

5: Mondo

by Ven. Shikai Zuiko O-sensei
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Do you have any questions at this point, about anything?

[Student]: Osho, you say that self-image wants to believe continuously that it is perfect. What about the times that self-image wants to believe that it's worthless, worth nothing?

[Osho]: Content. That's just content, because if it's going to be worthless, it's going to be the most worthless, ever, right? Perfectly worthless. Self-image is the phrase that is used to describe any view whatsoever about how we are and how the world is. That's how we use it in the context of this practice.

Now, this presents interesting possibilities and many little roads to go down that will get us back to the same place, which is: no experience is the words that we use to describe it. But we use words. There are a lot of self-esteem books and courses and so on saying that we should have a "good one" and the reason why we don't have a "good one" is because we have a "bad one" and so then we have to do things with the "bad one" to bring it up so that it's the "good one" and then we can do whatever it is that we need to do.

So, content is not the point with practice. It is noticing the compression or the contraction that "good" or "bad" has and the contraction can be the same, of the same intensity, for either. Does that answer your question?

[Student]: Yes, thank you.

[Osho]: Welcome.

Anything else about anything?

[Student]: I have a question and it comes up all the time and it is related to the noticing...not the content, but the contraction. How do we know contraction please.

[Osho]: Okay. When something happens that we are not expecting or when a situation occurs that we are not expecting, we will notice that the bodymind goes "whoa", it actually contracts like this, okay? We may be in the monastery. We may not know what to do in a situation. We can start to feel that energy of not knowing, the energy of the thought of not knowing. The converse side of that, of course, is that we should know and that itself expresses itself as a movement in the body that is towards being smaller. We, as it were, become smaller. A self is on its way to being created, a being is being created that, really depending upon its story, shouldn't be here because it doesn't know what to do. Or it places blame; "they" shouldn't be this way because can't they see that "I" am really trying to do this thing properly? So any movements like that, which move to create a "self", and with that inherently "other", have a palpable quality to them. We feel them. We feel smaller on the whole.

A way I've found of remembering it quite easily is to make a fist. That's contraction. [O-sensei lets hand fall open] This is open. This can do anything. [O-sensei closes hand into a fist] This can't do anything, except maybe do this [makes punching gesture] or hit the floor. That's it. Extreme way, but it can help to describe it. It is something you feel.

[Student]: I had a question about the atmosphere of the monastery being designed so that there are cues to remind you to be open rather than closed. Is it a good idea to try to do that in your home or work environment, to have some subtle cues in the environment to remind you?

[Osho]: Sure.

[Student]: Obviously you can't be bowing through the door at work.

[Osho]: But you can always stop. We can take a second when we are moving throughout our day-to-day experience, day-to-day environments, and stop at a door. Some people have done things like put little rock gardens, or a few rocks, on their desks. The bodymind sees it and it is a reminder that there is more going on than that particular context, as you were saying, the context of a work environment. That can be very limited. It is very limited. It's institutionalized. Because we are working in that environment, we have very good reasons for being there, namely, say, a paycheck, that's a good thing, that's useful; then it's pointless to take our energy and try to change that whole environment. But as you pointed out, having a reminder of the potential you have of openness, of open experience, is definitely a good thing.

Now, you've said that the atmosphere of the monastery is to show you openness, as it were, to remind you to be open. That's one way of saying it. Another way of saying it is that everything in the monastery is a tool to show you when contraction is present and to show you how to open it. Humans being the way we are, and the way we latch on to words, can present problems. "Openness" has been misunderstood. There are whole movements towards "openness" that have ended up with people who don't even know each other hugging each other for no reason whatsoever and...

[Laughter]

...regurgitating their horrible personal stories, one view of their horrible personal stories. That's not openness, that's just bad manners.

[Laughter]

We want to see how this happens in our own experience moment-to-moment and once we've seen that pattern, any pattern, for what it is, as a pattern, regardless of the content, (and again pattern is just a word as is contraction to describe an experience) practise. When we notice the experience, then we can feel the breath, open the eye gaze, sit up straight. That's the whole thing, that's what's been taught for 2600 years, that's the bottom line, saying that no contraction can define you; nothing that is known can describe Knowing in Itself. And that includes a sense of self. Any time that comes up, that's the point where you practise.

Is there anything else?

[Student]: When we are sitting, are we either practising opening, or if we are not doing that then by definition, what you are saying, are we suffering from a contraction? Does it have to be one or the other?

[Osho]: It's not either/or like that, not at all. Again, as I said, none of the words are what the experience is. So when we are sitting and we are lost in whatever, contraction, when we are coerced, when open experiencing is coerced, well we are in the environment of practice so by definition we are practising, is one way of looking at it. We have made ourselves available to looking into how our experiencing is. So a practice

advisor or a Dharma Teacher might come around and adjust our posture and at that point of the postural adjustment everything can change. It shifts. No matter how hard we may struggle to get back into whatever story, we recognize that we have to struggle to get back into it. That lets us know that in fact there is choice available that we didn't know that we had because we have on the whole defined ourselves by the patterns of contraction.

Does that answer your question?

[Student]: It's getting there.

[Laughter]

[Student]: Does it mean that it's hard to get out of the box as it is to get into the box?

[Osho]: What box?

[Student]: It's as hard to get out of being coerced, and then when we suddenly see it, it's as hard to get back...

[Osho]: No, I wouldn't say that. No, because what you are trying to do there is to come up with a formula.

[Student]: That's probably what I am trying to do.

[Laughter]

[Osho]: The formula is this: the longer you put this [O-sensei slaps her backside] on this [slaps zafu], the more patterns will open up and when patterns open, they do become embodied in that sense that a bodymind learns. The bodymind loves sitting. It's very happy sitting. Self-image, the views we have about what we are doing, doesn't like it on the whole at all. That's why we get the natterings and whisperings and yellings that come up during a sitting round, about what we should be doing or how we would be better off if we just got up and left and why doesn't that person shut-the-hrmmph-up.

But once the contractions are opened over and over again, that pattern of contraction, that pattern of coercion is worn out. When that's worn out entirely, then you just are this moment of experiencing; you are Awareness in Itself. Awareness is the only condition. All that is arises as the display of Awareness. You are learning to see that. You are not anything that you are aware of because you are aware of it. Even a sense of some "one" being aware is known.