

## *A Unified Committee*

*October 20, 2005*

Each person's mind is like a committee, and each person brings a different committee to the meditation. This is why we have such different issues as we try to get the mind to settle down. Some members of the committee are willing to settle down; others are a little bit more resistant. And the politics within each person's committee is extremely individual. The way the inner discussion is run, the way each of us has been functioning in life, is very different. In some cases, the discussion tends to be repressive; in other cases, it tends to be more open and gentle.

Which means we have to learn different techniques and strategies for bringing the committee to a state of peace, to unanimity, to oneness. Think about all the things that your mind is registering right now. It's registering your body, how things feel in the different parts of the body, the signals that are being sent from lots of nerve endings. On top of that, there are other parts of the brain. One part is devoted to the breath right now, other parts have nothing to do, so they start wandering off to the past, wandering off to the future, because that's what they normally do. And when you won't let them go wandering off as they normally do, they can create trouble.

So you've got to find some way of getting everybody involved in the meditation. This is why the breath is such a good topic to focus on. It deals with your sense the body here in the present moment, and makes that the main focus. In other words, you don't want to be focused on just one spot in the body. You want to be aware of the entire body—as Ajaan Lee says, out to every pore. There's a nerve that leads out to every pore, there's a blood vessel that goes out there, so all the nerve endings that are sending messages are supposed to become part of a one big whole—which is not the way they normally function. Often you focus on this part, then you focus on that part, whichever parts seems to have a pain coming, and other parts get ignored. Wherever something seems abnormal, the signals get sent up nerves pretty fast and they tend to crowd out the other signals.

You've got to learn here how to open all the channels and to make them all as comfortable as possible. As for particular pains in different parts of the body, you've got to learn not to give them prominence. As you get involved in this process, you give the analytical part of your mind something to work on, right here with the sensations in the body. Part of the mind is thirsting after pleasure, so you give it something to feed on right here. In other words, the effort is directed at

getting everybody involved in one project, so that they get used to working together, instead of pushing and pulling and screaming at each other. But because of each of us has a different set of rules of order for how the mind works, the nature of the discussion tends to be different.

This is why each of us, as we're settling in, will have very different experiences as the mind gathers into oneness. It's important, if you listen other people talking about their meditation, that you ask yourself, "What exactly applies to me, and what doesn't apply to me?" As for the things that don't apply to you, just let them go. Don't try to squeeze your meditation in that direction, because you've got a different committee. Whatever technique, whatever strategies you have for getting everybody working together, focus on that. Eventually, you want everybody to settle down to oneness with the body here, with the breath in the present moment.

Just do your best keep everybody focused on this one project. There may be scattered thoughts that flicker across the screen every now and then, but try to keep the sense of the wide-open screen predominant, so that the thoughts have as little impact as possible. Then learn how to stay One for as long as possible.

This is a very important skill. Often when the mind settles down, you say, "Okay, what's next? We don't have much time." Well, that's part of the committee that's ready to move on to another job. You've got to say, "No, we're going to stay right here." Keep everybody right here, because you need to learn the skills for how to stay focused for long periods of time, to stay One for long periods of time, no matter what the situation.

They say that we'll have to work on mastering concentration all the way to non-returning, which means that even though the mind may be able to settle down, you want to teach it how to settle down in all situations. Only then can you say you've really mastered concentration. It may seem like it's dumb, it may seem like it's going nowhere, but having this center and keeping it as continuous as possible is what allows insight to happen. Insight doesn't come from thinking things out or reading books. Reading and thinking may help every now and then in dealing with specific strategies, in getting the mind to settle down, and in asking questions. But the skill that's going to make genuine insight or transcendence insight possible is just this: keeping the mind One in all situations.

That requires patience. It requires a certain amount of trust and faith. As I said this morning, there are two kinds of truths in the world: the truths that you simply observe and record, and the truths that are not going to happen unless you *make* them happen. Concentration is a truth you have to make happen. The conditions for discernment arising are truths you're going to have to make

happen. You have to learn how to ask the right questions once the mind is gathered together. That's a type of fabrication. It's something you have to put together, something you have to make happen.

And all of that depends on conviction. So you have to be convinced in the worth of concentration: *samadhi-garu atapi*—one who is ardent with respect for concentration. Respect, faith, trust: They all go together. You have to trust concentration. It may not seem obvious *how* it's going give rise to insight or *when* it's going give rise to insight, but you have to trust that it's going to happen. This is the condition you have to learn how to master. And a large part of mastering it is to have continued trust in what you're doing. Otherwise, it won't come into being.

So learn to appreciate the value of Oneness, stillness of the mind, where the mind is in a position where it doesn't have to think, doesn't have to figure everything out all the time, where it's content to stay still. Maintain that stillness, devote yourself to it entirely, get everybody in the committee working together on maintaining that stillness, and keep it alive. Only then will you have a proper foundation for the questions of insight.

Ajaan Khamdee, one of Ajaan Mun's students, made a comparison to being a hunter. Hunters go out and have to sit very still but be very alert at the same time. Even though they have no idea when the rabbit is going to come by, they do know that if they move around too much, the rabbit won't come anywhere near. Or if they dose off for even a moment, they'll miss the rabbit even if it's right under their nose. So even though you can't guarantee that you'll have your rabbit by noon or by 3 PM or whenever, you do know that this is the only way you're going to catch the rabbit. So do what you can to be ready for the rabbit whenever it comes.