

## *The Wealth of Simplicity*

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Back during World War II, one of the ways they tried to get people to help the war, or to help the cause, was if they were going to take a trip, to ask themselves, "Is this trip necessary?" And it's a good question to ask yourself as you practice. You're sitting here meditating, and the mind wanders off: Is this trip necessary? While you are meditating, it's pretty easy to answer No. Occasionally if you find that you have real trouble settling down, you may need to think a bit about what the problem is, what the antidote might be, and then bring that antidote in.

For example, if you're feeling lazy, think about death. Death can come at any time. Is your work done? Well, no. Okay, get back to work. When you're feeling discouraged, think about all the members of the Sangha in the past, all the monks and nuns who were going crazy one way or another. There's a story about a monk who said he hadn't experienced a finger snap worth of stillness in thirty years and he was ready to commit suicide. But he suddenly came to his senses and became an arahant. There was a nun who was kept running amok, as she said, out of her hut, but finally was able to settle down. We have no idea what their issues were, but at least we're not to the point where we're running amok here or contemplating suicide. So we're not nearly as bad off as they. If they were able to pull themselves together, well, so can you.

Then think about what you need to do to pull yourself together. There are standard antidotes. The antidote for lust is to contemplate first the object of your lust. Imagine that person as a dead person: one day, two days, three days dead, and you say, "Ah, I can't feel lust for that person anymore," but then you've still got this desire, you still want to lustful for something. That shows that the problem is not the object. The problem is inside. You want to turn around and ask, "So why do you like your lust?" Work on that until you're able to settle down and come back to the breath. Always use the breath as your home base. If you need a meditation word to go along with it, fine, but try to stay as close to the breath as possible. And keep the issues as few as possible.

The basic message all the way through is simplify, simplify, simplify, keep things simple. I've mentioned many times the instructions I got from Ajaan Fuang about training my mouth. Before you open your mouth to say something, he said, ask yourself, is this necessary? I found that cut down my conversation quite a bit, all to the good. And the same principle, of course, applies to the chatter in your

mind. Is this chatter necessary? It may be there, but you don't have to get involved in the conversation.

The basic questions you ask yourself are: "This thing I want to say: One, is it true? Two, is it actually beneficial? And three, is this the right time and place for it?" In a place like this where people are meditating, trying to keep their minds quiet, you want to say only things that are helpful and that disturb their peace of mind as little as possible. This way, as we pare down our own issues, we become less of a burden both to ourselves and to the people around us.

Ajaan Fuang had another comment one time. He said, "Lots of times we think that when the mind has lots of thoughts, it's wealthiest, but no, actually that's when it's poor. When the mind has only one or two things that it's thinking about: That's when it's wealthy. It can give those things its full attention."

It is like an exotic fruit in the market. If there's only one piece of that exotic food, it's going to have a really high price. But if it's all over the market, it doesn't have any value any more. So try to keep the value of your mind high, the value of your thinking, your actions, your thoughts, your words and deeds. Keep things pared down. Keep things simple. Try to have as few issues as possible, because that's when you begin to see what the real issues are.

A lot of our thinking is pretty much evasive action. You've got a big booming issue in the mind, and you just don't want to face it, you don't want to take it on, so you find other things to do, other things to think about, other things to get worked up about. And of course, the big issue gets left undone.

So when anything comes up, either inside meditation or in events outside, if you can find a way of making it as little an issue of it possible, okay, go in that direction instead of elaborating it. That's what it meant by *papañca*, the way the mind proliferates thoughts. These thoughts don't just go scattering out, they also come back and they attack you. The analysis is this: First there's contact at the senses, and from the contact comes feeling, and all of a sudden, it's not just an event of feeling anymore, what one feels, one perceives. A person has come in now. You've identified a sense of who you are as the feeler, and then you become the perceiver, and then what you perceive, you start thinking about. Then all the categories of proliferation come back and attack you. Your thoughts of "who I am, what I want, what I like, what I don't like": They not only attack other people, but they also come back and bite you.

So when you see the mind proliferating like that, try to pare it down, pare it down, pare it down. Have as few issues as possible. That way, you can be light—light on yourself, light on other people, light in both senses of the word: You're a shining example for yourself and you don't weigh yourself down.

The fewer issues the better. The fewer issues the less complexity. We know how difficult complexity is to handle: lots of balls that you're juggling in the air. Sometimes it seems like the meditation becomes one more ball that you're trying to juggle, but don't think of it in that way. Try to make it the place where you stand, not only while your mind stands on its object here in meditation—that's the image they have in the Pali, *arammana*, it means basically a support, something you stand on, like the breath is your *arammana*, it's your support right now—but also make that your support as you go through the day. You're in the body, standing on the breath, standing in the breath. Think of the breath surrounding you, bathing you. Let it become a force field that you carry around. Make tending to that force field your prime responsibility. Try not to have lots of other issues that make it difficult to tend to that.

All too often, you get up from your meditation and you drop everything right here on the floor. Then you go out to juggle all the different balls you have in the course of the day, and you don't have any really solid place to stand. And of course, that makes it more difficult to juggle them. Think of yourself standing in the breath, surrounded by the breath, bathed by the breath, permeated by the breath. You can envision your body as a big wire cage, and the breath flows in flows out through all the holes, no problem at all. Nothing needs to be pulled in, nothing needs to be pushed out. And the wire starts to glow with a cool light. If you find that a helpful image, use it. If it's not, find another image that you find helps keep you with the breath, in the breath, throughout the day. That's your one issue. You pick up other issues as you have to, and then as soon as you don't have to pick them up, you just put them down.

The fewer things you have to carry around, the wealthier you are. That way, it's easier to find harmony inside, easier to maintain harmony throughout the community because each of us is trying to paring our issues down, down, down, to be as simple as possible. Anything that doesn't have to become an issue, don't let it become an issue, Don't make it become an issue. Just keep it simple. That way, the really important things come to the fore, and you can deal with them straight on.