

MIND FENG-SHUI: MENTAL AERODYNAMICS

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I continue to reflect on a need for greater awareness to handle my own life and to help solve the problems I see around me. This is a section I just added to my booklet "Shamata Meditation: Allowing the Mind to Rest Naturally," which is a free download here:

<http://astrologysoftware.com/books/>

SUMMARY: At first we sit on the cushion to learn some muscle memory by practicing Shamata meditation (with its focus on an object) and mindfulness training (to keep from straying from the object). This takes a while because at the same time we have to become familiar with how the mind works, plus the fact that we can't just will or force the mind to rest. We each have to discover how to let the mind rest naturally. That's the hard part.

There is no pill we can take to become more aware and no one can do it for us. Each of us has to do it for ourselves. And since we don't really know what enlightenment, mind recognition, and greater awareness really is like (we have not experienced it), we are kind of feeling our way in the dark. We each have to learn by ourselves to let the mind rest. At some point, we actually have to do it. This is why it is helpful to have someone who already knows how to meditate as a guide, to show us how, and be there to answer the questions that just naturally arise.

In fact, we often naturally let the mind rest when we are not thinking about it, but we are not aware of it. Gradually, we have to be able to do this consciously. What is needed is to develop an awareness of the mind at rest, and how to allow the mind to consciously rest naturally. At first, this is best done on the cushion as part of a regular dharma practice. Trying to do it off the cushion (in the beginning) is not the way to learn this. That comes later.

Once the habits of resting and mindfulness have been acquired, we will notice that these same habits also work off the cushion as well as on the cushion. In other words, whenever we are distracted from what we are concentrating on in life, we can gently bring the mind back to the task at hand and continue. This alone is a great help, especially for those of us who have to work for a living. Being able to concentrate on a task, do it properly, and finish it in a timely manner is a great skill to have. It can make the difference between keeping a job and losing it.

Also the 'Two Accumulations' (merit & awareness) also work off the cushion as well. What awareness we acquire in our life can be used to better see and to more skillfully execute whatever it is we are doing. Those more skillful actions on our part then generate still greater awareness or clarity, which allow us to be even more skillful in what we do, generating still more clarity/awareness, and so on, ad infinitum.

A little trickier perhaps, but very useful is learning to not dwell on thoughts and events over which we have no control. When my dog brings something home that is dead and rotten, I just say "Leave it!" and he usually does. We have to learn to leave behind us hurts, insults, aggression, and what-have-you, so that we don't ingrain them in our mindstream. Let me make this clear.

It is not pleasant when someone is rude to me, or a friend walks by me and never even says hello. I can only guess at the reason why, but if I get my feelings hurt and spend minutes, hours, days, or weeks dwelling on this, I am just adding insult to the injury I imagined I sustained by the original slight that hurt my feelings.

These are my feelings, and only I have any control over them. Even if the person who snubbed me did it purposely, I am still responsible for my response to the snub. We can learn to just drop it, let it go, and stop recording karma for that event.

If we get our feelings hurt and think about the event over and over and over, each time we think of it we are digging a deeper track, further inscribing our hurt into our mindstream which then actually obscures our vision even more and sucks up our precious energy. Worse yet, all of the embedded inscription of the event does not just end there and simply fade away. No, it is karma that itself ripens and appears again over time as yet a further obstacle to obscure our mental clarity.

An analogy that is not far off would be if we made razor cuts on our arm, some deeper and deeper, etc. Not only would that mess up our arm, but in time the arm would have scars that would remain with us for a long time, and perhaps even become infected. The feng-shui of the mind is something to think about too. We also have mental scars.

In other words, with karma we don't just have to worry about not doing the big things, like killing or whatever. It is this perpetual rain of small karma that really adds up and clouds the windshield of our mind. It is hard to remove and can easily (or fairly easily) be avoided.

Lord Gampopa said, "Although one's view and realization may be as vast as space, one's attention to karma must be as fine as the finest ground flour."

Karma is cumulative over time. It grows. If we can learn to just drop those things that we cannot change and turn our attention to other things, then, while some karma is certainly recorded, at least it is not endlessly re-recorded and inscribed into our mindstream. We may get some cuts from our initial reaction, but not the deep scarring that is fairly normal to all of us, you know: going over and over and over something that has hurt us. Best drop it.

And please don't forget to dedicate the merit and make at least some aspiration going into either a meditation practice or any life work. We may take care of the big things and still be eaten up by all the little things we do. The fact is, that becoming more aware also means becoming increasingly responsible for everything we do, and that means 'everything'. Why is it that Zen

monks and meditation masters find rest in every action, everything they do? It is because they are that mindful, that aware. It is the little things that add up, and this is something that (gradually) we can do something about.

Meditation is basically inner feng-shui, mental aerodynamics, learning to airstream our mind so that it can perfectly rest in the winds of change instead of the crazy kites that most of us are flying now.