

Realization Ajaan Fuang Jotiko

A tape-recorded talk given to one of his students who had reached an impasse in her meditation.

Once the mind is firmly established in the breath, you then try to separate the mind from its object — from the breath itself. Focus on this: The breath is an element, part of the wind element. Awareness of the breath is something else. So you've got two things that have come together. Now, when you can separate them — through realizing the breath's true nature as an element — the mind can stand on its own. After all, the breath isn't you, and you aren't the breath. When you can separate things in this way, the mind gains power. It's set loose from the breath, and is wise to the breath's every aspect. When mindfulness is full, it's wise to all the aspects of the breath, and can separate itself from them.

Now if it so happens that your mind is strong and your mindfulness sharp while you're doing this, that's when insight occurs. The knowledge will arise in that moment, letting you know that you've really let go. If your mindfulness is still weak, though, you won't be able to let go. Only when your mindfulness is really resilient will you have mindfulness and insight arising together.

This is something you have to keep contemplating whenever you have the chance. When you can separate the mind from its objects, it'll be freed from all its burdens. So focus your attention right down, in the area of the heart. Keep it focused there, and then observe the breath and what it is that's aware of the breath. Be as observant as you can, and eventually you'll see that they separate from each other. When they've separated, that gives you the chance to investigate further inside. And once you've investigated this one element, you'll find that what you learn applies to everything else.

When you investigate the breath, you'll find that it's not a being, not a person — so what is there to latch on to? You can't latch on to it as your self, for it simply goes its own way. When you look at the breath you'll see that it doesn't have a body — no head, no legs, no hands, no feet, nothing at all. When you see this, you let go of it, in line with the way it really is.

The texts say, 'Cago patinissaggo mutti analayo': You move out of the breath. You remove your concerns for it. You don't make it your home any longer — because it's not yours. You let it go in line with its original nature. You give it back. Whatever it's got, you give it back to nature. All of the elements — earth, water, wind, fire, and space — you give back to nature. You let them return to what they originally were. When you examine all five of these things, you'll see that they're not a being, not a person, not 'us', not 'them'. You let them all return to their original nature in every way.

This then brings us to the mind, what it is that's aware of these five elements. What is it going to stay with now? Turn your powers of observation on this knowing element that is now standing on its own, with nothing else left. Examine it to see what's what, and that's when another level of insight will arise.

If you want to gain the insight that will let go of all things in line with their original nature, there has to be a special realization that arises in the act of letting go. If there isn't this realization, your letting go is simply an ordinary, everyday label or perception. It's mundane discernment. But when this special realization arises in the act of letting go — the instant you let go, the result comes right back at you, verifying, certifying what's happened for what it really is: You know. You've let go. You then experience the purity within you.

This is called transcendent discernment. When the realization arises within you, verifying what you've seen and what you've done, that's called transcendent discernment. As long as this

realization doesn't arise, your discernment is still mundane. So you keep working at your investigation into things until all the conditions are ripe. Then when they're ripe, there's nothing more you have to do, for transcendent discernment penetrates things completely the very instant it arises. It's not like mundane discernment at all.

The path we follow, then, is to be observant, to investigate things. Keep making a focused investigation until you reach the strategic point. When the mind reaches that point, it lets go on its own. What happens is that it reaches a point of fullness — the Dhamma within it is full — and it lets go. Once it lets go, the results will appear immediately.

So. Keep on practicing. There's nothing to be afraid of. You'll have to reap results, there's no doubt about it. You reap results all along the way. Like right now, while you're sitting in meditation here. You know that the breath and the mind are comfortable with each other. That's a result of the practice. Even though you haven't yet reached the end of the path, you're still gaining a sense of comfort and ease in your meditation. The mind is at peace with the in-and-out breath. As long as the mind and breath can't separate from each other, they have to help each other along. The mind helps the breath, and the breath helps the mind until they can get fully acquainted. Once the mind gets fully acquainted, it can let go. When it knows, it lets go. As long as it doesn't really know, it won't really let go.

What this means is that you have to associate with the breath, spend time with it, and gradually come to know it. As the mind gets more and more acquainted, it will be able to unravel its attachments to body, feelings, perceptions, thought-constructs, and consciousness. Its identity-views — seeing these things as the self — will fall away. This is the way to freedom. The moment this transcendent discernment arises, you'll be free. You'll be able to disentangle yourself from all the conventional truths of the world that say, 'person', 'self', 'man', 'woman', 'us', 'them', and so on.

But as long as you can't yet let go, you still have to depend on these things. They're your resting spots, but not your refuge. You simply lean on each other, and help each other along, so that you can make progress on your way. You can't abandon these things, for they're the path of your practice. As long as you stick with the practice, you won't fall back. But as soon as you let up on the practice, you'll start back-sliding immediately. You'll fall prey to doubts, wondering whether or not the Dhamma is true.

You have to keep being observant of the mind: awareness itself. It's not the case that the mind isn't aware, you know. Its basic nature is awareness. Just look at it. It's aware of everything — aware, but it can't yet let go of its perceptions, of the conventions it holds to be true. So you have to focus your investigation on in. Focus on in until the mind and its objects separate from each other. Simply keep at it. If you're persistent like this, without let-up, your doubts will gradually fade away, fade away, and eventually you'll reach your true refuge within you, the basic awareness called buddha that sees clearly through everything. This is the Buddha, Dhamma, and Sangha appearing within you as your ultimate refuge.

This is when you'll know what's actually within, what's actually without, what's actually a resting spot, and what's really your refuge. You'll be able to distinguish these things.

Things outside are simply resting spots. Like the body: It's a resting spot. For the brief moment that the elements of earth, water, wind, and fire stay balanced together, you can rest with the body. But as for your true refuge, you've already seen it. It's this basic awareness itself, within the mind. Your awareness of the breath is a refuge on one level. When it separates from the breath, it's a refuge on another level. And as for your true refuge — buddha — that's the awareness that lies further within. Once you realize this, that's all there is. It's sovereign in and of itself. It knows clearly and truly, all around. That's the true refuge within you.

As for things outside, they're just temporary supports, things you can depend on for a little while,

like a crutch. As long as there's the breath to keep them alive, you make use of them. When there's no more breath, that's the end of the problem. The physical elements separate and no longer depend on each other, so the mind returns to its own true refuge. And where is that? Just where is that buddha awareness? When we've trained the mind to be its own refuge, there will be no sorrow at that moment in the meditating heart.

The Buddha's own search was for this refuge. He taught all of his disciples to take refuge in themselves, for we can depend on others only for a little while. Other people merely show us the way. But if you want what's really true and good in life, you have to depend on yourself — teach yourself, train yourself, depend on yourself in every way. Your sufferings come eventually from you. Your happiness, eventually from you. It's like eating: If you don't eat, how are you going to get full? If you leave it up to other people to eat, there's no way you're going to get full. If you want to be full, you yourself have to eat. It's the same with the practice.

You can't let yourself latch on to things outside you. Things outside are inconstant. Impermanent. Undependable. They change with every in-and-out breath. This holds not only for you, but for everyone. If you don't part from one another while you're still alive, you part when you die. You part from things with every in-and-out breath. You can't base the meaning of your life on these things — and you don't have to. You can simply tell yourself that this is the way things are all over the world. The world offers nothing lasting. We don't want things to be that way, but that's the way they are. They don't lie under anyone's control at all. This is true not only with things outside, but also with things within you. You want the body to stay alive, you don't want it to die, but it's going to die. You don't want it to change, but it changes, constantly.

This is why you have to get your mind in shape so that it can take refuge in itself, in line with the principles of the skill the Buddha taught. And you don't have to feel doubts about the practice, for all the qualities you need to develop in the practice are already present within you. All forms of good and evil are present within you. You already know which path is the good one, which path is the shoddy one, so all you have to do is train your heart to hold onto the good path. Stop and take a look at yourself right now: Are you on the right path? Whatever is wrong, don't latch onto it. Let go of it. Past, future, whatever, let go of it, leaving only the present. Keep the mind open and at ease in the present at all times, and then start investigating.

You already know that things outside aren't you or yours, but inside you there are many levels you have to examine. Many levels you have to examine. Even the mind isn't really yours. There are still inconstant and stressful things inside it. Sometimes it wants to do this, sometimes to do that, it's not really yours. So don't get too attached to it.

Thought-constructs are the big issue. Sometimes they form good thoughts, sometimes evil thoughts, even though you know better. You don't want to think those things, and yet they keep appearing in the mind, in spite of your intentions. So you have to regard them as not being yours. Examine them. There's nothing dependable about them. They don't last. They're impersonal events, so let them go in line with their own nature.

And what is there that's lasting, solid, dependable, and true? Keep looking on in. Focus your mindfulness on the breath, and ask yourself right there. Eventually you'll come to see what's what within you. Whenever you have any doubts or problems in the practice, focus down on the breath and ask the mind right there, and understanding will arise, to loosen up your wrong views and help you past your impasse.

But even this understanding is inconstant, stressful, and not-self. Sabbe dhamma anatta: Everything that arises, the Buddha said, is inconstant and not self. Even the understandings that arise in the mind aren't constant. Sometimes they arise, sometimes they don't. So don't get too attached to them. When they arise, take note of them, and then let them follow their own course. Let your views be Right Views: i.e., just right, not going overboard. If you go overboard with

them, you latch on tight to them, and then they turn wrong on you, for you've lost sight of what you're doing.

What this all boils down to is that the more mindfulness in your practice, the better. As your mindfulness gets more and more mature, more and more complete, it turns into something transcendent. The transcendent discernment we mentioned above arises from the power of your mindfulness as it becomes more and more complete.

So keep training your mindfulness until it's Great Mindfulness. Try to keep it constant, persistent, and focused, until you see all things for what they are. That's how you'll advance in the Buddha's teachings.