

Dedicated Practitioners Program
Reading and Homework for January 2003
Fear and Equanimity

This month we will continue to focus on the topic of the *kilesas* through an investigation of fear, which many of us consider to be one of the multiple manifestations of aversion: a dislike of some future possibility. The readings, both suggested and optional, cover this topic from different points of view. In continuing the focus on the paramis, this month we will look at equanimity, sometimes described as impartiality or balance of mind. A powerful force in practice and in life, it is also a useful antidote to fear.

Readings: “Fear and Dread,” *Bhayabherava Sutta*, Majjhima Nikaya 4. The chapter “In the Dead of the Night” from *Food for the Heart*, Ajahn Chah, pp. 71, available at <http://www.accesstoinight.org/lib/thai/chah/heartfood.html#dead>. Excerpts from *What Are You Doing with Your Life*, J. Krishnamurti, attached as a Word document, also available from website www.jkrishnamurti.org/sitemap.asp.

Further Optional Readings: *Faith* by Sharon Salzberg, Ch 4, “Faith and Fear”, pp.74; *Forest Recollections* by Kamala Tiyavanich, Ch. 3 “Facing Fear”, pp. 79; *The Power of Now* by Eckhardt Tolle, “The Origin of Fear”, pp. 35.

Reflections

1. In MN 4, the Buddha implies that as long as our conduct and mind are not purified, we will be subject to fear and dread in lonely places. From your experience, do you think this also applies to places full of other people? Why do you think the Buddha linked fear to impurity in this way?
2. Both the Buddha in MN 4 and Ajahn Chah in *Food for the Heart* talk about remaining steadfast in the face of fear. Are there times you have practiced with fear in this way? What happened for you? What was your most profound insight or experience with fear?
3. Krishnamurti says that fear and desire are related. Is this true in your experience of both emotions? That is, does one always involve the other? Other teachers have commented that when fear is absent, love is present. Is this true in your experience? Can you recall times that this has been clearly evident to you?
4. What do you understand the root of fear to be? Do you believe that fear can end and not arise again for a human being? If so, do you think that fear can end simply through changes on the emotional level, for example, by bringing in wholesome emotions instead? Or does its resolution require insight and wisdom? Why?
5. We are also focusing this month on the parami of equanimity (*upekkha*), an impartiality of mind that is not moved by pleasure or pain. This is one of the highest factors of mind the Buddha spoke of. It is the last factor of enlightenment and hence the most refined of the seven factors. It is a brahma vihara. In the *Visuddhi Magga*, equanimity about formations is described as the last stage before enlightenment. When you feel inwardly settled in a sitting or in daily life, notice what state of mind is present. Is it calm? Is it concentration? Is it equanimity? (These are the three pacifying factors of enlightenment.) Or is it something else? What do you see as the difference between calm and equanimity? When equanimity is not present, are there skillful means you can use to summon it? What are they?

Daily practice: For the next four weeks, try these approaches in your daily practice. If no fear arises in your life for an entire week, in one of your sittings you might play with thinking of something that has been frightening in the past just to experiment with mindfulness of fear. Remember to let go of the imagination before you end the sitting.

Week	Focus	Suggestions
1	Fear in the body	Notice whenever fear arises in a sitting or in daily life in any of its forms (anxiety, dread, fear, panic, etc.). Then investigate: how is it expressing itself in the body? Notice any sensations in the body connected with the emotion. At some point in the day, write them down in your journal so you can report them to your dharma buddy, group, or teacher.
2	Fear in the mind	When fear arises, pay attention to the mental state directly. How would you describe the mood or emotional coloring of fear? Can you notice the point at which the mental state of fear is no longer present?
3	Fear and equanimity	When fear is present, notice any mental response to the bodily sensations or mental state of fear. Does aversion arise? Does more fear arise? Is it possible for equanimity to be present with the sensations? With the mental state?
4	Fear and thought	When fear arises, notice what you were thinking about just before it arose. Did the thought bring up the fear? As you feel the fear, notice the thoughts that arise while in that state. Does fear bring out a certain kind of thought? What are these thoughts like? Do you believe in them?

Please schedule a time to connect with your dharma buddy for a discussion of this month's reflections and practices, and for an interview with your mentor if you are receiving monthly interviews.