

## *Giving Weight*

*February 26, 2005*

One of the terms for concentration is *adhicitta*, which means a heightened mind—not heightened in the sense that you’re physically above something else, heightened in the sense of heightened importance. You try to be very clear about where your awareness is focused. You make that focal point the really important issue. Normally, you focus on one thing but then something pulls you away, and you run after it. Your mind becomes a slave, like a dog running after whatever captures its attention. It’s under the power of all the things around you. As a result, the mind never gets any rest, never gets any sense of its own importance, because it’s constantly being a servant to this, that, or the other mood or notion or desire, or just whim of the body.

So try to give the mind importance. Look at what you normally let it feed on or run after, and you’ll notice often that if someone could take a picture of your mind, it wouldn’t be a picture you’d want other people to pass around. So try to focus on being still right here in the present moment. Stay with the breath coming in and going out. See how still you can make the mind. Then be conscious of anything that might come in to make your awareness waiver. Resist the temptation to go running after it. Try to give the mind some weight.

That chant we had just now on respect: The word for *respect* in Pali also means weight. You give weight to the mind; you give weight to your practice of concentration. You don’t toss it away in favor of other things. You want to try to maintain that center no matter what, not only while you’re sitting here meditating, but also wherever you go. You want to be able to take that sense of a firm center out into the world, so that even when you’re with other people, having to interact with them, your center doesn’t go drifting off to focus on them. You want to keep your center inside.

You’ll notice a lot of resistance, because most of the time when we deal with other people, our mind is focused on what their reactions are, what their thoughts may be. But think about it: How much do you know about another person’s thoughts? You’re trying to read all the signs of what they may be thinking, but that’s not much of a center at all. It doesn’t have any good support. In the meantime, you’ve abandoned your own center, which means that you’re out of balance. All the weight goes outside. There’s nothing inside to ground you.

So try to give some importance to having this center stay inside. This is why we work with the breath to make it comfortable. Give the mind a good place to stay,

a place where it *likes* to stay, so that when you're pulling it back into its inside center, it's not as if you're dragging it off to its execution. You're bringing it back to a place where it really is good to be.

That way, it's a lot easier to resist the temptation to go flowing out the eyes, ears, nose, tongue, or body, out to the past or the future. The word, *asava*, which means effluent or fermentation, refers to something you can sense as you try to go through the day, keeping your center inside. Look for the times when your mind's focus goes out. There will be a sensation of flowing out. If you try to resist the flow, you'll always feel it. Yet so much of the time, we place our center of awareness outside, trying to provide it a place where it can stay outside, thinking that it's going to be safer out there. If you're outside, you think you can keep track of what other people are thinking or saying or about to do, and maybe influence it in the direction you want it to go. But if really look at that kind of knowledge, you see there's an awful lot of conjecture and uncertainty in it. Even though you tend to give it weight, it can't support the weight that you want it to hold. It doesn't provide any real security, doesn't provide any real happiness.

So you want to give weight to this focus inside, give importance to having your center stay inside the body, with the breath, where it's comfortable, where it really can have a good solid foundation, a good solid support. As for what other people are thinking: Actually, you find that once you keep your center inside, you see more clearly what's going on. However you may have to maneuver through the day, you're coming from a position of strength, a position of solidity, not startling at the least little thing.

This way, the mind gains a sense of its own importance—that by staying safe inside, you really can function a lot better. If you look after the mind, it really can help you in lots of ways. Ordinarily, we don't take much care to look after the mind. We think the mind can take care of itself as it does its daily work. But when you begin to see that taking care of the mind is what enables you to do that kind of work, then the mind should always come first. That's when you get your priorities straight.

As for what other people are thinking or saying or doing, just remember: They can never take you to hell. If you're going to go to hell, it's through your own doing. They can't take you to heaven, either. If you are going to heaven, it's through your own doing. And you don't have to worry about heaven and hell in the afterlife. Right here and now, you can see it. Other people can do horrible things, but it's only when you let what they're doing get into your mind, and then you start doing horrible things along with them: That's when it really gets bad. At the same time, no matter how good other people may be, you can always be

worried about how much longer that goodness is going to last. Sometimes, the better the person is, the more you're worried: "It can't last. So I'm just going to have to hold on to them."

The issue isn't what other people are doing, it's how you're managing your own mind. This is why you have to give importance, give weight to this ability to stay centered right here inside, because when you're operating from here, you can see things a lot more clearly. With less worry and flurry cluttering up your mind, you can also have a better idea of what you can do to respond to any given situation in an appropriate way, without having to pre-plan it, or worry about it too much. It comes because the mind is in a spot where it sees things a lot more clearly and quickly, with less of a sense of being under the power of other things.

Remember: That power is something you gave to that other things, and you can decide not to give it. Try to keep the strength inside. Give first priority to tending to your mind at all times, even when you're looking and listening.

This is why restraint of the senses is so important. Try to notice, when you look at something, how your focus—not only the focus of your eyes, but also the focus of your whole consciousness—seems to go out to that object. When that happens, you've lost your center, you've lost your foundation. Pull it back in.

If you get used to staying here, then when you sit and meditate, it's a lot easier for the mind to stay in place. When you deal with other people, it's a lot easier for the mind to stay in place, because you've made a habit of giving the weight to your inner focus, your sense of being inside the body.

And when you give the mind weight, when you get it importance like this, then it's going to start showing you what it can do. If you don't, it's always going to be a slave to things outside, operating under their power. Ask yourself: Which state of affairs do you prefer? And remember that you're making this choice all the time, every time you look, every time you listen: Where does the weight go? Where does the importance go? Make it a habit, make it a skill, that you're going to give the weight to the mind, that you're going to keep the importance centered right here inside. After all, that's where it really belongs. And when it's here, then it can function in the most skillful, most appropriate, all-around best way.