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Week 2, Awakening the Mind: A Journey for Contemporary Life

Balancing Emotions

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Hello again. Thank you very much for being here. Now we will talk about the second part, the second week at Tricycle online retreat. And today we'll want to talk more about analytical meditation by introducing the second building block, which is balancing the emotions.

Let's review what we covered last time. We were talking about the Buddha's great insight, which is, if you want to change the quality of experience, you need to go within. So that gives rise to the *bodhisattva* vision, which is freeing yourself inwardly to be able to express that freedom outwardly. Then my inner experiences will be great not only for me, but will be a positive force in this world, contributing to the world for us to have a better way of living and getting together. The way to do that is awakening the mind, and then awakening the mind on the mentally healthful building blocks, which I mentioned: Meditation balances the emotions, cultivates compassion, and develops insight. With "meditation," we're talking about concentration meditation as well as the analytical meditation.

Today we want to cover more of the analytical meditation and also introduce the balancing of emotions. That would give a very good understanding of that building block. So let's see about analytical meditation. Analytical meditation, as the name describes, is when we want to analyze one topic. And in order to meditate analytically with that topic, we need to get familiar with that topic. So familiarity comes first.

Then, through familiarity, we'll be able to bring reasoning into the topic: is this topic good, not good? What is its counter-argument? I will try to do critical analysis—not make judgments, not make any conclusions, but just think logically about the topic I'm meditating upon. After that—some period of time and meditation with the application of logic—I apply some reflection and reason. Then I'll see how that topic is applicable to my life and how I can apply it to my day-by-day life. So I'm thinking, "Hm, maybe this way, maybe that way—," and then I try that application.

Then if any insight comes from familiarization, from reasoning, and from application, that insight will become my object of concentration for that meditation, and I will concentrate on that object for as long as I meditate. I will meditate for a short period of time.

What we suggest is doing a little reading. And then when we do a little reading on some topic, usually we use the awakening of the mind [as the topic of our meditation]. And with that topic, we try to get familiar with what we just read, and then seriously apply the reasoning and see what insight comes before the next meditation.

Again, these periods should be done daily, where we spend at least five minutes in each one of the phases: five minutes on familiarity, five minutes on logic, five minutes on application, and five minutes on that new insight—at the most. I mean, at least you have a little period of time to meditate analytically and do the meditation.

In the analytical meditation, it is important to pay attention to those four phases, and we need to know about what we want to meditate upon, what is the analytical meditation, what the topic of the analysis would be—in our case, the awakening of the mind. We have those three building blocks—one is meditation, which is the tool. Now I would like to go to the second one, which is balancing the emotions.

Why emotions? Emotions color everything we do. Emotions are very important. We don't pay attention much because we pretty much, as beings, move by emotions. We don't have an understanding of what's going on. And then when we start to manifest afflictive emotions, we always have the finger pointing at someone else. We point and say, "Oh, I feel this way emotionally, because you created that for me. You did that to me." And if you go even further, you point the finger up, meaning you blame some authority. You know, some people <inaudible> authority into us. So we always point at people; we blame some exterior things, but we forget about those three fingers pointed back at us, which is our inner pattern, our inner stories. And then the mind would deny everything and try to make up everything, and that's why we always point at others—I mean as if the emotions are coming from outside. No. The emotion is just a reaction—overreaction—to the inner stories we have.

This is why it is extremely important for us to balance those emotions. So that means to dismantle that story—the structure that has that component that leads us into afflictions, leads us into suffering, leads us into stress—and to reframe that structure, reframe that story, to bring us to be able to have positive emotions, enhanced emotions that bring joy, clarity, and satisfaction. Those are the emotions we need to cultivate. Why don't we have that? Because the basis of our emotions, the basis of our inner pattern is so tight, so intense. That's why we need to meditate analytically upon those emotions.

So to meditate analytically upon those emotions, we first need to understand what kind of emotions we have. And then we have to have a little inventory of our emotional status. So one of the aspects of the reason why we don't manifest ourselves in joy, in happiness, in clarity, is because we're always very attached to that inner pattern and inner story. We need to reframe that

aspect of it. So that's one of the reasons: emotion. It's very important to pay attention, understanding the inner role of emotion.

Now, at Juniper, we pay attention to the balance of emotion as a scale, how we present our self in the world. First of all, we have assertiveness: how we assert our self and want to be in the world, the level of contentment we have. What about our reality? How realistic are we, and what is the realism of our life about? Also, what about compassion and self-value? We pay attention to it.

Let's pay attention to the assertiveness. We want to be assertive; we need to be heard; we need to be a leader, or something, in the world. So what happens any time we try to do that, we don't have balanced emotions in that aspect. So anytime we try to apply those kinds of emotions, we become very aggressive. Aggressiveness. So we have this aggression and we're very aggressive, angry, overbearing. And then other times we don't have this emotion. Then what happens? We become meek, become submissive. We become weak in the world. So from that, we apply our assertiveness: we need to be cooperative, but at the same time we need to stand up. We need to have self-confidence and so forth. So how do we know that? That's why we need to pay attention: to know our characteristics and [such] and to know that scale of our emotions.

Second aspect of that: how content are we in that level of contentment? Most of the time we feel unsatisfied, overindulgent—I mean lusting and all that and never satisfied with that. So we've lost that capacity to be balanced and [are] without contentment. On the other hand, we are in self-denial and we don't pay attention, don't care. It's as if there's indifference in that. So we need to pay attention to that emotion, to such a level, to be content with what you have—increase the level of contentment to be fulfilled, to be happy. And that's why we try to accomplish balancing our emotions.

In relation to realism, it's pretty much the same. Sometimes we so unrealistically dream. We dream and we have this kind of space-cadet dreaming. So we dream something unrealistic and then later on get frustrated, because we're not able to accomplish it. On the other hand, another extreme of that is that we are somber, depressed, feel invalid, feel worthless, kind of dark and all that. So we are very pessimistic. We don't have any kind of—I mean nothing is good; everything is dark and is negative and so forth and so on.

Another aspect of our day-by-day life itself is compassion. So we try to help everybody, because we have this nature. You have this inner characteristic: empathy for the suffering of others. (By the way, this is the topic we're going to cover next week. The next session will be compassion.) We try to be compassionate, but either you go to the extreme of compassion or we become indifferent to people—we are self-absorbed, we are insensitive, we don't have that compassion. Or we go to another extreme of compassion: we feel like a victim. We feel like a sacrifice. And, even worse, we feel abused and used. So that's one of the aspects of being compassionate:

instead of taking this potency—to grow from that and help others—we feel used or abused or not feel as well or feel totally indifferent toward everybody's hardship. So that compassion we're talking about is how we enhance our sensitivity, how we enhance our comparativeness, how we include others, yet feel good and not be abused or indifferent to other's hardship.

The last aspect I want to talk about here is self-value. We have a tendency on one hand to be too narcissistic, too vain and self-absorbed, and “me, me, me” and all that. Or you go to the other extreme: we have zero-worth; don't pay attention to me; I'm service; I have low esteem, and so forth and so on. So how do we get to the middle of that? By having self-respect—natural self-respect. It's still humble, but self-respecting. It's standing by ourselves, but still humble, not egoistic and not in arrogant mode and so forth.

So if we pay attention to a topic—to meditate on balancing emotions—we need to build that awareness of our characteristics—who we are. And we especially need to build up understanding of our emotional patterns, our inner stories, and, most likely, the trigger for those emotions to take a stand and overreact upon others and ourselves. So it's very important for us to really pay attention to our emotions. Because when those emotions are out of balance, not only will they affect our mental well being, but also we will disturb our physical well being. I mean, we'll create diseases. A lot of our diseases are started by psychosomatic effects, the imbalance of our emotions. And then we'll create this point of losing our balance and losing our harmony. And that's not only in the mind, but also in the body—suffering.

So that's why analytical meditation is in place for us: to focus upon our emotions, to acknowledge—to bring awareness of this pattern, to bring awareness to the characteristics we have, and then to understand our inner stories and to understand the trigger points. And, slowly, slowly, when we get the analytical meditation, get familiarity with that, bring reasoning to those aspects, and see how it's applicable to our life or should be negated from the application to our life, then we hold that insight for a little moment. That insight, that new focus of our projective concentration, that new object of concentration, will be the focus that strengthens the mind to start to create the basis of transformation.

So that's what building up analytical meditation is about. And how we get familiar with one topic—the topic itself is that building block of balancing compassion. As we continue to meditate analytically into the balance of emotions, slowly, slowly, we'll be able to bring balance and to bring the transformation.

I have one saying which I say all the time to my students: soft water dripping day-by-day wears the hard rock away. It means that the soft water is my ability of mind and the dripping day-by-day is our practice. The hard rock is that inner pattern and the stories we have. Therefore, [applying] the ability of our mind practicing that mode of analytical meditation, day-by-day,

we'll be able to undo and break apart that hard inner story and inner pattern and allows our inner, utmost joyful nature to become potent and to become alive. So that is the topic of the second week's meditation, balancing the emotions for all of you. Thank you very much. I encourage all of you to continue to do your daily concentration meditation as well as to exercise from this week until the next week. Analytically make an inventory of your personal characteristics: knowing yourself, all the patterns you have—without making judgments, but just the acknowledgement of them.

See you next week. Have a good meditation and enjoy your meditation. Thank you.