

The Blooming of a Lotus

#17 Looking Deeply at Internal Formations

1. Aware of my body, I breathe in.
Smiling to my body, I breathe out.
Aware of body Smiling

2. Looking at the roots of the pain in my body, I breathe in.
Smiling to the roots of the pain in my body, I breathe out.
Roots of physical pain, Smiling

3. Aware of the contents of my mind, I breathe in.
Smiling to the contents of my mind, I breathe out.
Aware of mind, Smiling

4. Looking at the roots of the pain in my mind, I breathe in.
Smiling to the roots of the pain in my mind, I breathe out.
Roots of mind's pain, Smiling

5. Looking at the roots of the pain of fear, I breathe in.
Smiling to the roots of the pain of fear, I breathe out.
Roots of fear, Smiling

6. Looking at the roots of the feeling of insecurity, I breathe in.
Smiling to the roots of the feeling of insecurity, I breathe out.
Roots of insecurity, Smiling

7. Looking at the roots of the feeling of sadness, I breathe in.
Smiling to the roots of the feeling of sadness, I breathe out.
Roots of sadness, Smiling

8. Looking at the roots of the feeling of anger, I breathe in.
Smiling to the roots of the feeling of anger, I breathe out.
Roots of anger, Smiling

9. Looking at the roots of the feeling of jealousy, I breathe in.
Smiling to the roots of the feeling of jealousy, I breathe out.
Roots of jealousy, Smiling

10. Looking at the roots of the feeling of attachment, I breathe in.
Smiling to the roots of the feeling of attachment, I breathe out.
Roots of attachment,, Smiling

11. Looking at the roots of the feeling of being caught, I breathe in.
Smiling to the roots of the feeling of being caught, I breathe out.
Roots of being caught, Smiling

12. Looking at the roots of the feeling of joy, I breathe in.
Smiling to the roots of the feeling of joy, I breathe out.
Roots of joy, Smiling

13. Looking at the roots of the joy of liberty, I breathe in.
Smiling to the roots of the joy of liberty, I breathe out.
Roots of joy of liberty, Smiling

14. Looking at the roots of the joy of release, I breathe in.
Smiling to the roots of the joy of release, I breathe out.
Roots of joy of release, Smiling

15. Looking at the roots of the joy of abandoning, I breathe in.
Smiling to the roots of the joy of abandoning, I breathe out.
Roots of joy of abandoning, Smiling

16. Looking at the roots of the neutral feeling, I breathe in.
Smiling to the roots of the neutral feeling, I breathe out.
Roots of neutral feeling, Smiling

To oppose, brush aside, or deny pain in our body or mind only makes that feeling more intense. In the preceding exercises, we have practiced acknowledging and accepting painful feelings. Our painful feelings are not other than ourselves, or to put it more precisely, they are a part of us. To deny them is to deny our very selves. The moment we accept these feelings, we begin to feel more peaceful, and the pain begins to lose some of its intensity. To smile to our pain is the wisest, the most intelligent, the most beautiful thing we can do. There is no better way.

Every time we acknowledge a feeling of pain and make its acquaintance, we come in closer contact with ourselves. Bit by bit we look deeply into the substance and the roots of that pain. Fear, insecurity, anger, sadness, jealousy, and attachment form blocks of feelings and thoughts within us (Sanskrit samyojana, "internal formation"), and we need time and opportunity to acknowledge them and to look into them. The mindfulness of breathing does the work of making painful feelings bearable. Mindfulness recognizes the presence of the feelings, acknowledges them, soothes them, and enables the work of observation to continue until the substance of the block is seen. Mindfulness is the only way to transform it. All the seeds of pain are present within us, and if we live in forgetfulness, the seeds of pain will be watered every day. They will grow strong, and the internal blocks will become more solid. Conscious breathing transforms internal formations of painful feelings.

Internal formations can also be seen as "fetters" or "knots" of suffering deep in our consciousness. The knots are created when we react emotionally to what others say and do, and also when we repeatedly suppress our awareness of both pleasant and unpleasant feelings and thoughts. The fetters which bind us can be identified as any painful feeling or addictive pleasant feeling, such as anger, hatred, pride, doubt, sorrow, or attachment. They are forged by confusion and a lack of understanding, by our misperceptions regarding our selves and our reality. By practicing mindfulness, we are able to recognize and transform unpleasant feelings and emotions when they first arise, so they do not become fetters. When we do not let ourselves react to the words and actions of others, when we are able to keep our minds calm and peaceful, the fetters of internal formations cannot be made, and we will experience

greater happiness and joy. Our families, friends, and associates will also benefit from our greater understanding and love.

In our consciousness there are also the seeds of happiness, such as a loving heart, the ability to let go, joy, calm, and freedom. But these seeds need water every day or they will never thrive. When we are able to nourish these seeds with mindfulness, they will burst into bloom and offer us the flowers and fruits of happiness. This is the object of the latter part of the exercise. This exercise does not need to be practiced all at one time. It can be divided into several shorter exercises to be practiced over a long period of time, say, three to six months.