

Developing the Capacity to Let Go

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Martin: Hi, Jim. I came across this passage in something I was reading. I'll tell you what later, as would just appreciate your comment.

“Developing the capacity to let go allows us to be open to what is emerging and to practice what Buddhism and other meditative traditions call ‘non-attachment.’ In Buddhist theory, two Sanskrit terms, *vitarka* and *vicara*, are used to describe the subtle attachments of mind. *Vitarka* characterizes the state of ‘seeking,’ when our attention is attached to what we’re trying to make happen. *Vicara* characterizes the state of ‘watching,’ when even though we’re not trying to force something to happen, we are still attached to an outcome we are waiting for. With either, our mental attachment makes us blind or resistant to other aspects of what is happening right now. Overcoming the traps of *vitarka* and *vicara* requires continual letting go.”

I'm interested to hear what you have to say.

Jim: Hi, Martin. “Developing the capacity to let go...”

When you are trying to develop non-attachment you need to understand the nature of attachment. Most worldly people do actions for the results. This is very natural. They develop attachment to the results because they feel the results will somehow benefit them, not just physically or materially, but psychologically too. This attachment causes agitation in the mind. When you experience agitation concerning results it means you have not understood the nature of *karma* – how results are apportioned. Appropriate and timely action in a particular field does not guarantee the desired result nor does desire for the result. The result depends on appropriate and timely action in one's chosen field and THE NATURE OF THE FIELD – over which you have absolutely no control. This is why desiring or “seeking” is pointless. So if you are going to develop non-attachment you have to understand that the result has nothing to do with your desire, all spiritually-materialistic and New-Agey notions notwithstanding.

In other words, you have to “let go” or surrender the action and the desire to the field. Since this is a non-dual reality made of awareness, you leave it to awareness to apportion results according to its “understanding” of the needs of all the individuals in the field. Why should a certain result (object, situation, etc.) go to you if it would better serve the total if it went to someone else? The point of this “surrender” is to render the mind available to deal with “other aspects of what is happening.” If the mind is only thinking of results it will miss out on all the other aspects of reality. Most doers have a kind of tunnel vision – they are so focused on what they are doing and what they want that they are not aware of the background, the larger picture. This is a problem because no individual action takes place in isolation. It always occurs in a greater context.

Whoever wrote this did not really understand the meaning of *vicara* or was a Buddhist and was using the term according to Buddhist usage, which has migrated a bit from the original. There is a little similarity in the way it is used to suggest the original Sanskrit meaning. *Vichara* actually means “investigation” or “inquiry.” In proper *vichara* attachment to the result gets in the way of investigating reality. The purpose of *vichara* is to understand the nature of reality. It is a purely

scientific state of mind.

The problem with this whole idea of developing states of mind, i.e. learning how to “let go,” or surrender the results, is this: Who is letting go? Who is going to “be open to what is emerging”? Obviously, it would be the ego. So this kind of practice is about ego “development” under the guise of spiritual growth. The fact is that you are not attached to anything in the first place – you just think you are. And the only way you will become completely non-attached is if you discover that all things perceivable are empty.

If “you” are attached to results then you have the wrong “you.” There is actually only one person, the self, and it is not attached to any results, because nothing can add to it or subtract from it. There is no need to develop “seeing,” because the nature of the self, you, is awareness. If anything is known it is only known by awareness, not by a unique individual – as it appears.

This is not to say that if you think of yourself as an individual, someone who is doing action for certain results, that you should not try to develop a clear-seeing, dispassionate state of mind with reference to what you want. If you do, awareness will fold back on itself and you will come to understand the nature of the one who wants the results in the first place – the ego. You will see how empty of self-nature it (you, the doer) actually is.

I don't know how the Buddhist's use the term “what is emerging,” and any comment I would offer would be speculative. It may mean the self, but I think it means how events, *karmas*, unfold from the *samskaras*. Doers, *karmis*, are very much interested in events, in “getting the edge” so they can influence events and produce certain results. If this is one's state of mind then developing non-attachment is indeed useful since it allows one to become subtle enough to pick up on the *samskaras* and see how they might outpicture (emerge) into *karma*. According to Vedanta, however, the purpose of developing non-attachment (and other subtle body qualities like discrimination, determination, devotion, etc.) would be to prepare the mind for inquiry into reality. So this practice is not the goal of spiritual life, just one of the aspects of mind that make up the psychology of a mature individual.

~ Ram