

Dharmette: Q&A – How We Hold Our Concerns

Transcribed and edited from a short discussion with Gil Fronsdal on March 14, 2012

Gil: I'd like to do something a little different today, if you're game for it. At the beginning, I gave a short talk about concerns – how you hold them, the weight of the concerns. Did you apply that in your practice in the last hour and a half? Did you look at your mind, at the texture and quality of your concern, and at the weight, strength, and intensity of it? Was that interesting for some of you? Was it meaningful for you? I thought maybe some of you might like to say something.

Participant 1: I had a bit of a revelation. I wasn't conscious that I was actually applying it, but one of the concerns that always comes up for me is other people's violation of my internal sense of how things go. What I realized today when I looked at that as a concern was that it wasn't really ... What annoyed me wasn't ... There was something deeper under that annoyance, and it was this sense of my system letting me down. I had never connected to that before. I was still externalizing the suffering that I encountered. I realized that I'm not annoyed at other people; I'm annoyed at my system. It's falling apart. I know it's supposed to fall apart, but I'm pissed about that, and not having a good time dealing with it. I'd never connected that before.

Gil: So you're saying that when people don't uphold the order of the universe, in a variety of different ways, then you get annoyed at people, disappointed. But when you looked beneath that, what fuels it is actually your own body, your own self. You're letting yourself down. The order of the universe according to how you're supposed to be is not being held up, so the annoyance is really towards yourself.

Participant 1: Yes. Well, not exactly. I recognized that the annoyance at others was masking a deeper thing which had more to do with fear. I had this whole order on purpose.

Gil: That's wonderful. I think it's fantastic. We should celebrate.

Participant 1: When I was sitting there I was like, "Okay. I can deal with that much better than dealing with making everybody else do things the way I want them to."

Gil: Great. Thank You.

Participant 2: I came in during the little talk toward the end of it, and it tied in with other processes that are going on. I've been trying to incorporate meditation into my life, and quite often I don't think I have time for it, because I have to be frenetically active, doing things for other people so that I can be right in the world. When I go to the beach, I'm totally responsible for the waves coming in, and I worry about it. I worry about what the beach is doing without me there? What's the situation doing without me? How can I manipulate what I do to get other people to just co-operate in the greater good – because I know what that is. I've been trying to be consciously aware that I am not that important, and to be more aware of how my body feels. If I can just get everybody else whipped into line, or every other situation in my life – if my house is all clean and the cat isn't throwing up, then I can feel good. Then my body can feel good and my mind can be rested. So I'm starting to be aware that when I am meditating, when I am aware of how I feel, every issue seems to have the same emphasis, the same importance. So I have to do it all, and all at once. So my next inquiry is, "Well, what's the next thing to do? Maybe it's to meditate." Everything has the same importance for me emotionally, and I'm pivotal to it all. I want to be aware of what I can actually have a part in, and what I need to let go.

Gil: Great. Beautiful. Great exploration. Thank you. Important to see.

Who else is trying to control the universe here [laughter]? Anybody else have any different perspective on what I brought up this morning about the weight of your concern or the quality of the concern, the intensity? Not looking at what you're trying to do or what your concerns are, but how they operate, how they function in your mind. Did anything come up for you, or didn't you come with any concerns today?

Participant 3: Well, I wasn't here at the talk but I do. When the concerns slow down – the thoughts or whatever – usually there is the sense of contraction. No matter what the subject matter is, to release the contraction

seems like being able to let go and allow space around it.

Gil: Nice. So part of what comes with having concerns is being contracted? And if you let go, then it's easier, lighter?

Participant 3: Right, and then it's like the movie sort of goes to the side a little bit, and it's not so compelling.

Gil: Great. So what makes it compelling has a little bit to do with the contraction. The energy of that makes it compelling.

Participant 3: Yeah. Whether it's worry or anger or sadness or whatever, it seems it doesn't matter what the flavor is.

Gil: Great. Wonderful. Thank you.

Participant 4: Well, I had a similar experience. It was nice holding the concern more as a texture, or more as a physical event than the content of what the concern was. Both of the things that were just mentioned – relaxing the muscles that were involved, and creating a more spacious feeling around the texture of the concern allowed the content to leave more easily. So thank you; it worked well.

Gil: Great. Thank you.

I'm glad to hear all of that – your engagement with it. You're finding your way with your minds.