

Whole-hearted Concentration

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Samadhi, the word that we translate as concentration, is defined in the Canon as *cittass'ekaggata*: singleness of mind. And it's worth exploring the levels of meaning of that term. There's the singleness: *Eka* means one. *Agga* is a controversial term. Some people translate it as point, to convey the idea that your awareness should be reduced to one point, like the point of a pencil.

But in Pali it doesn't mean point. It means the summit of something, the tip, the ridge line of a roof, the top of something. It also means a gathering place. The *uposath'agga* is where the monks meet together to have their *uposatha*. The *bhatt'agga*, the meal *agga*, is where the monks meet to have their meals. And because we're said to enter and remain or dwell in this dwelling of concentration, that seems to be the more relevant meaning. We have one place where we dwell, one topic that we dwell on.

Like the breath right now: Gather the mind around the breath. If you're going to be thinking, think about the breath. If you're going to be asking questions or exploring, ask questions and explore the breath. You do this singly in the sense that this is the one topic you're going to focus on. If you really want to know this, give it your full attention. As you go through the day, you have to split your attention between the breath and the things you're doing outside. But right now, while you're sitting here, there's nothing else you have to pay attention to. You can give your all to the breath.

This connects with the two meanings of *citta*. It can mean *mind* but it can also mean *heart*. You want to do this with your whole heart. Ajaan Lee uses the term *temcai*, which in ordinary Thai means to do something willingly. But he also uses it so that it means to do it wholeheartedly. Realize that if there's anything going to be found in the practice, it's going to be found right here. Spread your awareness to fill the whole body. Or instead of thinking of spreading your awareness, you might think: Wake up your awareness.

That's another term that Ajaan Lee uses. Our awareness in our head tends to be pretty awake, but unless we're actively engaged in some physical skill, our awareness in the rest of the body seems to be pretty much asleep. You don't have the whole heart, you don't have the whole mind fully awake, fully alert. So wake up your alertness in your feet, wake up your alertness in your hands, in your arms, in your legs, in your torso, all around. If you're using a meditation word, think of every cell in the body saying that meditation word. If you're focusing on the

breath in and of itself, okay, every cell of the body is breathing in, breathing out. Everywhere there's a nerve end, think of its being awake to the breathing in and breathing out of every cell. Be fully present. And be willingly present.

All too often our concentration gets cut off because we're partly here and partly not here. There are parts of the mind that can think of other things to do, other things to think about. You've got a whole hour. You can give part of it to something else and then come back to the breath. That's what they say. But why fall for them? Remember, you're here voluntarily. You're here to meditate because you see that meditation is going to be good for you. The more you give yourself to the meditation, the more you're going to receive. So don't hold back.

We sometimes have a sense of being perched in our bodies, like a bird perched on our shoulders, looking through our eyes, listening through our ears, but withdrawn from the rest of the body. Well, get back down in the body. Give it your all. It's only then that you can get the full nourishment out of the meditation. The Buddha talks about a sense of ease and well-being spreading through the body. This is how you spread it: by opening up all the channels inside, waking up everybody inside.

Ajaan Lee makes a comparison with putting roads and running electric lines through a former wasteland, so that now you can have communication, you can have transportation coming and going. You don't have to push the breath around. Simply open things up in the body, so that the breath can flow of its own. The same as when you build roads: You don't have to push the cars around the roads. Simply make sure that the roads are open and in good repair, and the cars will go on their own, smoothly on their own.

The important thing is that you simply don't hold back. You give your whole mind, your whole heart to what you're doing right now. This is an attitude that you should develop to the whole practice. When you're sweeping up around the monastery, be fully there. Have a sense of your body, the whole body, involved in the sweeping. When working in the kitchen, doing whatever chores need to be done, be fully there. Sometimes we notice that we're doing a lot of sweeping while someone else is doing less sweeping, but remember: We're not doing it for them. We're doing it for us. Here's an opportunity to develop your goodness. Wholehearted goodness. Wholesome goodness. So take as much as you can by giving as much of yourself as you can, and you're going to gain a lot.

The same with the precepts, especially for the monks: Sometimes it seems pretty daunting. There are lots and lots of precepts, and when you're first ordained, it seems like a huge demand. You used to have five, eight, or ten precepts. Now you have 227, and that's just the tip of the iceberg. It seems

superhuman. But it's not. Remember that the precepts are not meant to tie you down. The fact that you're following the precepts makes other people more inspired to support your practice. So the precepts give you freedom.

I remember when I was a young monk: The first time that notion occurred to me totally changed my attitude toward the precepts. At first I put up with them grudgingly, not wholeheartedly. But then I realized, one, I had the freedom to meditate all day because of the precepts. And as I lived in the community, I noticed whenever there was strife, whenever there was disturbance in the community, it was because somebody was breaking the precepts.

Because the precepts are designed for freedom, the more you give to them, the more freedom you get. So you observe them wholeheartedly. You do your duties wholeheartedly. You're generous wholeheartedly. Follow the precepts wholeheartedly. It's a lot easier than to sit down and meditate wholeheartedly, fully present, with no regrets from the course of the day, no issues brought in from the course of the day, so you can give yourself fully to being right here. The whole body, your awareness of the whole body, can be fully given over to the breath so that there's a strong sense of oneness. The breath is one. The body is one single sensation of awareness. The mind is one. Your heart is one. There's an intensity that comes from that.

I've heard people say they don't like the term *concentration* for samadhi. It sounds too tense. They prefer "lucid calm," or "collectedness." But the actual quality of samadhi is very intense. When you fully give yourself to it, there's an intensity of well-being that comes with that. And a sharpness of alertness that you don't get otherwise.

So the more fully you give this your whole heart, your whole mind, then the more fully you reap the benefits.