

FALLING SHORT

Last week the precepts were introduced. These come from the vinaya, or the code of conduct for the monastic community. Several different translations were handed out. All the precepts can be summed up into one precept: that of non-harm.

Sila is also an expression of the insight knowledge of interdependence, that there is only one of us out there in all our different forms. We all share the same mind. When we harm another, we are harming ourselves. When we harm ourselves, either by commission or omission - not nurturing and supporting ourselves, we harm all beings. Here sila interconnects with right understanding and right intention.

When we begin this practice, we become aware of how much we fall short of our intentions. We are not able to do this perfectly, sometimes not at all.

This can be a stunning and sometimes disheartening process. It's like opening the blinds after a long time and seeing the dust on everything. One time a Zen master was asked what it was like to be a Zen master. His reply: Awakening means you get to watch yourself falling short many many times each day.

It takes some guts and determination to stick with this clearer seeing of ourselves. The 12 step program talks about a fearless moral inventory. This can be hard stuff. The comfort is that we are all in the same boat. The answer is not working harder. The way out is through clear seeing and realization.

It's seeing that when we work out of the small, egocentric mind, we are up against the ego ideal, which is what our ego thinks we would be if we were perfect, or what the enlightened person would be. From that ideal, we will both fall short and feel like we are always efforting.

The path is to move from the small mind to the big mind. We do this in practice, as we sit and feel the silence begin to shine. This is about using life as practice, so we can do this in everyday living as well.

MOVING FROM SMALL MIND WILL TO BIG MIND WILL

What do we mean by these terms?

SMALL MIND: Adyanshanti calls this the “Ego-Identified Mind” (EIM). The default state for all of us is the trance of this state of being. It is the unending activity in the mind from that place of separateness, of “me” against the world. It is the unconscious putting of the word “I” or “me” with every thought or feeling that arises. (I am tired. I am angry.). It is what creates the illusion that we are our thoughts and feelings that we work to see through in our practice.

Everything in this state feels like an effort.

When we come to practice, this is all we know. If I weren’t here running my life, how would things be done? “Who” would do what I need to do? It’s hard to imagine anything else.

We talked about what it feels like to experience our lives from this state. For me it includes: a needing to ‘push’ through, make myself finish, burnout, feeling like I am weighed down by duties or ‘should’ be doing this our that. Others added: hard, feeling pointless, stressed, determined, I have to do this, burdened.

BIG MIND: when something bigger than ‘me’ is flowing in our lives. Every religious tradition has an understanding of this. In Christianity, we owe her talk about being led by the Holy Spirit, or by opening to how ‘Spirit;’ may be nudging or inspiring us.

We actually experience this on an ongoing basis in our lives. We tend not to notice it, as it is invisible to the EIM. It flows so smoothly, it does not leave a trace. We usually notice what we struggle with.

It's not uncommon when someone has a moment of crises, the EIM is overwhelmed and does not know what to do. The small mind collapses, and something else, something that feels like divine grace, that knows exactly what to say or do, steps in. It feels like a miracle from beyond, but it is actually your true nature, the ground of our being, that becomes available when the EIM collapses and stops blocking it from us.

It's important that each of us knows this experience, so we shared in class a time when we felt this larger ground hold us.

Actually, the big mind is there from day to day as well. It's the stuff that seems to flow naturally, works well and we do not think about. Wisdom from big mind also tends to come to us 'complete'. Often in meditation, suddenly you simply know how to handle something that's been troubling or concerning. There's no 'thinking' or 'figuring it out', it just comes as a understanding in the heart. This is big mind in action also.

Again, we tend not to notice it because there was no effort, no energy cost. Indeed, it usually has a energy bonus, which might be experienced as relief, or restfulness. Our life practice is noticing these moments and thus enlarging our sensitivity and opening more fully to them.

Another way we notice big mind is the ease of which it fits into the flow of life. When something is in the larger order, it just kind of falls into place.

It is possible to actually live from this flow of being, or more from this. As you might imagine, it is a much lighter and peaceful way of life.

The dharma speaks repeatedly of effortless effort. This is what the dharma is speaking of. Living from the flow of truth, or the Ground, or from a place of not-self (i.,e. not EIM).

So how do we open this in our lives?

When we begin to see ourselves more clearly, and look at the places where our actions were different from our intentions, we begin to understand how many of our actions spring from what's traditionally called the three poisons or the defilements. These are as anger, greed and delusion. Or this rephrasing: avoiding discomfort, wanting to cling to comfort, and defending the ego.

These three energy streams are the energy currency of the EIM.

That leads us, with time, to understanding the importance of finding a different basis than the EIM to live from. If we want to be free of the defilements, we need to move outside the confines of the EIM.

Indeed the whole point of the dharma teachings is finding liberation from 'self', or of finding 'no self'. This is the place of living beyond the small mind. This is nirvana, when the fires of the ego go out.

When we fall short, it is from the viewpoint of the ego ideal. Not because there is anything wrong with us, but because we are not conscious of the conflicting defilements that drive our thoughts, emotions and action from the egoic standpoint.

Rudolf Steiner once said that the spiritual is path making the unconscious conscious.

It's not about 'trying harder'. That just reinforces living from the EIM and the ego ideal. That is suffering. This practice is not about trying to change ourselves. That's a violent approach to ourselves that is rarely questioned.

It is about seeing the denying forces. It is about realizing the force of the defilements on the small mind. When we do this, the possibility of big mind opens.

We need trust at this phase, trust that eventually, seeing and accepting leads to less conflicted and burdened living, and efforting is replaced by more effortless effort. Awareness itself eventually brings all into balance. Our path is to stay awake.

What is actually happening is clear comprehension, it is a giant step forward. Just with a tough spot in the middle.

So how do we go about this process? Four steps:

1) **Acknowledgment.** For many things of a sila nature, this is the only step required. We simply need to see what is there. If we know our shadow side as all the things we don't want to look at in ourselves, then this is embracing the shadow. We hold our shadow selves - with gentleness and compassion. We invite it to sit next to us. We hold our rage, our fear, our insecurities, as we would a small, frightened, angry child.

It is simple presence and staying with. This is a great act of love. When you learn to do this for yourself, you may find others wanting to talk to you about their inner misgivings. Confession is good for the soul, either in hearing another, or hearing yourself.

2) **Stop fixing, stay with seeing.**

It's hard to give up our belief in fixing. We simply see and see, and let our awareness do all the heavy lifting for us.

We find that instead of our 'letting go;' of things (which is an illusion anyways), things just begin to let go of us. We find things simply falling away. seemingly without any effort on our part.

3) Right response if necessary. Some things may require action. But not the fixing kind that comes from the place of "I should" or of social conditioning. Only when we are in this space of acknowledgment from step one can wisdom arise to let us know if any action is needed or skillful.

4) Paying attention to the precepts (which tend to tell us what to avoid), and the sila: right speech, action, livelihood - we will cover next week. This helps us to stay current with the present moment to understand skillfulness, cultivating virtue as the opportunities arise.

small mind will > efforting and strain
big mind will > effortless effort

I gave the analogy that the two minds are like the military airplanes that can re-fuel in mid flight. When the two planes are aligned, flying in the same direction and closely matched attitude, the upper plane pours fuel into the lower plane.

We condition, or cultivate, the qualities of the big mind in order to be able to raise the small mind up to the level where the two can connect. The small mind tends to be so weighed down by the defilements, so that it cannot get up to altitude. We cultivate the precepts and sila to give it the altitude it needs to be able to open to big mind.

HOMEWORK

- 1) Notice when you are in small mind, places of falling short: the qualities of strain, stress, burn out, feeling burdened with duties. Apply the four guidelines:

- 1) acknowledging what is happenings
- 2) don't; fix, stay with noticing
- 3) consider if there is right action to take
- 4) use the precepts and sila as your guidelines

2) Notice the moments of ease and openness when big mind is flowing.