

RESTING

October 17, 2012

By Michael Erlewine (Michael@Erlewine.net)

The Tibetan Mahasiddha (great adept) Götsangpa Gönpo Dorje wrote:

“The mind is not found through searching. It is not seen by looking. If examined, it is found to be non-existent. If grasped at, it cannot be held. If dismissed, it does not go. If placed, it does not stay. If mixed, it does not blend. It cannot be split through division. It cannot be parted by separation. It is not known through looking. It is not realized through explanations. It cannot be illustrated by any example. It cannot be arrived at through any means.”

I find this teaching by Götsangpa so inspiring. For one, it tells me how the mind is and therefore something about how meditation has to be. This quote confirms what I am already finding out for myself, that ‘trying’ to meditate, trying to ‘place’ the mind will never work.

The only ‘trying’ we do is when we first learn how to meditate, when we are ‘practicing’ learning to meditate. ‘We’ don’t ‘rest’ the mind; we can only learn to let the mind rest by itself, just as it already is. Meditation is like Aikido, not Judo. In other words, we work ‘with’ the mind as it is rather than altering the mind in any way. ‘We’ don’t “do” anything.

It took me years to understand that when the meditation texts say to just let the mind ‘rest’, they mean rest, the same kind of rest we take at the end of a long day, like a long gentle sigh.

My favorite image of how to let the mind rest is that of the old-fashioned sheaf of straw, bound in the middle by a single thin cord. If you set the sheaf of straw against a wall and then (with a small pair of scissors) very gently snip the cord, the straw does not just fly all over the place. Instead, it ever-so-gently (almost like a physical sigh) just (almost imperceptibly) slumps and comes to rest in a relaxed position.

That is how we learn to let the mind rest.