

The point of focus

Many people misunderstand the point of concentration practice or dismiss it all together. It is a pleasing play on words to say, 'what is the point of focus?' or 'What is the point of the point?' but even without the humour perhaps it can be easy to dismiss something that involves a degree of effort and discomfort, sitting still for many hours.

That aside, 'But how does this help us work through our stuff?' I hear them ask. All the time we have our attention centred on the breath all this stuff is trying to get in from the periphery of our attention. All kinds of visitors come and go. We see what our craving is like when it does not get what it wants – not nice! This can help us really want to let it all go, but how does concentration meditation lastingly achieve this?

This first objection is related to a common assumption that concentration represents an exclusive point of focus and to small-mindedness. This is, however, only where it starts. The breath is not something we can hold tightly onto very long without going blue. We have to go with the flow and come to enjoy the space. The act of concentrating on the breath, when so relaxed, does not tighten the mind into a small, feeling-based focus. Instead, when the attention is strong enough our concentration will obliterate this point altogether, leading the mind to open in a completely new way, fresh and bright.

This is the only way to really let go. **For a mind that is grasping by nature the only way of letting go of something is to hold on to something else.** The only way to let go of everything is to hold on to the space, to fill the mind up with space. This is a very important point. We cannot just let go; letting go is a fruit of the practice not a method. If we try it as a method we are not letting go of anything, instead we would be trying to push things away or ignore things.

But surely the spacious mind does not last, say the critics? On the contrary, if we get there the result of genuine letting go is so pleasant, so blissful, that it will change or lives forever. Gone will be all the active, sensual craving which was at the root of all the suffering all along.

Get the point? Actually, the only way to see if I am right is to try it for yourself.

I offer this for your reflection.

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