine the sort of person you become. If you keep doing the same thing over and over again, then you are creating a current or a kammic pathway. Every time you go down that track you generate an afflictive formation, an afflictive *sankhāra*. This kamma then comes back to you because you have created a channel through bodily action for certain actions to lead to certain results. The same thing happens with actions of speech and with actions of the mind. If you think in certain ways, you foster particular emotions, and you then get programmed into particular habits and tendencies, like jealousies or grudges or things of this nature.

The second kind of kamma is called "bright action with bright result." Here one generates an unafflictive bodily *sankhāra* through a skillful action, such as abstaining from taking life, generosity, harmlessness, or an unafflictive verbal or mental *sankhāra*. This leads to a bright destination or result, in the sense that wholesome things will result from wholesome actions.

The third kind of kamma is when it is mixed. There's a bit of a muddle here: a bit of dark and a bit of bright. Perhaps you're running out in order to do someone a favor but kick the dog that's getting in your way—some good, some bad.

The last kind of kamma is neither dark nor bright action, with neither dark nor bright result, and this is the idea the Buddha is introducing to the dog ascetic. It is a kind of action that leads to the destruction of action, because it is the action undertaken with an attitude of letting go, of detachment, of dispassion. When one abandons the volition of acting to obtain particular kammic results, there is no habitual track, no program to follow, no becoming a being, no constructing a self.

Action to End Action

The actions that lead to further kamma proceed from an inherent experience of "me," a being, an identity. And these actions give results in another me, another identity. The action that leads to the end of action does not proceed from a sense of me, and it doesn't give rise to the sense of me. This is the action of insight, if you will. It is this movement of insight that allows you to come out of the program, to come out of the conditioning, to come out of being a self. This is the movement of the *dhamma*.

In this movement, there is no "I." It is not "I" who am concentrating, for example, during a meditation session. Rather, concentration comes because it is dependent on the causal condition of rapture and ease; rapture depends on the causal conditions of joy, gladness, and freedom from remorse. So it is not me that's doing it; I am not producing a result. It is just that certain causes and conditions fill up and flood the system, and they generate other causes and conditions. The process of dhamma involves a transpersonal causality of conditions. It is not me doing it. There may well be a sense of me doing it, or of claiming ownership of what is happening, but this is not the same thing.

So the dhamma that leads to the end of kamma is not me getting rid of my kamma because that intention and action to get rid of kamma would be kamma! Let's say there is some negativity in me, and I think, "I've got to get rid of my bad habits." That's not going to do it. It might be a nice idea from which to start, but it is not going to do it, because that would be *me* trying to do it. All that happens is we get a sense of negativity toward ourselves to "Stop being this way, stop being that way." This does not take us very far.

A more effective approach involves touching into the good, attuning to the good, letting



the good swell up and move. That's the process of dhamma, which has two aspects: calming (*samatha*) and insight (*vipassanā*). Calming the mind and body gives rise to a good feeling. It is a good feeling not just because it feels good, but because it makes the mind expansive, steady, intelligent, and intuitive. And then there is insight, looking into causes and conditions and understanding the nature of what is happening. From these two working together, the process of liberation unfolds. When one sees, "Well, that's not necessary, that's just painful," one stops doing it. This is the abandonment of action.

The ceasing of kamma, of habitual action and reaction, always depends upon a skillful basis. We work on two fronts. One is in setting up the programs, the conditions, the *sankhāras* that will keep the relative sense of me in touch with what is healthy and in a good place. That can be maybe 80% of our practice, and it is a wide practice, not based just in meditation. From that basis we can begin to look into how it can all be abandoned, how the sense of me that is so often generated can be seen through and even relinquished.

Calming

The first aspect of this process of dhamma, the calming aspect, is perhaps the most easy to talk about. Recollecting the ten *pāramis* is one of the easiest things we can do to get on the calming track: **generosity** (*dāna*), of body, speech and mind; **virtue** (*sīla*), or being aware of behavior through body, speech and mind; **renunciation** (*nekkhamma*), attuning to needs rather than wants in body, speech and mind; **discernment** (*paññā*) or wisdom; **persistence** (*virīya*) or energy; **patience** (*khantī*); **truthfulness** (*sacca*); **determination** (*adhiṭṭhāna*) or resolution; **loving kindness** (*mettā*); and **equanimity** (*upekkhā*). These are ways in which the good can be classified or broken up into ten pieces. This means that throughout a day you've got something you can bear in mind: "I can be more patient, I can develop this quality; I can do it." We do a little bit each time. It gives you something to tune in to and recollect. And at the end of the day, for example, when you get into your meditation, you feel it from where the goodness is, which is where we should ideally begin our practice in the causal process of dhamma.

Turning Toward Insight

The primary obstacle to insight is deep ignorance, in which are rooted all sorts of tainted emotions, mistaken views, and habitual actions. The second sutta of the *Majjhima Nikāya* (the *Sabbāsava Sutta*) outlines a number of strategies for stemming the outflow (*āsava*) of these taints. You tackle the whole lot of it by stemming the flow—putting out a block here, an obstacle here—so that it doesn't flow out so freely and you have less stuff to have to repair. The Buddha presents seven avenues for attending to the outflow of unhealthy states in this text, and they offer an accessible way to move from calming into insight.

1. **Seeing.** The first approach is called seeing, and has to do with learning appropriate attention (*yoniso manasikāra*). This is a *sankhāra*, a formation, and it refers to the skill of the defining mind, the thinking mind, or the mind that can conceive. It is not the feeling mind, but the mind that defines "What is this? What is a skillful way to look at it?" It determines what to give attention to and what not to attend to. There's a broad range here. If you give a lot of attention to where greed, hatred and delusion arise, that's called inappropriate. If you give attention to where they subside, that's appropriate, that's skillful.

So you might examine how you look at television. What do you watch? How much do you watch? How good is it? Is it skillful? Is it useful? Is it appropriate, and when is it appropriate? When is it not appropriate? These are not hard-line judgments but just a way of knowing your own mind, to know what's happening for you: what you look at, what you give ear to, what you attend to.

The Buddha talks in some detail about this. If you keep attending in terms of "Was I? What was I? How was I? What will I be? Having been, what will I be? Am I? Am I not? What am I?

How am I?" and so forth, then this kind of attending to those ideas is food for the outflow of becoming. "Becoming" is that which always forms an identity. So if you keep saying "Who, who, who," you're actually stimulating that tendency to become or be someone. You will strengthen the tendency to create light and dark actions that lead to light and dark results.

Thus, various kinds of views can arise. "I have a self. I have no-self. My Big Self perceives my small self. My not-self perceives my self," and so forth. This is called a thicket of views, and we can go round and round and get really caught up in all that. It is quite a ride, and it can be interesting at times. But this is not conducive to insight. Instead, you can attend to experience in less personal terms, such as "Where is the stress, where is the suffering now? What does it originate from? Where does it stop? What helps it to stop?" That is wise attention.

2. **Restraining.** Restraint involves guarding or checking the senses. It means that we have some responsibility for our eyes, our ears, and our other senses. Don't just let any old thing grab your eyes or ears. This could be very helpful, I guess, when you're going shopping because everything is out to grab your paycheck. Then you get home and think, "What did I buy this for?" We need to look at what's helpful and not at the things that are going to strengthen the outflow of greed, for example. When you attend to guarding the senses, the outflows don't have so much free rein.

3. **Using.** A monk can reflect appropriately on the four requisites of the monastic life, but even if you're not a monk it is a good thing to reflect upon. These four requisites are the things you need: clothing, food, shelter, and medicine. If you are getting these, you can use them without obsessing over them. They are there to serve a particular purpose. For lay life, there are probably a few other requisites. A car is probably a requisite; wages are a requisite; insurance

The mind learns to not make a whole mental reaction to the inevitable discomforts we must all face.

policies may be a requisite. But just how much and what standard do you really need?

It can be seen that needs tend to stabilize, whereas wants do not. Wants only get bigger. And there is a lot of encouragement to foster more wants and call them needs. They are really just wants, which are really kind of fairy dust stuff. If you get a clear indication of what you need and why you need it, then what you get serves what you need. This helps to stop the outflow into sense forms, where you identify with your car, your house, or your paycheck.

4. Enduring. The next strategy is tolerating: patient enduring or the ability to endure painful feeling. This is something to develop. Painful feelings will inevitably come to us, and it is good practice to learn to bear them, to develop that capacity to tolerate, since there is only so much you can ameliorate. Someone was saying yesterday that as you get older you pretty much get more disagreeable feelings. Maybe you can't do much about that; it is something you have to bear with and not get depressed about.

Don't let the physical feeling translate into an emotional feeling; that's the point of tolerating. It doesn't mean being super-brave, but just pragmatic. You don't want this stuff that gets into the body to get into the heart and take over. I know people who suffered extreme, long-term chronic pain. They have become extremely serene and cheerful because they don't let their minds go into complaining and struggling, because they understand that doing that just makes it so much worse. If you reinforce the approach of "Well, that's that; don't go there," the mind eventually learns to not make a whole

mental reaction to the inevitable discomforts we must all face.

5. Avoiding. Avoiding dangerous things is also a useful practice. The text gives all sorts of analogies about a wild bull, a stump, a bramble patch, poison ivy and dams and mosquitoes, an open sewer. Then it goes into associating with bad friends. Just as you would avoid a garbage pit, avoid people who would tend to draw you into unskillful ways. We are flocking creatures, so we tend to want to flock and associate with others. This is natural, but it takes a little bit of awareness and resilience to learn whom to flock with. As the Buddha said, if you can't find suitable friends, better to be alone.

6. Removing. Sometimes something is just so unhealthy it has to be removed or even destroyed. This can be a difficult topic, discussed in some detail in the *Vitakka-santhāna Sutta* (M 20) which deals with how you abandon, dispel and wipe out unskillful thoughts. It doesn't mean necessarily using a sledgehammer. There is a whole range of ways—from the subtle to the insightful to the patient—for not allowing negative moods to take over and dwell in the mind. If you do dwell, the moods will create programs such that your habit of repeatedly thinking in certain ways creates a channel down which your thinking moves. You can be acting in certain ways and not even be aware that a channel is being created.

A common example of this is gossiping. Because our flocking habit is so strong, we get together and talk about, you know, so and so and so and so. "What she's like" and "Have you



heard about this one?" And this can get pretty unskillful. It is better to have a program where we don't do that. If something really needs to be said, or if your opinion is asked for, you say it, but you don't go bad mouthing other people for the sake of fun, for the sake of social contact. Sometimes gossip contains nuances of psychological abuse. Thus, gossip is something we can refrain from.

7. Developing. Development is a topic in its own right, but can be taken here to refer to the gradual cultivation of the seven factors of awakening. Developing mindfulness (*sati*) leads to interest in the investigation of phenomena (*dhamma-vicaya*); which gives rise to energy (*viriya*); leading to joy (*pīti*); which settles into tranquility (*pasaddhī*); manifesting as concentration (*samādhi*); and culminating in equanimity (*upekkhā*). The cultivation and development of each of these qualities leads naturally to the next, and a natural course of progress unfolds.



So this is the insight process. It begins with establishing or allowing skillful qualities to grow and develop by turning toward the good and creating a ground of well-being and balance. The ten *pāramīs* (perfections), used as skillful kamma, set up the causal conditions for this. Then through the cultivation of letting go, we gradually abandon the project of becoming the self who creates actions and experiences their results. All this perhaps gives you a sense of the breadth of Dhamma training. It is all conducive to liberation. It is all skillful kamma that will lead to the end of kamma.

Ajahn Sucitto entered monastic life in Thailand where he became a bhikkhu in 1976. He has lived in Britain since 1978, training under Ajahn Sumedho in the lineage of Ajahn Chah. He has been teaching since 1981, and was appointed abbot of Cittaviveka (Chithurst) in 1992.

Breaking Free with Creative Awareness

Martine Batchelor

Meditation is often seen just as a way to relax or to empty one's mind. Personally I think this is a lost cause, because one can't stop the brain from functioning.

This morning I would like to look at creative awareness. You might be more familiar with the word "mindfulness," but it is the same idea. The common ground is looking at what we do in meditation. Meditation is often seen just as a way to relax or to empty one's mind. Personally I think this is a lost cause, because one can't stop the brain from functioning.

It is interesting, in term of habits, to see what we are doing in meditation. Here I want to make a distinction between cultivation and effect. People are often judging their meditation in terms of its effects, but the cultivation aspect is actually more important. The effect is merely the aftermath and is not what we are actually trying to cultivate.

A student came to me once and said, "I've been meditating for ten years, and my meditation is not really improving." My first question was, "But what about your life?" She said, "Oh yes, my life has greatly improved." Once we started talking, she could see that actually over ten years her meditation had improved. However, it was not in line with what she thought it should be. So there is no guarantee that meditation will be like you want it to be, but I can guarantee you it will work.

This article is drawn from a course offered by Martine Batchelor at PCBS this past October.

Concentration

The first element of meditation we want to look at is *concentration*. Concentration focuses the mind on an object of experience. But here we are not talking about a forced concentration, the kind of thing you do when you try to narrowly focus on the breath. We are talking about a type of concentration that is inclusive, not exclusive. There is a meditation where you exclude everything else and focus exclusively on one thing, like the breath, but personally I don't think this is such a good idea. I'd rather have a concentration practice much more like an anchor, like a resting point, a place you come back to. Let's look at how this works.

You sit in meditation for a few seconds or a few minutes, completely aware of the breath coming in and going out. You feel it. You know it. You are very present to it. And then you go off. Generally, you don't go off into some amazing, new, fantastic state, but rather you go into what I would call mental patterning, emotional patterning or physical patterning. As an example of this mental patterning, you sit here, you're present, you're sitting in this room, with these people. And then, you might be in Boston, or you might be on holiday, or you might be in your retirement. It can be anywhere or anything, but generally you will be somewhere that you often think about.

*When we come back to the breath, we come back to experience...
where our creative potential can come out and express itself.*

What happens when we do this is that we feed our habit of this kind of mental patterning. The way concentration works is that even when you go off and away from the breath, you don't go so far. You go a little bit but then you remember the other possibility, the possibility of focusing on the breath. So we come back, and that's how it works: off again, come back, and so on. Often people think, "Ah, it's so boring. I have to come back all the time." But it's not boring if you become aware of the effectiveness of coming back. The fact that you go off, but you don't go too far, is a major breakthrough in how we normally live our lives. Too often we go off, get lost, and don't come back.

When you do come back, two things are happening. First, you're not feeding the pattern; you're not developing it even more. Each time you consciously come back to the breath, you diminish the power of the pattern. This way, over time, you become more calm and spacious with your concentration. Each time we don't feed or give more power to our story, to our ideas about ourselves, we break the pattern a little.

Each possibility of breaking the pattern is a matter of choice. Most of the time you continue with a thought, even if you don't want to follow that particular thought, because it's more interesting than following the breath. A lot of the time we may believe we are thinking through an emotion when we are actually firmly in its grip. But when we decide to do meditation, with an effort in concentration, we generate a power of intention. With this intention, you let go of the stray thought and you come back to the breath. And every time you come back, you give more power to the creative awareness and less power to the habit.

For me, it is an axiom that meditation is not so much about being with the breath every single second. That is very difficult and can only

be achieved in very specific circumstances. But this does not mean the meditation of coming back is not effective. You could have a thousand thoughts, and a thousand times you will have the opportunity to come back. You can make the choice to come back at any time, and it will diminish the power of the mental habit. So cultivation is the coming back, again and again, to the breath. It is not useful to think only about the effect of meditation, because that is a slippery slope. Better to focus mainly on cultivation.

When we come back to the breath, we come back to experience. It's very important to see that when attention goes off, it generally goes into abstraction. In abstraction we are ignoring reality instead of being in the fullness of experience, which is where our creative potential can come out and express itself. We all know we have a brain, we have a certain kind of emotional system related to the heart, we have a body, and we have sensations that go with it. All this is not going to stop. But there is a difference between what I would call creative functioning within those potentials of thinking, feeling, and sensation, and being stuck in them and feeling you can't get out. Concentration brings back the mental, emotional, and physical patterns to the creative functions of mind, body, and heart.

An image of what concentration does is that of a glass with muddy water. If you shake the glass, the water gets muddy and you can't really see through it. But if you leave the glass alone for a bit, the mud goes to the bottom and the water at the top becomes clean. This is the basic idea of concentration: if things are not so agitated and they settle down, then you can see more clearly and there can be more space for you to see. Over time meditation develops space around our thoughts, around our feelings, and around our sensations.

Inquiry

The second element of meditation to look at is *inquiry*. This is not an intellectual inquiry, or a psychological inquiry, or an analytical inquiry: it's an experiential inquiry. When you go into the breath, you notice certain characteristics of that experience of breathing. For example, we can notice its constantly changing nature, coming in a little cooler, going out a little warmer. When an inquiry is made with awareness, there is vividness, a clarity, a creativity. One is really going inside the experience. Going inside the experience means looking at its changing nature.

Why does the Buddha say "Look at the changing nature?" Because we have a tendency to solidify, we have a tendency to "permanentize" things we experience. Something is happening that is just arising out



of conditions and will disappear under other conditions, but we tend to regard it as if it were going to happen forever. The Buddha said, "Come look, nothing can last for a very long time. Things arise, stay a little while, and pass away." Often I feel we make things last longer than they need to, and sometimes this causes suffering. The habit of permanentizing is one of our habits of suffering.

Another habit we have is "forecasting." For example, some of you might not have done much meditation, so when you come to sit a retreat it's either painful or it's not much fun, and you think, "Ah, it's going to be like this for the whole three days," and then three days begin to seem to you like ten years. This is because we have the habit of thinking, "The way I feel now, I'm going to feel exactly the same way every second, every minute, every hour, from now on."

But this is not exactly our experience. Can we just stay with the experience in the moment? If we continue to notice, we can see how our thoughts change, how emotions change, how sensations change. And they are changing quite rapidly. So this is the reason for looking deeply and inquiring, to become aware of the changing nature of things. This awareness is a new habit that replaces the old habit. It is a skillful habit replacing an unskillful habit.

We can also look at what is called the *conditioned nature* of experience. One of the major insights of the Buddha is that things arise from conditions, stay awhile, and then disappear when conditions change. Many monks gained great insight just by hearing these words of the Buddha. Nothing is intrinsically what it is, but all things arise and pass away interdependently with other things. But we live with the habit of feeling that things are fixed, independent, and disconnected from one another.

The function of experiential inquiry is to help us see that we have choices with our habits. The thing with habits is that we feel stuck, and we keep doing the same thing over and over again, and feel "I cannot do otherwise." But this experiential inquiry shows

*It was a wonderful experience.
Then, like everything, it turned out to be impermanent.*

us how things are changing, how things are conditioned, and starts to allow us to see that we have some choices. We have a choice of doing this or doing that. There can be different ways to deal with whatever is arising, with difficulty or with ease. Creativity comes from this realization.

So concentration give us more space, so to speak, and within that space, experiential inquiry allows us see more. Together, concentration and experiential inquiry help us develop creative awareness. That is what we are doing when we do meditation on retreat or in daily life: we're developing the power of creative awareness.

Learning a Lesson

I once saw something quite clearly using this method when I was practicing as a nun in Korea many years ago. I used to sit in meditation ten hours a day. One day, as I sat in meditation, I suddenly saw very clearly that I was totally self-centered. Up to that point, since I was eleven years old, I had wanted to save the world. So I lived with the image of myself as a really compassionate person. I mean, I would have given my shirt to anybody who asked for it. I thought I was incredibly other-centered. But what came to me in that particular moment when I was sitting there in meditation was that all my experience was self-referential—what I was thinking about, what I was feeling, what I was sensing—it was all about me. As I thought about it, it became clear to me that whatever I experienced was about ninety to ninety-five percent self-centered.

I was sitting at that time in Korea with four other women, and when I looked at them I realized they were doing the same thing. They, too, were as self-centered as I was. I realized that when our self-interests coincided, we could be in harmony with each other. But it was still painful to see how much we were bound up in all this self-interest.

So I said to myself, "Okay let's go to fifty percent self-centered, and fifty percent other-centered." There is still this body, this organism that needs some care. It's in a way my responsibility, since I'm alive, to not entirely neglect myself. But the point is that there needs at least to be a better balance between being self-centered and other-centered. From the ninety-five percent of our habitual self-centeredness, we can try to pare it away and gradually move more to other-centeredness. Undertaking this process, we begin to see that while it seems to be in our interest to be self-centered, it is very tiring to spend our energy that way. As we become more other-centered, we release much of our constricted energy and move into greater openness. We don't disappear. We are still there, but it feels very different from the energy of self-centeredness.

Toward the end of that retreat, things did feel very different. I thought, "What's happening? Why is it so different?" And I realized that everyone was feeling much more other-centered. For fifteen days we acted not just out of plain self-interest but also out of other-interest. It was a beautiful moment for me. It was so peaceful, so open. It was so stable, so harmonious. It was a wonderful experience. Then, like everything, it turned out to be impermanent. After a few days the percentage went up again, and we were back to our self-interests.

What was interesting about the creative awareness in this whole process was that I did not feel terrible about myself. I did not feel that I was the worst person in the world because I was so self-centered. In fact I thought it was funny. Acceptance is an important aspect of creative awareness. In the experience I have been talking about, when I saw my self-centeredness so clearly, I fully accepted it. I did not say, "This is not so." I said, "Yes, it is so." Because I could see clearly, I could accept it. And because I could accept it just as it was, it could be transformative.

*This is a lifelong journey we are on.
It is making our buddha-mind emerge slowly.*

It is important to see that creative awareness is not judgment, because sometimes we can use awareness practice to reinforce self-judgment. Self-judgment is like a little policewoman or policeman on our shoulder. "Oh, this is not good." With creative awareness, when you see something, you open up to it. When I saw the problem of self-centeredness, I said to myself, "Okay, now I know what the difficulty is, and now I can work on it."

When we see our negative habits we can work on them. But until you see them clearly, it's like fighting in the dark. You don't really know what goes on. And one difficulty is that, like everything else, negative habits are not there all the time. They emerge depending upon certain conditions, and change when the conditions change. Part of our experiential inquiry is to see this, to ask the question, "What are the conditions that give rise to negative habits?"

I used to have a habit—not so much anymore—of being irritable. I would get irritated, and I used to look for somebody or something to be irritated at. As you know, it's not so much fun being irritated with oneself, so I generally looked for somebody else. And then I tried to get into some argument as a result of such irritation. Working with creative awareness, I looked at this problem and I thought, "What's going on? What are the conditions causing me to be irritable? And I realized, "I am tired." So when I saw that condition, instead of going to look for somebody to be irritable with I went to take some rest, and it was much better for everybody, myself included.



Creative awareness allows us not only to see the negative things in our experience; it illuminates the positive things equally clearly. It allows us to appreciate our good qualities and our greater potential, which we often don't see clearly. It is very important to know, to experience, and to accept these things, too.

This is a lifelong journey we are on. It is making our buddha-mind, our potentiality for other-centeredness, emerge slowly, as we work

the percentages. Creative awareness is not as much some particular state as it is an opening. It opens up something in us, by bringing together concentration and experiential inquiry. Concentration helps us to be calmer and have a more spacious mind. Experiential inquiry helps us see more clearly what's going on in our experience, to see its changing nature. Then, in our meditation practice, creative awareness helps us open up to all kinds of possibilities and transformation. That's why sitting is so important. It allows us to develop stability, which in turn enables us to accept things as they are, both difficult things and positive things. Whatever arrives, we can deal with it.

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Outline of Abhidhamma

The Abhidhamma is a body of literature that emerged shortly after the lifetime of the Buddha, comprising the third of the "three baskets" (*Tiṭṭaka*) of the early Buddhist canon. The word also refers broadly to a body of thought whose roots are in the psychological teachings and meditation practices of the *suttas* (the discourses) and whose branches reach far into the mature philosophical discussions of the Mahayana and Vajrayana traditions.

The Abhidhamma is essentially an attempt to systematize the Buddha's teachings about the dynamics of moment-to-moment experience as it unfolds in the stream of consciousness. The following pages offer a brief outline of some of the main components of the system. More detail of the Pali version presented here can be found in Bhikkhu Bodhi's excellent *Comprehensive Manual of Abhidhamma* (BPS/Pariyatti).

In summary, the Abhidhamma describes how 28 physical phenomena co-arise with 52 mental factors, manifesting as 89 types of consciousness, which unfold in series of 17 mind moments, governed by 24 types of causal relation. One of its methods is to take a single thought-moment of experience, accessible by means of (rather advanced capabilities of) insight meditation, and then identify the characteristics of that moment of consciousness. Numerous things might be discerned about it:

1) Consciousness (*citta*). Each mind moment will manifest as one of the 89 forms of consciousness enumerated on this list. It will be consciousness taking place on a certain sphere or level of existence, from the mundane sense-oriented sphere, through the higher form and formless spheres accessible by the purification practices of absorption (*jhāna*), all the way to the non-ordinary states of consciousness associated with the attainment of awakening. In addition, this moment of consciousness will be known to be either wholesome, unwholesome or neutral in terms of its karmic effect on subsequent moments. Finally, each moment will be classified either as a karma-producing mind moment, the result of previous karma-producing moments, or as a purely functional moment that is neither. The moment of consciousness under review will be seen to be only one of the 89 possibilities; the next moment is sure to be different.

2) Mental factors (*cetasika*). There are a total of 52 sub-functions of the mind, called mental factors, which cooperate in various configurations to assist consciousness in the knowing of an object. Among these, 7 arise in all mind moments and are called universals, while 6 others may or may not be present and are thus called occasionals. These 13 mental factors are ethically variable because they can arise in either wholesome or unwholesome states of mind. The next 14 factors are always unwholesome, and their presence renders all moments of consciousness containing them unwholesome. These too can arise in various internal combinations, but the first 4 of them are always present in every unwholesome mind moment. The final 25 mental factors are always wholesome (called beautiful), and any mind moment containing them will become wholesome by their presence. These too can arise in various combinations involving universal and occasional wholesome factors. An important principle of the system is that wholesome and unwholesome factors can never arise together in the same mind moment.

3) Material form (*rūpa*). All the 28 material phenomena are based on the 4 great elements, earth, water, air, and fire (i.e., solid, liquid, gas, plasma), and these four also all arise together in different combinations or saturations. Material phenomena include both the organs and the objects of experience, as well as a number of supporting life functions. A category of non-concrete matter includes various characteristics of material phenomena not construed as things in their own right. With material factors, as with mental factors, there are various rules governing the way they can arise in combination.

4) The mental process (*citta-vīthi*). The Abhidhamma, influenced primarily by later tradition, identifies 17 different functions of mind that unfold one after another over time in the stream of consciousness. From a baseline of unconscious mental activity, the mind responds to a stimulus presenting at a sense door by gradually taking notice and turning attention toward the object, cognizing the object in a moment of seeing, hearing, etc., and then taking a few moments to receive, investigate and determine what is happening. There are then 7 moments of intentional response in which wholesome or unwholesome karma is produced, followed in some cases by a couple of moments of recognition. If the mental process is taking place at the mind door, rather than at a sense door, it is somewhat quicker and cuts out a few steps. After this series, the mind lapses again into an unconscious state until the next stimulation. The details of this process are described (in the later texts) not only for normal mental processes, but also for *jhāna* states, the process of rebirth and liberation.

5) Causal relations (*paccaya*). Not shown on these pages is the list of 24 causal relations governing the relationship between all possible combinations of material phenomena, mental factors, and consciousness. Factors within a single group (e.g., mental, material), within a single mind moment, between different mind moments, between individual and group factors—all these are spelled out exhaustively (and yes, exhaustingly) in the culminating text of the Abhidhamma section of the canon, the *Paṭṭhāna*.

This may all seem rather busy to those of us familiar with a more simple and open approach to meditation, but this science of the mind offers a rigorous description of the landscape revealed by insight meditation, taken to its furthest stages of development. The Buddha seems to best express the crux of the Abhidhamma—the relationship between insight, knowledge, impermanence, dependent origination, awakening, and liberation—when he said of his chief disciple (and probable guiding architect of the Abhidhamma):

"Sāriputta has deep...penetrative wisdom. For half a month Sāriputta had insight into states one by one as they occurred:...known to him those states arose, known they were present, known they disappeared. He understood thus: 'So indeed, these states, not having been, come into being; having been, they vanish.' Regarding those states, he abided unattracted, unrepelled, independent, unattached, free, unfettered, with a mind rid of barriers." *Anupada Sutta* (M 111)

—A. Olendzki

SENSE SPHERE CONSCIOUSNESS**PRODUCES UNWHOLESOME KARMA**

1. Greed-rooted; with mental pleasure; with wrong view; unprompted
2. Greed-rooted; with mental pleasure; with wrong view; prompted
3. Greed-rooted; with mental pleasure; without wrong view; unprompted
4. Greed-rooted; with mental pleasure; without wrong view; prompted
5. Greed-rooted; with equanimity; with wrong view; unprompted
6. Greed-rooted; with equanimity; with wrong view; prompted
7. Greed-rooted; with equanimity; without wrong view; unprompted
8. Greed-rooted; with equanimity; without wrong view; prompted
9. Hatred-rooted; with mental displeasure; with aversion; unprompted
10. Hatred-rooted; with mental displeasure; with aversion; prompted
11. Delusion-rooted; with equanimity; with doubt;
12. Delusion-rooted; with equanimity; with restlessness;

RESULT OF PAST UNWHOLESOME KARMA

13. Unwholesome resultant; with equanimity; eye-consciousness
14. Unwholesome resultant; with equanimity; ear-consciousness
15. Unwholesome resultant; with equanimity; nose-consciousness
16. Unwholesome resultant; with equanimity; tongue-consciousness
17. Unwholesome resultant; with physical pain; body-consciousness
18. Unwholesome resultant; with equanimity; receiving
19. Unwholesome resultant; with equanimity; investigating

PRODUCES WHOLESOME KARMA

31. Beautiful rooted; with mental pleasure; with knowledge; unprompted
32. Beautiful rooted; with mental pleasure; with knowledge; prompted
33. Beautiful rooted; w/ mental pleasure; w/out knowlege; unprompted
34. Beautiful rooted; with mental pleasure; without knowlege; prompted
35. Beautiful rooted; with equanimity; with knowledge; unprompted
36. Beautiful rooted; with equanimity; with knowledge; prompted
37. Beautiful rooted; with equanimity; without knowlege; unprompted
38. Beautiful rooted; with equanimity; without knowlege; prompted

RESULT OF PAST WHOLESOME KARMA

20. Wholesome resultant; with equanimity; eye-consciousness
21. Wholesome resultant; with equanimity; ear-consciousness
22. Wholesome resultant; with equanimity; nose-consciousness
23. Wholesome resultant; with equanimity; tongue-consciousness
24. Wholesome resultant; with physical pleasure; body-consciousness
25. Wholesome resultant; with equanimity; receiving
26. Wholesome resultant; with mental pleasure; investigating
27. Wholesome resultant; with equanimity; investigating
39. Beautiful resultant; with mental pleasure; with knowledge; unprompted
40. Beautiful resultant; with mental pleasure; with knowledge; prompted
41. Beautiful resultant; w/ mental pleasure; w/out knowlege; unprompted
42. Beautiful resultant; with mental pleasure; without knowlege; prompted
43. Beautiful resultant; with equanimity; with knowledge; unprompted
44. Beautiful resultant; with equanimity; with knowledge; prompted
45. Beautiful resultant; with equanimity; without knowlege; unprompted
46. Beautiful resultant; with equanimity; without knowlege; prompted

FUNCTIONAL—ALL

28. Functional; with equanimity; five-door adverting
29. Functional; with equanimity; mind-door adverting
30. Functional; with mental pleasure; smile-producing

CONSCIOUSNESS (CITTA)**FUNCTIONAL—ARAHANTS ONLY**

47. Functional; with mental pleasure; with knowledge; unprompted
48. Functional; with mental pleasure; with knowledge; prompted
49. Functional; with mental pleasure; without knowlege; unprompted
50. Functional; with mental pleasure; without knowlege; prompted
51. Functional; with equanimity; with knowledge; unprompted
52. Functional; with equanimity; with knowledge; prompted
53. Functional; with equanimity; without knowlege; unprompted
54. Functional; with equanimity; without knowlege; prompted

FORM SPHERE CONSCIOUSNESS**PRODUCES WHOLESOME KARMA**

55. 1st jhana; one-pointed; happiness; zest; sustained app.; initial app.
56. 2nd jhana; one-pointed; happiness; zest; sustained application
57. 3rd jhana; one-pointed; happiness; zest;
58. 4th jhana; one-pointed; happiness;
59. 5th jhana; one-pointed; equanimity;

RESULT OF PAST KARMA

55. 1st jhana; one-pointed; happiness; zest; sustained app.; initial app.
56. 2nd jhana; one-pointed; happiness; zest; sustained application
57. 3rd jhana; one-pointed; happiness; zest;
58. 4th jhana; one-pointed; happiness;
59. 5th jhana; one-pointed; equanimity;

FUNCTIONAL—ARAHANTS ONLY

55. 1st jhana; one-pointed; happiness; zest; sustained app.; initial app.
56. 2nd jhana; one-pointed; happiness; zest; sustained application
57. 3rd jhana; one-pointed; happiness; zest;
58. 4th jhana; one-pointed; happiness;
59. 5th jhana; one-pointed; equanimity;

FORMLESS SPHERE CONSCIOUSNESS**PRODUCES KARMA**

70. Sphere of infinite space
71. Sphere of infinite c'ness
72. Sphere of nothingness
73. Sphere of neither perception
nor non-perception

RESULT OF KARMA

74. Sphere of infinite space
75. Sphere of infinite c'ness
76. Sphere of nothingness
77. Sphere of neither perception
nor non-perception

FUNCTIONAL—ARAHANTS

78. Sphere of infinite space
79. Sphere of infinite consciousness
80. Sphere of nothingness
81. Sphere of neither perception
nor non-perception

SUPRAMUNDANE CONSCIOUSNESS**PATH**

82. Stream-entry
83. Once-returning
84. Non-returning
85. Arahantship

FRUIT

86. Stream-entry
87. Once-returning
88. Non-returning
89. Arahantship

MENTAL FACTORS (CETASIKA)

ETHICALLY VARIABLE FACTORS

UNIVERSALS

1. Contact *phassa*
2. Feeling *vedanā*
3. Perception *saññā*
4. Volition *cetanā*
5. One-pointedness *ekaggatā*
6. Life faculty *jīvitindriya*
7. Attention *manasikāra*

OCCASIONALS

8. Initial application *vitakka*
9. Sustained application *vicāra*
10. Decision *adhimokkha*
11. Energy *virīya*
12. Zest *pīti*
13. Desire *chanda*

UNWHOLESOME FACTORS

UNIVERSALS

14. Delusion *moha*
15. Shamelessness *ahirika*
16. Fearlessness of wrong *anottappa*
17. Restlessness *uddhacca*

OCCASIONALS

18. Greed *lobha*
19. Wrong view *diṭṭhi*
20. Conceit *māna*
21. Hatred *dosa*
22. Envy *issā*
23. Avarice *macchariya*
24. Worry *kukkucca*
25. Sloth *thīna*
26. Torpor *middha*
27. Doubt *vicikicchā*

BEAUTIFUL FACTORS

UNIVERSALS

28. Faith *saddhā*
29. Mindfulness *sati*
30. Shame *hiri*
31. Fear of wrong *ottappa*
32. Non-greed *alobha*
33. Non-hatred *adosa*
34. Neutrality of mind *tatramajjhataṭṭā*
- 35-6. Tranquillity *passaddhi*
- 37-8. Lightness *lahutā*
- 39-40. Malleability *mudutā*
- 41-2. Wieldiness *kammaññatā*
- 43-4. Proficiency *pāguññatā*
- 45-6. Rectitude *ujjukatā*

OCCASIONALS

47. Right speech *sammā-vācā*
48. Right action *sammā-kammanta*
49. Right livelihood *sammā-ājīva*
50. Compassion *karuṇā*
51. Appreciative joy *muditā*
52. Wisdom faculty *paññā*

MATERIAL PHENOMENA (RŪPA)

CONCRETELY PRODUCED MATTER

GREAT ESSENTIALS

1. Earth element *paṭhavi-dhātu*
2. Water element *āpo-dhātu*
3. Fire element *tejo-dhātu*
4. Air element *vāyo-dhātu*

SENSITIVE PHENOMENA

5. Eye-sensitivity *cakkhu*
6. Ear-sensitivity *sota*
7. Nose-sensitivity *ghāna*
8. Tongue-sensitivity *jivhā*
9. Body-sensitivity *kāyo*

OBJECTIVE PHENOMENA

10. Visible form *rūpa*
11. Sound *saddo*
12. Smell *gandho*
13. Taste *raso*
- (x). Tangible (=earth/fire/air) *poṭṭhabba*

OTHER MATERIAL PHENOMENA

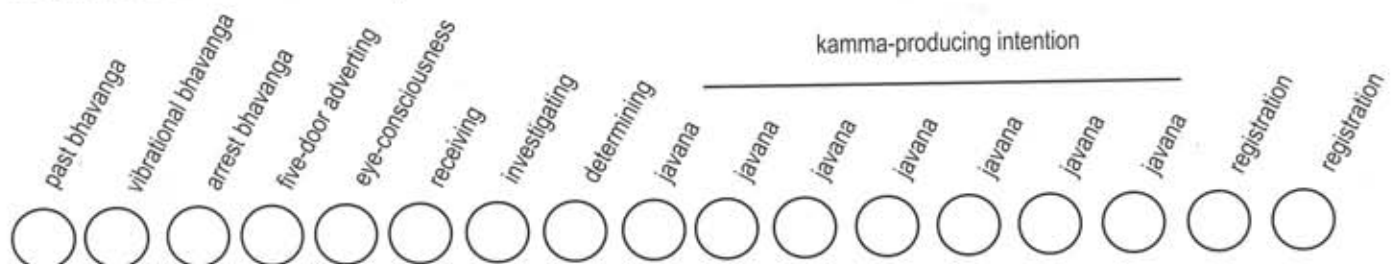
14. Femininity *ithatta*
15. Masculinity *purisatta*
16. Heart-base *hadaya-vatthu*
17. Life faculty *jīvit-indriya*
18. Nutriment *kabalīkār-āhāra*

NON-CONCRETE MATTER

19. Space element *ākāsa-dhātu*
20. Bodily intimation *kāya-viññatti*
21. Verbal intimation *vacī-viññatti*
22. Lightness *lahutā*
23. Malleability *mudutā*
24. Wieldiness *kammaññatā*
25. Production *upacayo*
26. Continuity *santati*
27. Decay *jaratā*
28. Impermanence *aniccatā*

—Andrew Olendzki

THE MENTAL PROCESSES (CITTA-VĪTHI)



This Fickle Mind

This fickle mind is like a river
that puts on a different face for every sky.
It shivers in an ecstasy of crushed blue silk.
It howls like a madwoman
the way it does today.

This fickle mind is like a river
filled with contradiction:
mud in its pockets, sun on its long dark cape,
the skin translucent, like vellum, where the wind
writes messages, torrents of words
at first—love letters, hate mail, anything it can think of.
Little by little
the words all wash away.

This fickle mind wants
the patience of a still, spacious river,
all reflection, all illusion.
Like water everywhere, it yields endlessly.
Imagine such a mind.
It is translucent.
You bend over the silver water.
You look down.
There is no one there.

—Kathleen M. Kelley

Anything

In mid-step,
the memory arises—
a Scots farmer's quiet words,
acknowledging his dogs
for gathering the sheep:
"That'll do, Cap.
That'll do, Tip."
The thought falls gently
to my feet,
as if to say for each
careful or attentive step,
"This'll do, for now.
And now.
And now.
This'll do"

—Virāṇāni

Today

Eating good food
from a china bowl
by the lily pond
on a beautiful day,

The sun turns hot
There is a wasp in my bowl.

Strolling under the
willow trees on a
full moon night
the breeze caresses me,

It grows muddy underfoot
There are mosquitoes.

Accepting impermanence
not attaching
I am content.

—Palinda

AVTTASIHDOB BODHISATTVA

beginning
in self
the end.
end the
self in
beginning.

—Jeanne Larsen

This page contains material sent in by our readers. If you have a poem, drawing or photograph you would like to share with others, relating to your meditative insights or retreat experience, please send it to the editors at BCBS.

Selected Haikus

Oh, how it hurts to
Hold on—sadly, I had to
Learn this from a thief!

✽

The earth rolls over
And the birds in her hair don't
Seem to be worried.

✽

Rain takes pen and ink
To the pond, draws circles that
quickly disappear.

✽

I float on the sea—
There is stillness—Suddenly,
The sound of my heart!

✽

The meditation
Circle: eighteen women sit;
Old dog groans and farts.

✽

When January
Thaws the pond and your heart starts
To melt, let it go.

—Kathleen M. Kelley

Thoughts

make
or
break
(my day).

✽

Dukkha?

A means A to one.
A means B to another.
Now watch
JUST WATCH!
hoo-ha
unfold.

—Charlotte Glück-Wurm



Zen Circle (Left-Handed)

—Philip Foster

Simply Resting in Knowing

Sarah Doering

I would like to begin tonight by telling a story from the Zen tradition. One day, about 600 years ago, a so-called “man of the people” made his way up a steep path to the top of the mountain. A “man of the people” means an ordinary person, someone like you or me. When he’d reached the top of the mountain, he approached the wise old man who lived there, bowed, and said, “Please, sir, will you write down for me the first principles of wisdom?” The wise old man picked up a brush and wrote down one word: *Attention*.

The man of the people looked at this and paused, waiting expectantly, but nothing more happened. So he turned again to the old man and said, “Please, sir, isn’t there more?” The wise old man picked up the brush and wrote down another word, which was exactly the same as the first: *Attention*.

The man of the people looked at this, frowned, and waited. Nothing happened. He said, “Well, I don’t see what’s so special about this.” So for the third time the teacher picked up the brush and wrote down one word, again the same one: *Attention*. The man of the people looked at him, shook his head, and said, “What does *attention* mean, anyway?” The reply came, “*Attention* means *attention*.” The man of the people bowed, turned, and made his way back down the mountain.

We don’t know what was in his mind, of course, but probably there was a fair amount of both confusion and frustration. It’s easy to sympathize with him, because wisdom is so rare, and of such inestimable value, that quite naturally we assume that the way to it must be abstruse and very complex. Yet only one word was given in response to that question, “What is the foundation of wisdom?” And that one word was *attention*.



Tonight I would like to speak a little about attention and its relation to wisdom and inner freedom. Attention, or mindfulness, is the active aspect of awareness. It’s a deliberate effort not to forget, not to be careless, but to be aware. Awareness, of course, is the remarkable capacity that we all have to be conscious, to know. Awareness is a characteristic of all sentient beings. It’s the very hallmark of what it means to be human. Yet really it’s seldom considered. It’s so familiar that most of the time it’s taken quite for granted. We’re really like fish in water, and awareness is the ocean we swim in, without really noticing.

One reason why we don’t notice is that awareness isn’t in any way obvious. It doesn’t have any color or shape, any substance. There’s nothing to touch, nothing you can put your finger on and say, “Ah, there is it.” It has no characteristics to identify it. Nonetheless, it *is*. Knowing *is*. Right now, there is hearing going on, and it’s known. Perhaps there’s seeing, and it’s being known.

This article is drawn from a dharma talk given by Sarah at the Forest Refuge several years ago.



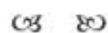
Most of us tend to live our lives looking out the window, as it were. We're paying attention to what's going on in the external world. We want to know what's going on out there. We think, "Oh, he's a nice person," or, "I like this and I don't like that," or, "This is good and that's bad." We're always busy checking and assessing, wanting to know more about the world outside. All our conditioning in our culture leads us to believe that happiness is "out there," that out there is what matters, that out there is where reality is.

What we don't understand is that the only way the so-called "outside world" is made contact with is through our mental experience of it. The entire sensory world of sight, sound, smell, taste, touch and knowing, is filtered through the screen of our minds. Nothing can be experienced apart from the mind. In fact, all our experience takes place within the mind. Because we're not accustomed to thinking this way, or to observing our minds, there is very little understanding of the processes that happen within the mind. The result is confusion in our lives and much suffering.

Because we don't understand how the mind works, we don't understand the difference between seeing clearly and not seeing clearly,

and what makes that difference. We don't see that our minds are affected by how they're used. We don't see that whatever we think and say and do affects the quality of consciousness. We don't see that we're actually creating ourselves, our character and the unfolding of our lives, as we go along.

At a deeper level we take to be permanent what, in fact, is impermanent. We take to be happiness what, in fact, is *dukkha*. And we take to be solid and real what, in fact, is insubstantial—only a bubble, a dream.



The practice of mindfulness cuts through our conventional way of seeing. It changes our understanding, for it changes the way we perceive. It awakens the vast potential of understanding and of love which now lies dormant within each of us.

Mindfulness has been spoken of in different ways a number of times in the last weeks. I'd like to look at it again for just a moment, very briefly, because it's so important. It's the one factor of mind of which there can never be too much. You might think, "How can there be too much love?" But unless love is balanced by wisdom, it becomes sentimental and soft and

foolish. You might think, perhaps, "How could there be too much wisdom?" But unless wisdom is balanced by compassion, wisdom can be hard and dry. Mindfulness is the only factor of mind of which there can never be too much.

It is a deep, direct knowing of the present moment. It's not attention as we ordinarily use that word. That attention is likely to be superficial and hasty. Ordinarily the energies of the mind are very scattered and diffuse. Their focus is quite imprecise. In the ordinary course of things, attention is simply not sustained long enough for really careful observation. A moment in which we're paying attention ordinarily is followed by some kind of an emotional reaction or a thought. The attention itself is broken. Yet, if you ask anyone (that is, anyone who isn't here sitting on retreat), they're quite likely to tell you, yes, of course they know how to pay attention. But just like the "man of the people" in the story, they may have no idea what difference it makes, why paying attention is any big deal.

We all have a few main channels in our lives, of course, where thought and action are purposeful and deliberate. Sometimes this is true to a very high degree. An artist intent on her work, a mathematician solving a problem, a basketball player playing a serious game, a skier—all can know the joy of an alert and concentrated mind. I talked a few weeks ago, as it happened, to a surgeon, who spoke about the joy of operating. You may not think of an operating room as a place where there can be very much joy. But he actually spoke of the rapture, the bliss, of operating. Rapture and bliss come from very close observation and very deep interest in what is going on. For those of you who are enjoying these states now from time to time, that's because your attention is very close and continuous.

But for the people in these various activities which I've just described, once they come back into normal life, that high degree of attention is broken. So there isn't an opportunity, really, for them to come to understand the way the world is.



What we're doing here, in the practice of mindfulness, is collecting all the scattered fragments of mental energy around a particular point. If you're doing mettā [loving-kindness] practice, that point is a constant one. In mettā the phrases are repeated over and over again until the mind begins to gravitate right back to those few phrases. Or the point of attention may change in an open field, as with the practice of vipassanā [insight meditation]. Mindfulness moves first here, then there. But even in an open, ever-moving field, mindfulness can maintain a quiet, steady focus so that deep levels of concentration can build.

Mindfulness is able to notice not only what's going on, but can stay with that object or changing field of objects over time. It doesn't slip away as it develops. We all know what it's like to be with the breath. You have connected, perhaps, with the first half-breath, and then, before even that single half-breath is completed, something comes up, attention skitters off, and the breath is forgotten. We're not even able to be with one single half-breath. But in time, of course, that changes.

Mindfulness is sometimes likened to throwing a stone at a mud wall. To throw the stone, energy is needed. Effort. Aim. Just as effort is made with the stone, so mindfulness connects with the object and, if the effort continues, mindfulness sticks, just as the stone sticks to the wall if the wall is made of wet mud. I like that example because it tells us how old this practice is. It goes back more than 2,500 years ago when most of the houses and buildings were made of mud. This practice is just as relevant now as it was back then.

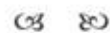
Mindfulness doesn't let objects disappear from view. It stays firmly noticing, so it penetrates right into the object. It can immerse itself in the breath, for example, and quite literally pervade the breath, be inside the breath. Some of you may have seen this. It's a very deep kind of knowing. It takes whatever is present



as grist for its mill. This means, whatever is present it accepts and observes. It doesn't care what's here. It doesn't matter whether it's fear or boredom or joy. It's likened, of course, to a mirror, which just reflects back whatever appears before it, with no comment whatsoever.

But the metaphor of a mirror can be misunderstood, because a mirror suggests some kind of distancing, perhaps, from feeling. But mindfulness feels every feeling. It knows the flaming heat of anger. It knows a dull ache in the heart. It knows each flicker of hope or joy. But when it's full and complete it knows them with no reaction. Its power derives from this clarity. The mind is simply stripped of all the stuff that ordinarily is added to it—all the personal likes and dislikes and associations and expectations that we have. There is just "attention attending." That's why the wise old man at the top of the mountain gave the answer he did to the man of the people. To the question, "What is attention, anyway?" he simply said, "Attention is attention."

That can seem an irritating or puzzling answer. But in one sense, there really was nothing else to say. The kind of attention that he was concerned with, the kind of attention that leads to wisdom, is bare of anything else. It's awareness, pure and simple. A state of pure awareness.



This state of pure awareness is described in a *sutta*, or sacred story, from the *Udāna Sutta*. One day when the Buddha was going on alms rounds, he was approached by a man called Bāhiya of the Bark-Cloth. Bāhiya was a man who'd made a long journey to come into the presence of an awakened being, the Buddha. So here he is at last, and he urgently asked the Buddha for a teaching. The Buddha declined; it wasn't the right time. He was carrying his bowl, and he was seeking food. It just wasn't the right time to give instruction. But Bāhiya persisted. A second time the Buddha said no. Bāhiya asked again, and it's said that when a Buddha is asked three times for something, he always agrees. He finally spoke a few very brief words, and said,

"In the seen there will be only the seen. In the heard, only the heard. In the sensed, only the sensed. In the cognized, only the cognized. This is how you should train yourself." (Ud 1.10)

When Bāhiya heard this, he understood and, as the story goes, was instantly enlightened.

For all its apparent simplicity, this obviously is a very subtle teaching. It's difficult to understand unless the mind is completely prepared for it, as Bāhiya's was. It's also difficult

to talk about. "In the seen is only the seen" is speaking of a kind of clear seeing. It's a seeing, a knowing, that is utterly pure. It's without thought, without associations. It's nonverbal, completely intuitive. This kind of seeing—which one can call pure mindfulness, pure awareness—occurs only during the very beginnings of perception, at the very first phase of hearing or seeing. It occurs when a vibration first registers upon the eye or the ear, and consciousness receives it purely. It's in this first fleeting moment that the truth of what is makes itself known.

But then almost instantly the thinking mind jumps in and puts a stamp upon it, finding it pleasant or unpleasant, liking it or not liking it, building associations that define it, limit it, domesticate it, make it its own. In the doing, that initial glimpse of truth slips away and is forgotten.

The work that we're doing—being mindful of the breath, coming back as soon as we forget, coming back over and over again—deliberately strengthens that first receptive state of knowing. It begins to prolong the openness that is pure knowing. In that split second of pristine openness, the tangles of the mind release. There can then be a vividness, an intensity of the most ordinary things of every day. We've all had moments when the setting sun is simply a brilliance of orange and red and gold, when the grass is green—really green—or the sky is blue. When one is present in this way, the familiar seems quite unfamiliar, because everything seems so new.



As Joseph Campbell once observed, it is not so much the meaning of life that we seek, as the experience of being alive. It's the experience of being alive that bare attention can give. All that's required is an attentive, whole-hearted willingness to be with experience. Here is a poem written by a contemporary practitioner explaining what that means. You'll

notice this is a very plain poem. It doesn't have any adjectives, any descriptive phrases; it's mainly verbs.

*Sit.
You sit down.
Breathe when you breathe.
Lie down.
You lie down.
Walk where you walk.
Talk when you talk.
Cry when you cry.
Lie down. You lie down.
Die when you die.
Look when you look.
Hear what you hear.
Taste what you taste.
Smell what you smell.
Touch what you touch.
Think what you think.
Let go, let go, let go.
Die when you die. Just die when you die.
Lie down, you lie down, and die when you die.*

Whatever we do, the message is, do totally, with complete attention. If we put ourselves totally into an experience, we disappear into it. The sense of self vanishes.

Here is another poem, written over a thousand years ago by the Chinese master Li Po:

*The birds have vanished into the sky.
Now the last cloud drains away.
We sit together, the mountain and me,
Until only the mountain remains.*

To drop into that space of silent awareness, in which finally only the mountain remains, because the sense of "I" simply is no more—this doesn't require great effort. It comes about through a balance of alertness and repose, from simply resting in knowing. The flow of life then is simple, harmonious, and clear.

Sarah Doering was formerly a resident teacher at the Forest Refuge. She now lives in Northampton, MA with her family.

The Crow-Birth

A Jātaka Story

Margo McLoughlin

Jātaka is a Pali word meaning “birth-story” (*jāta*—“that which is born” and *ka*—from *katheti*—“to relate”). The Jātaka may simply be Indian folklore re-worked to suit Buddhist aims, but they are also believed to be the Buddha’s own account of his previous lives. In each of these tales, the Bodhisatta [one committed to awakening] is seen perfecting those qualities that led to his full awakening as the Buddha of our era. Scenes from the Jātaka appear on the carved stone railings at Sanchi and Bharhut in India and have been dated to the second century BCE. What is remarkable about these stories is that ancient as they are, they still serve as the principal means for imparting Buddhist values to children and adults of all ages in the Buddhist countries of Southeast Asia. What is also remarkable about the Jātaka is the way an apparently simple story can reveal so much depth of understanding of human psychology and human potential. We have no way of knowing how these stories affected their listeners, except to consider how they affect us.

I first translated Kāka-Jātaka, “The Crow-Birth,” in 2001. I have told it many

times since then, and I find I am still learning what this story is about. Each setting, each new context, adds a new layer. The way listeners respond, or the comments they make, deepen my understanding of what this story is teaching, which just goes to show that stories don’t exist in theory, but only in practice, in the dynamic exchange between teller and listener or reader. What follows is a translation and commentary of Jātaka 140, “The Crow-Birth.”

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*"I can't help myself," said the crow, "I have to do it!"*

*Once, in the past, the Bodhisatta came into being in the womb of a crow. Now in those days, just as in these days, a crow would make its living however it could, scavenging and foraging inside the walls of the city and outside, in the villages, the forests, and the fields.*

In British Columbia, where I now live, there are crows everywhere—dropping mussels or nuts on the pavement, hopping politely out of the way on the sidewalks, careening wildly down from their perch on a telephone wire, always giving the impression of intelligent opinions, as well as a certain deviousness, necessary to their survival. In Boston, where I was living when I first translated this story, there were not many crows, but there were a large number of homeless men and women. The image of the crow as forager and scavenger struck me most vividly when I saw a man systematically investigating the contents of the trash cans along a residential street in Cambridge. He was just doing his job, like the crow, making the most out of other people's leavings.

*One morning, the king's high priest left the city early. He went out by the eastern gate and down to the holy river, the Ganges, to bathe. When he had bathed he put on fresh, white, muslin robes. He adorned himself with sweet scents. He set a garland of jasmine flowers about his neck and returned towards the city. There were two crows sitting on the gate. One crow said to the other, "I have an idea. I shall let some droppings fall on the shiny head of that Brahmin. See him coming from the river, freshly washed, in his fine robes?" "What?" said the second crow. "You would do what? This Brahmin is a lord. If his anger is aroused, he could cause the destruction of all the crows." The first crow shrugged his shoulders. "I can't help myself," he said. "I have to do it."*

At this point in the story, I often hear the audience laugh. Something about the first crow's honesty strikes a chord with them. "I can't stop myself," he is saying. "I have to follow through. I am compelled to perform this act of mischief, no matter what the consequences." The crow knows how hard it would be to divert the course of his will. Likewise, we all recognize that such momentary inclinations,

apparently without much significance, have a certain momentum. The ability to interrupt an impulse, see it for what it is, understand clearly the results that may follow, and make another choice, is a highly developed skill.

*"Well then," said the second crow, "we'll see what happens." And he flew away. Sure enough, just as the king's high priest came below the gate, that crow, setting forth into flight, let some droppings fall right on the Brahmin's shiny head. The priest, looking up, saw the source of his humiliation—a black-winged crow. Anger was born in his heart and he set himself to take revenge upon all the crows.*

The Pali text is very clear to show the visiting status of anger. As one of the *kilesas*, or defilements, anger is portrayed as a temporary visitor to the mind/heart. (The duration of the stay depends on the amount of "fuel" given it by the victim of the act of mischief.) The priest does not "become angry," or "feel anger"—two ways we might describe the experience in modern English usage. Instead, anger is "born in his heart" and its arrival is the condition for the high priest to seek revenge. He directs his mind to cause harm to the one who caused him shame and humiliation. But, since all crows look alike from the human perspective, there is no way to limit retaliation to the single perpetrator. All crows must suffer for the sins of one.

*Now at that time, the story continues, a certain serving-girl was earning her wages by guarding the rice outside the granary sheds, not far from the king's elephant stables. She had spread the rice in the sun to dry, and there she sat in the door of the shed, guarding it. The day was hot, and it wasn't long before the girl fell asleep. A certain long-haired goat, wandering about, noticed that the girl was off her guard. He came up and began to nibble and chew on the rice. At the sound of his snuffling and chewing, the girl woke up and shooed him away. She sat herself down once again, and once again she fell asleep. The goat came back and continued to nibble and chew on the rice. The girl woke a second time and a second time shooed him away. And it all happened a third time, exactly as before.*



*Then the girl said to herself, "This goat, returning again and again, will eat up half the rice and then I am sure to lose my wages." She went to a nearby cooking fire and took out a long, smoldering stick. Holding the stick by one end, she returned to her seat by the granary shed and pretended to fall asleep. When she heard the goat begin to nibble once more, the girl stood up and flung the burning stick, striking him on the long hair of his body, which caught fire. With his body burning, the goat went leaping and jumping right to the elephant stables where he rolled in a pile of straw. The straw blazed up, the stables caught fire, and before the fire could be put out, many of the elephants were badly burned.*

*The king's elephant doctors could find no cure for the wounds on the elephants' backs. This they reported to the king. The king was distressed, for he was very fond of his elephants.*

*He said to his high priest, "Teacher, do you know any cure for the wounds on my elephants' backs?"*

*"Yes, your majesty, I do," replied the king's high priest. "Crows' fat."*

*"Crows' fat?" said the king.*

*"Yes," explained the Brahmin. "It is an ancient remedy, handed down through many generations. Only you will have to slaughter a great many crows, if you want enough fat to heal the wounds on your elephants' backs."*

Conditions have come together to provide the king's high priest with exactly the circumstances he needs to satisfy his desire for revenge. The brief appearance of the serving girl in the story is like a cameo lesson on the importance of mindfulness. Because she could not stay awake, the girl had to resort to more drastic means to get rid of the goat. But setting the goat on fire is a case of overkill, and the chain

of events that follow points to how everything we do has one or more effects, including many we may never have imagined. Blaming the serving-girl for not being mindful, however, is not the point. We have no way of knowing why she kept falling asleep. Perhaps her mother was ill, and she was up all night caring for her or for younger siblings. We just don't know. The scene reveals, however, the way that an intention, whether for good or for ill, once planted in the mind, is ever on the look-out for the conditions which will allow it to manifest. It also demonstrates the way that one person's actions, one person's karma, intersect with another's.

*"Very well," said the king. "Let the crows be killed and their fat obtained."*

*The orders were given, and on that day a great slaughter of crows began in the city of Varanasi. From the temple roofs and the branches of the banyan trees, the king's archers shot them down. Black bodies tumbled and fell. Heaps of dead crows could be seen in every street. They were gathered in carts and taken to the king's kitchens where they were boiled in great cauldrons. So little fat was obtained as to be of almost no use at all. But still the orders continued: the crows of the city were to be shot and killed—young and old, male and female, large and small. A great fear was born in the crows of Varanasi—the fear of death.*

The king is motivated by compassion for his elephants. But with the goal in mind of lessening their suffering and healing the wounds on their backs, he is oblivious to the suffering of other creatures—creatures for whom he has less affection. He seeks the advice of his high-priest and accepts it without question. He never stops to consider what might be motivating his high-priest to offer up crows' fat as a cure for burns. A leader is only as good and wise as those he has chosen to advise him. In this passage we also see a second example of the visiting nature of the *kilesas*. *"A great fear was born in the crows of Varanasi—the fear of death."*

The story now changes scenes and takes us into the forest:

*At that time the Bodhisatta lived in a forest cemetery. One night, one of the city crows came and told the Bodhisatta what was happening in Varanasi. The Bodhisatta reflected, "Besides myself, there is no other*

who can cure my kinsmen of their fear." He flew up into a Sal tree where, alighting on a branch, he called to mind the ten perfections: *dāna-pāramī*—generosity; *sīla-pāramī*—virtue; *nekkhamma-pāramī*—renunciation; *khanti-pāramī*—patience; *virīya-pāramī*—energy; *paññā-pāramī*—wisdom; *sacca-pāramī*—truthfulness; *adhiṭṭhāna-pāramī*—resolve; *mettā-pāramī*—loving-kindness; *upekkhā-pāramī*—equanimity.

Selecting loving-kindness as his guide, he flew through the forest, over the gates of the city, right to the king's palace where he entered by an open window. Alighting before the king's empty seat, he hid himself beneath it. The king was just entering the chamber as a serving-man came forward to catch and remove the crow. But the king said, "No. Let him be." The Bodhisatta, recovering himself, once more called up loving-kindness to be his guide. He stepped out from under the king's throne and addressed the king.

This is one part of the story that struck me most when I was translating it. Here, embedded in an ancient Buddhist narrative, we see a leader whose people are being systematically and unjustly slaughtered consider carefully how he wishes his actions to be guided. Will they be guided by anger? By hatred? By fear? Or is it possible to choose another route?

The Bodhisatta reviews each of the ten *pāramīs* (Sanskrit: *pāramitas*) in turn, beginning with generosity and ending with equanimity. Any one of these qualities might serve him well in his encounter with the king, but he selects *mettā* or loving-kindness as his guide. Why does he choose *mettā*? *Mettā* is unconditional friendliness. *Mettā* recognizes the truth that whatever we do we are motivated by the simple wish



to be happy. By calling up *mettā*, not once but twice, the Bodhisatta-Crow is choosing to place himself on equal footing with the king. He radiates with his words and his being this understanding—that all beings wish for happiness and ease of well-being. He does not judge or condemn. Indeed, his loving-kindness contains within it all the other qualities, including patience, wisdom, and truthfulness.

"Your majesty," said the Bodhisatta, "I too am a king. A great fear has been born in my people—the fear of death. Is it not true, your Majesty, that a king should do everything in his power for the well-being and safety of his people?"

The king was amazed to be addressed by this creature, but he nodded, and the Bodhisatta continued.

"Your Majesty," he said, "The king's high priest has fallen under the influence of anger. He has spoken an untruth. He has told you that crow's fat will heal the wounds on your elephants' backs. But the truth is that crows have almost no fat at all."

The king was so moved that he ordered a royal seat be given to the king of the crows, fresh water in a golden bowl, and sweet rice in a golden dish. The Bodhisatta leapt up on the seat. He nibbled and drank. The king addressed him, saying, "Wise one, tell me, how is it that crows have almost no fat?"

The Bodhisatta answered, "The reason is simple and I shall explain:

With a heart forever anxious,  
and the whole world at our  
back,

Because of that there is no  
ounce of fat for my relatives,  
the crows."

This is a fascinating commentary, contained within the story, on the nature and personality of crows and the way they are

*"See how one unguarded impulse, arising in the mind,  
causes much suffering for many?"*

perceived by human beings. As scavengers and foragers they can never rest. As less than equal co-residents of city streets they are commonly persecuted. It is for this reason that they never have the luxury of acquiring fat.

*The Bodhisatta instructed the king in the five precepts. He asked for an end to the slaughter of crows. He asked for protection for all creatures. To both the king agreed and, in addition, he offered the Bodhisatta a kingdom. But what does a crow want with a kingdom? He gave it back. The king ordered that a measure of rice be cooked and served to the remaining crows of the city, while to the Bodhisatta he ordered a meal fit for a king. The Bodhisatta ate and drank. Bidding farewell to the king, he flew back to the forest cemetery, where he gathered about him all the crows of the forest, the villages and fields, as well as the crows of the city. He said to them, "See how one unguarded impulse, arising in the mind, causes much suffering for many?"*

*Then he spoke this verse:*

*Quivering, wavering, this mind,  
hard to guard, hard to protect.  
The wise one makes it straight,  
like the fletcher the arrow-shaft.*



This story is about many things, but probably most of all, it is about intention. What is intention? Where does it come from? On long retreats it is possible to slow down enough to notice subtle intentions, such as the impulse to turn and look for the source of a sound, or the impulse to stand, or reach. With such noticing we also see the potential for renunciation. We begin to see how noticing intention allows us to practice developing skillful attitudes of mind, rather than reinforcing our habitual patterns of liking and not-liking.

Throughout the story, characters act with specific intentions, aiming to achieve specific results. In most cases there is little or no awareness of what kinds of mental attitudes are being reinforced by following through with impulse. The first crow only wants to satisfy his urge to do mischief. The king's high-priest aims to satisfy his desire for revenge. The goat just wants to eat the rice, while the serving-girl, unable

to stay awake, wants to teach the goat a lesson he won't forget. The king wants his elephants to be healed. The Bodhisatta, learning of the slaughter of the crows, not only wishes to make it stop, he is willing to go to the root of the situation, where he exposes ignorance (the mistaken notion that crows have sufficient fat on their bodies to provide a healing salve for burns) and the truth, that the king's high-priest was motivated by anger to recommend crows' fat as a cure.

The Bodhisatta, alone of all the characters in the story, takes the time to examine his position *vis-a-vis* the situation. "Besides myself," he says when he learns what is happening in the city, "there is no other who can cure my kinsmen of their fear." Whereupon, he flies up into the branches of a Sal tree and reviews the ten perfections, asking himself how he wishes his actions to be guided. Because the foundation of his very life is his resolve to become a fully-awakened Buddha, the Bodhisatta's intentions are guided by awareness.

The story teaches this truth about the practice of awareness: that an entire life can be guided by a skillful intention, both from the perspective of the long view, and in the daily moments of our lives. The mind/heart (*citta*) is very much as the Buddha describes it in the Dhammapada. It quivers, it wavers. It resembles a fish thrown on dry land. Having a foundation of morality (*sila*) and a practice of awareness is the ground from which skillful intentions can emerge. It is what allows us to make the mind straight (*uju*, with connotations of steadfast, upright, stable), like the fletcher the arrow-shaft.

Instructions to the reader: Stories offer strong medicine for healing. Let this one sit with you. See what images linger. Notice if the story speaks to you about some aspect of your own life. This, after all, is why stories like the Jātaka stay with us. They offer a direct teaching about the challenges and rewards of living an ethical life.

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*Margo McLoughlin, a graduate of the Harvard Divinity School, has been translating and adapting the Jātaka stories since 1998. She performs for audiences of all ages in the United States and Canada.*



## Barre Center for Buddhist Studies 2008 Courses Offerings

|                  |          |                                            |                                                         |
|------------------|----------|--------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>January</b>   | 18-20    | Paul Simons & Gregory Bivens               | Working with Addiction: 3-S Therapy                     |
|                  | 26       | Ellison Findly                             | Buddhist Art                                            |
|                  | 27       | Mu Soeng                                   | The Ox-Herding Pictures                                 |
| <b>February</b>  | 1-6      | Andrew Olendzki & Taraniya Ambrosia        | Integrated Study & Practice Program                     |
|                  | 10-15    | Andrew Olendzki, Taraniya Ambrosia, et al. | Essentials of Buddhist Psychology                       |
|                  | 17       | Susan Kaiser Greenland                     | Practicing Mindfulness with Children                    |
|                  | 22-24    | David Loy                                  | Personal and Social Transformation                      |
|                  | 29-Mar 2 | Claire Stanley                             | Mindfulness for Educators                               |
| <b>March</b>     | 7-12     | John Peacock                               | ASPP Continuation Module (Closed program)               |
|                  | 13-16    | John Peacock                               | Rich Beyond Material Wealth                             |
|                  | 21-23    | Roshi Pat Enkyo O'Hara                     | The Heart Sutra: Wisdom from the Heart                  |
|                  | 28-30    | Jan Willis                                 | How to Become a Bodhisattva                             |
| <b>April</b>     | 6-11     | Andrew Olendzki                            | Abhidhamma: Classical Buddhist Psychology               |
|                  | 12       | Carol Wilson                               | Meeting Aversion with Wisdom                            |
|                  | 18-21    | Ajaan Thanissaro                           | Bringing Wisdom to the Brahmavihāras                    |
|                  | 25-27    | Rebecca Bradshaw                           | Four Heavenly Abodes for Helping Professionals          |
|                  | 28-May 3 | Andrew Olendzki, Claire Stanley            | Meditation for College-Aged Students                    |
| <b>May</b>       | 6-11     | Bill & Susan Morgan, J. Engler, R. Siegel  | Mindfulness Retreat for Mental Health Professionals     |
|                  | 16-19    | Ajahn Sucitto                              | Working with Perception                                 |
|                  | 30-Jun 1 | Mu Soeng                                   | Satori/Nirvana                                          |
| <b>June</b>      | 6-11     | Andrew Olendzki & Taraniya Ambrosia        | Integrated Study & Practice Program                     |
|                  | 14-20    | Andrew Olendzki & Taraniya Ambrosia        | Five Aggregates of the Grasping Mind (Bhāvana)          |
|                  | 28       | Nona Olivia                                | Poems of the First Nuns                                 |
|                  | 29       | Margo McLoughlin                           | Exploring the Jātaka: Narrative and Transformation      |
| <b>July</b>      | 4-6      | Jason Siff                                 | Learning Meditation from Within                         |
|                  | 11-13    | Taitetsu Unno & Mark Unno                  | Shin Buddhism                                           |
|                  | 18-27    | Leigh Brasington                           | Paṭicca-Samuppāda and Jhāna                             |
|                  | 29-Aug 3 | Community Dharma Leaders Program           | (Closed program)                                        |
| <b>August</b>    | 28-Sep 1 | Christina Feldman                          | ASPP Continuation Module (Closed program)               |
| <b>September</b> | 13       | Jack Engler                                | Seeking the Seeker                                      |
|                  | 14       | Joseph Goldstein                           | A Path of Practice: 40 Years in the Dharma              |
|                  | 19-21    | Mark Hart                                  | Relaxing the Compulsion to Control                      |
|                  | 23-28    | Paul Fulton, Taraniya Ambrosia, et al.     | Certificate Program in Mindfulness & Psychotherapy      |
| <b>October</b>   | 3-8      | Andrew Olendzki & Taraniya Ambrosia        | Integrated Study & Practice Program                     |
|                  | 12-17    | Andrew Olendzki, Taraniya Ambrosia, et al. | Essentials of Buddhist Psychology                       |
|                  | 19       | Narayan & Michael Liebenson Grady          | Inner Freedom and Nonreactivity                         |
|                  | 24-26    | Gregory Kramer                             | Dharma Contemplation: Right Effort                      |
|                  | 27-Nov 2 | Gregory Kramer                             | Insight Dialogue and Right Effort                       |
| <b>November</b>  | 7-9      | Dean Sluyter                               | Cinema Nirvana                                          |
|                  | 14-22    | Mindfulness Based Cognitive Therapy        | Professional Training Program, Level 2 (Closed program) |
| <b>December</b>  | 5-10     | DaeJa Napier                               | Brahma Vihāras (Bhāvana Program)                        |

For complete course descriptions, teacher biographies and registration information, please contact us for a free course catalog or visit our website at [www.dharma.org](http://www.dharma.org).

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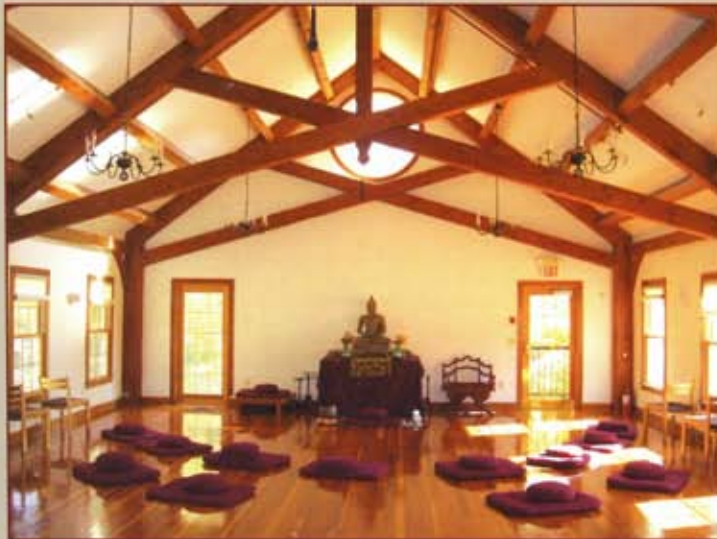
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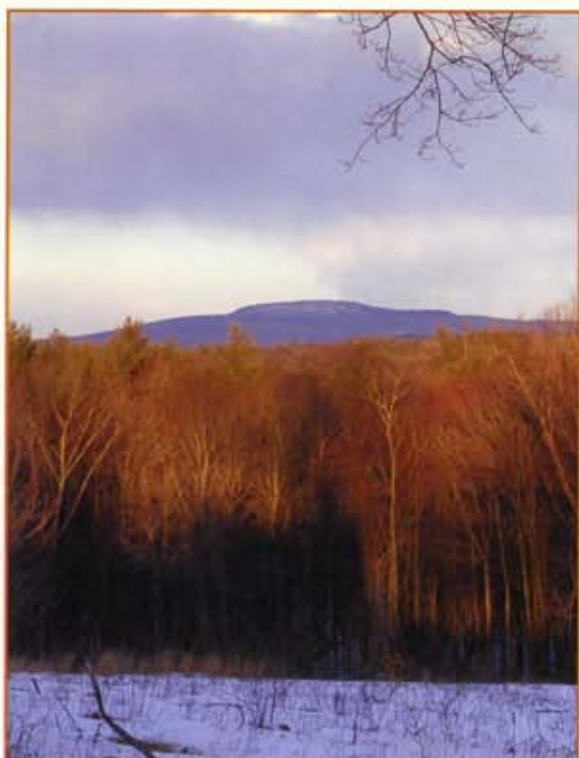
## About the Barre Center for Buddhist Studies



The Barre Center for Buddhist Studies is a non-profit educational organization dedicated to bringing together teachers, students, scholars and practitioners who are committed to exploring Buddhist thought and practice as a living tradition, faithful to its origins and lineage, yet adaptable and alive in the current world. The center's purpose is to provide a bridge between study and practice, between scholarly understanding and meditative insight. It encourages engagement with the tradition in a spirit of genuine inquiry and investigation.

Located on 90 acres of wooded land in rural, central Massachusetts, just a half mile from the Insight Meditation Society, BCBS provides a peaceful and contemplative setting for the study and investigation of the Buddha's teachings. A 225-year-old farmhouse holds a library, classroom, and dining room that create a comfortable setting for classes and workshops. A meditation hall holds space for practice. On-campus housing is provided by a dormitory under the meditation hall, rooms in the farmhouse, and three cottages.

The study center offers a variety of study and research opportunities, lectures, classes, seminars, workshops, conferences, retreats and self-study programs. Its program is rooted in the classical Buddhist tradition of the earliest teachings and practices, but its vision calls for dialogue between different schools of Buddhism and discussions with other religious and scientific traditions. All BCBS courses involve some level of both silent meditation practice and conscious investigation of the teachings.



## Māra Rebuffed

by Gotamī Therī, *Samyutta 5.3*

Māra:

kiṃ nu tvam hataputtā va  
ekamāsi rudammukhī  
vanam ajjhogatā ekā  
purisaṃ nu gavesasī ti

What's this? Like one whose son is slain  
You sit with a face full of tears?  
Immersed in the woods, all alone,  
Perhaps you are seeking a man?

Gotamī:

accantaṃ hataputtāmi  
purisā etad antikā  
na socāmi na rodāmi  
na taṃ bhāyāmi āvuso

Long gone is she whose son is slain.  
Men too are in that past for me.  
I do not grieve, I do not weep,  
And sir—I'm not afraid of you.

This poem is all the more remarkable when you know the story behind it. The Elder Gotamī is the very same KisaGotamī who was at the heart of the mustard seed tragedy.

As a young woman she was married into an abusive family, who scorned her for being so skinny (*kisa*) and for not bearing children. She finally did give birth to a fine healthy son, and was then treated well by her relatives. Alas the child had some sort of terrible accident as a toddler and was killed. This drove Gotamī mad with despair, and she wandered from place to place clutching her dead child and seeking medicine to heal him. Shunned by all, she was eventually pointed toward the Buddha, who sized up the situation immediately and asked her to seek mustard seeds from households who have not experienced death. This was of course impossible, and when Gotamī finally realized the universality of death and the fragility of the human condition, she was healed of her madness. Joining the order of nuns, she eventually became an *arahant* or awakened one.

In this exchange she is visited by Māra, a trickster figure in Buddhist literature, who may be considered the embodiment

of evil or the personification of the shadow side of the human psyche. He obviously knows what buttons to push, and goes after both the personal tragedy in her past and the demeaning assumption that as a woman she must only be capable of happiness if she finds a man.

The Elder Gotamī is unmoved by Māra, and demonstrates she has achieved a state of such profound well being that even the tragic loss of her son is entirely healed. As an *arahant*, we are to understand the third line of her stanza to indicate she is beyond any kind of grief, not just the loss of her son. This point is triumphantly made when she addresses Māra as an equal (*āvuso*) and declares that she has no fear whatsoever of him. In the light of awakening, Māra, who thrives only in the shadows, is completely exposed, all-unconscious tendencies and dispositions are revealed, and the mind is purified of every emotional affliction, including fear. We are told in the text that upon hearing her words, Māra becomes discouraged and vanishes on the spot.

—A. Olendzki