



Unseating the Inner Tyrant

AJAHN SUCITTO



Unseating the Inner Tyrant

AJAHN SUCITTO

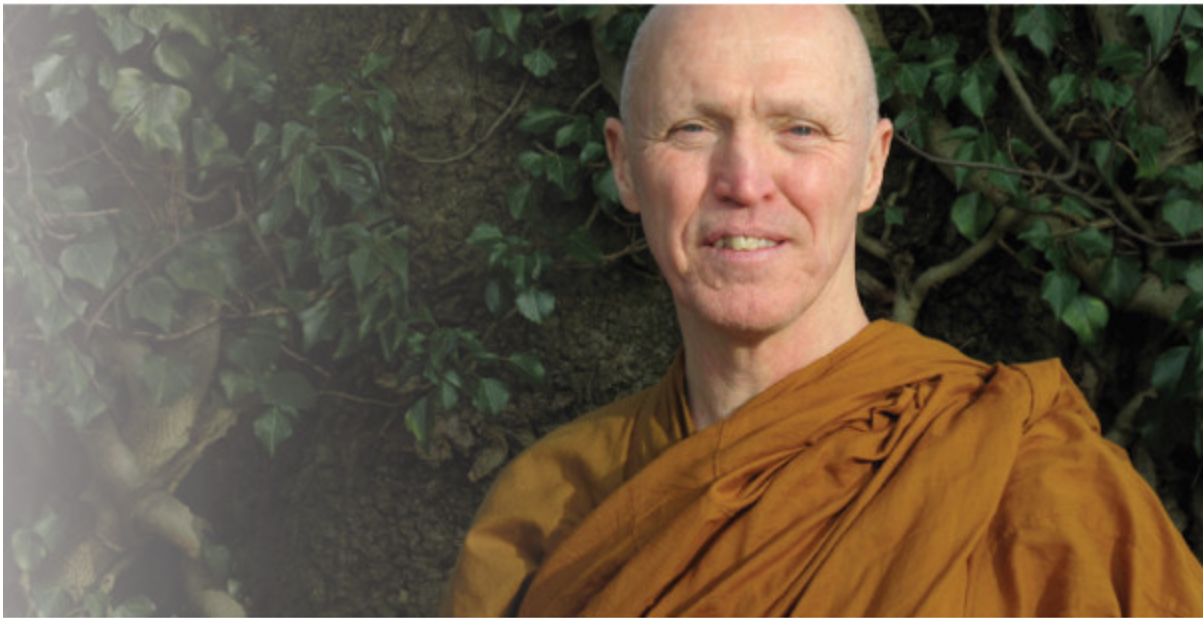
Unseating the Inner Tyrant

Ajahn Sucitto



AMARAVATI
PUBLICATIONS

“THE INNER TYRANT IS A NAGGING VOICE
THAT DEMANDS YOU ACHIEVE PERFECTION,
NEVER OFFERS CONGRATULATION ...
IT CUTS OFF ACCESS TO THE
NATURAL EMPATHY OF THE HEART”



FOR FREE DISTRIBUTION

Author's Dedication

On the occasion of my sixty-fifth birthday, I offer these teachings and any good results that may accrue for the welfare of my late parents Charles and Winifred Malcolm.

You gave me all that you had.

Unseating the Inner Tyrant

Do you ever find yourself dominated by a chain of thought that tells you that you're not good enough, that you don't deserve much, and that other people look down on you or tolerate you out of politeness? Do you find yourself snagging on memories of things you did wrong, or relationships that you didn't get right? Do you feel that you have to be a success in life like you think someone else is – and are consequently critical of yourself? This piece of psychology is called 'the Inner Tyrant'. The good news is that it's not just you who has this, and that you can get free of its grip. And the key to this is through establishing, and continually re-establishing, right intent.

Right Intent

Intent is the attitude or inclination on which we base our actions, and in a life that is full of things to deal with, it's easy to lose touch with that base. Yet intent is significant; it creates a bias and affects how we see things, and how we will act or speak. If we hold a negative intent, we see things in a negative light; if we clear a hostile or depressed intent, the heart feels light and clear. And our actions and speech follow in accordance. This is the principle of cause and effect, right view, the foundation for the Path out of suffering and stress.

It should be easy to follow that principle, but the snag is that the mind gets confused. It loses right view and gets duped by the appearance of things. It's fooled by pleasant sights and ideas into wanting to possess them and fearing their loss. It forms comparisons with other people – although we don't really know how they feel in themselves. But because of believing in appearances, we measure ourselves in terms of gain and loss, success and failure, praise and blame. So, how do we get in touch with right intent?

* * *

The simple answer is that right intent has to come from the depth of the heart, not from its turbulent surface. Focusing within, you can notice that

wholesome inclinations lead to freedom from turbulence, anxiety and regret. This feels good, whereas inclinations that are pushy, embittered or deceitful don't feel good. So you can know both the wholesome and the unwholesome, and through steering away from the unwholesome you can come into balance. To live in this balance entails regarding oneself and others with the same intent of kindness and compassion: 'to others as to myself.' This is right intent. The heart is in its natural undivided state, and the resulting balance feels good.

So 'intent' isn't an idea in your head, but the inclination of your heart. And right intent, or right motivation (*sammā-sankappa*) has three inclinations: kindness, compassion and renunciation. These three work together: as you experience warm-heartedness towards yourself and extend it to others, you feel more contented and less needy. So right intent helps us to let go of the pull of the senses and instead focus on conscience and fellow-feeling. Tuning into and sustaining this right intent generates self-respect. Then, if we act in accordance with right intent, we make good friends and cultivate a livelihood that isn't caught up with greed or manipulation. In such a lifestyle the heart feels stable and comfortable.

Right intent treasures the good and guards it, and it becomes the basis for the efforts we make in our daily life and in meditation. Because that intent feels good, it helps us to meet our difficulties and work on them. It's like when you're looking after someone who's ill: you have to put yourself out and tidy up around them, but because you wish for their welfare, you feel good about doing that. Your energy is joyful rather than driven.

*“Sustaining ...
right intent
generates
self-respect”*

Self-view and the Inner Tyrant

If right intent isn't accessed, the mind gets snagged on the moods and thoughts that pass on the surface. Then we don't recognize the basic goodness in ourselves and get stuck in disputes, fantasies and worries. And

if energy goes into thinking about what we are and what we should be, between feeling inadequate and trying to prove ourselves, the mind never consolidates and comes into its strength. The heart is divided by doubt, and in that fluster the mind produces narratives such as ‘not a very good person ... impure, can’t concentrate, not very mindful at all ...’ etc. So as the heart loses balance, it divides, and the sense of self creeps in, along with judgements, doubts and comparisons with others. This is anything but right intent! In this respect, even good ideas can be problematic – because they take you up into your head and into ‘self-view’ – a notion of what you should, could or couldn’t be.

* * *

Even inspiring teachings get twisted if we approach them with self-view. For example, the Buddha advised the recollection of Buddha, the Dhamma and the Sangha in order to give rise to gladness and confidence. But if we recollect the Buddha, Dhamma and Sangha with self-view we think, ‘Buddha = somebody a lot better than I am; Dhamma = something I haven’t got very far with; Sangha = a bunch of people who belong to something I’m not part of.’ The idea hasn’t translated into a heart-sense, and instead turns into a self-view. Yet if I see a beautiful sunset, I don’t think: ‘I’m not as big and beautiful as that!’ or ‘I’m not part of that.’ I can take it in and appreciate it – because my heart gets the meaning of beauty and receives and relaxes into that. Recollection is like that; it’s a means for lifting the heart by receiving and empathizing with qualities like understanding, joy, freedom and integrity. Then you partake of their beauty, and see them in your own heart. But when we compare and define ‘this is me, this is the other’, then there’s self-view, and even beautiful things make one miserable. This isolated and self-critical view speaks loudly and is very domineering. That’s why I call it ‘The Inner Tyrant.’

The Inner Tyrant wants a perfect self-image. You’ve probably met him or her. The Inner Tyrant is the nagging voice that demands that you achieve impossible standards of perfection, never offers congratulation or appreciation, exaggerates shortcomings, indicts you with total responsibility for events of which you may have been only a part; and based on this, delivers indifference or scolding. Sometimes the Tyrant keeps urging you to

do more, or try harder – advice that may have its place, but is inappropriate when it's applied to a divided heart. It adds more weight to carry when carrying a self-image is already making our lives problematic. So, by trying to make them form a satisfactory self-image, the Inner Tyrant actually impairs our actions.



“THE INNER TYRANT IS A NAGGING VOICE
THAT DEMANDS YOU ACHIEVE PERFECTION,
NEVER OFFERS CONGRATULATION ...
IT CUTS OFF ACCESS TO THE
NATURAL EMPATHY OF THE HEART”

The Tyrant's work: seeking acceptance in the world of ghosts

The painful flaw of self-view is that it makes how I feel, and what passes through awareness, into who I am. So, as what comes up in awareness is often a mix of unresolved memories and impressions, this habit of identification gives rise to a hurt or flawed self who keeps rehashing old grudges and disappointments and regrets in an attempt to clear them. This self fixates on the details of 'she said this five years ago and then yesterday she did this,' or sinks into 'I'm always anxious and am never going to make it' again. So whenever we identify with thoughts and emotions, we stop relating to them with the compassion that could resolve them. Then the Inner Tyrant takes over. It cuts off access to the natural empathy of the heart. It will generally urge you to feel bad about yourself and to give up on yourself; and when that sense of self-respect is out of the way, then the heart is prone to addictive habits and 'It's all a waste of time anyway.'

Life is difficult enough already. We live in a realm of separations, needs, brutalities, and the inability to hold on to something that's satisfying. We can't prevent pain or sorrow coming to us; we're all swimming around in this sea of difficulty or 'dukkha.' That being so, the most important thing to bear in mind is to not drown in the water; to let go of the weight of identity and learn to swim. This is why the Buddha presented a way to release the heart from seeking or believing in any self-image. Whether that image is bad or good, it will lead to comparisons, conceit, pride, despond and a loss of right intent. And it's only when we can stop forming a fixed impression of ourselves, the heart finds balance and is clear. Then it can stop taking on dukkha.

'Stopping', rather than 'annihilation' is the term because self-imaging (and suffering) is something we do; so we're not trying to get rid a real entity. Identification is a deeply ingrained action of taking hold of feelings, interpretations and impulses and conceiving, 'this is what I am.' Whereas if we really were something we could define, we wouldn't need to keep trying to find it and firm it up. So trying to define what we are is a non-starter: we just need to know that in order to not drown in dukkha, we have to stop holding onto any impression of ourselves or of others. The results of doing that are positive. Whenever the heart drops self-view and picks up right

view and right intent, difficult mental states become manageable and are even conducive to growth in terms of compassion, patience and understanding. This approach makes it possible to grow through life rather than feel we have to defend ourselves against it or distract ourselves from facing its limitations. But it entails working on our wishes and fears, rather than identifying with them.

* * *

The Inner Tyrant however is committed to making how I feel into who I am. Or it makes an ideal and an absolute out of ‘stopping’ to the extent that we assume we should even stop feeling: ‘I am that which doesn’t feel.’ Then when one does feel some happiness, the Inner Tyrant takes over and says, ‘Don’t hang on to that, that’s self, let go of that.’ So we attach to an idea of not-self and reject the feeling. The truth about the Tyrant is that it can’t handle feeling. It can’t relate to or be fully with what’s going on. So it adopts ideological positions and control strategies. It’s a judge, whose demands and verdicts come from losing touch with the good heart. The scenarios are exaggerated, the verdicts severe, the punishments only make matters worse – but the Tyrant can’t operate any other way. It’s trapped; the Inner Tyrant is a piece of stuck psychology, a view that relates to the heart through an idea.

The Tyrant arises at the boundary between our inner life and outer context. Internally, we experience ourselves feeling what we’re feeling, with transient impulses, interests and passions, pleasure and pain. We experience inclinations that are either unacceptable by our social world or irrelevant to it, and there are those we’re not sure about. Yet we feel bound to present ourselves as acceptable to the world around us. And we get many messages as to what we should be. Some of these are to do with our intelligence, our physical appearance and our mannerisms. Our natural inclination to belong can keep us trying to catch up with what everybody else is wearing, or with the current jargon. Some of this is job-oriented or partner-oriented. All in all, a huge amount of energy and attention goes into being an object that is acceptable and interesting to others in one’s particular group. Because of the need to belong to or be valued by others we’re under considerable social pressure, so our sense of not acting upon (and not even mentioning) the

unacceptable can be based on that pressure, rather than on our own ethical sensitivity. In which case the centre of authority shifts away from our own heart-intelligence. We lose the heart, and become actors seeking an audition before an audience of ghosts.

The heart and how to handle it

Clearly we shouldn't act upon or express every feeling and impulse that arises; we need to retain the authority to restrain, act or let an impulse pass. Otherwise instead of wisely handling the impulse (with the sense that 'this doesn't feel good') we relate to it from a reflex rejection of it, from the idea that 'this shouldn't exist'. And the problem is that immoral, unacceptable impulses do exist. This sets off an escalating inner conflict. If the impulses shouldn't exist, then: 'It's my fault. There's something wrong with me. So wrong in fact that I can't tell anyone about it; I just better make sure they don't find out ...' etc., etc. The Tyrant appears.

But look around and you'll acknowledge that the human heart is capable of the most noble and the most selfish, brutal impulses. This is the heart. Handling it is quite a job, so we need all the encouragement that we can get. We need to sieve through the awareness of our own subjective experience, however messy and weird, rather than get stuck in the emphasis that we are seen to be 'OK.' (After all, who judges that?)

Now we may very well want to do what's right and strive to be better and so on. But do you ever investigate the bases of such attitudes? What is wrong with you anyway? And how would that change? Notice what it's like to believe that some aspect of one's body or mind is flawed; and the fluster and tirade that occur when you forget something or make a mistake. What does it feel like to think about yourself? That which thinks about you – can it handle and work with your mind, or does it just complain? Does it offer guidance or support? And if not, how is any intent based on that thinker going to be of benefit?

* * *

I'm sure we all have energies and attitudes that need to mature into wisdom. But maybe there's also a way of helping the heart to grow up – by

encouragement rather than through blaming or suppressing what's unwise. So, how would it be to listen to ourselves with calm and empathy? Because we can tune into our intentions and feel the difference between good and evil; and we can choose goodness. This is wise development. And it only occurs through clearly acknowledging the good and the bad – and making a choice. Then the Tyrant is replaced by wisdom.

This change comes through restoring the undivided heart: through being with, and feeling with the energy and the feel of a mood rather than following it, getting scared of it or believing in it. The heart is then patient, attentive but uninvolved, listening to the voice of your mind. This practice takes us to 'measurelessness', the non-measuring of who we are and how long it will take to get better. Calm inner listening is then the primary means of unseating the Inner Tyrant. It encourages kindness, compassion, appreciation of what is good, and equanimity to arise in response to our dukkha. In this way, the heart can both hold the Tyrant in check and support a deepening of awareness. It realizes, 'I am greater than this Tyrant, I don't believe this stuff.' 'I value just being aware, even of my uncertainties.' Because to abide in compassionate awareness, without changing anything but without blaming – this is good in itself. It allows our difficulties to be met by a stream of skilful intent rather than by a self-view. And then transformations, through forgiveness and letting go, can occur.

*“The Tyrant can't handle
Feeling ... so it adopts
ideological positions
and control strategies”*

The Great Spoon Race

For spiritual seekers there's the aspiration to experience purity, bliss and peace. The problem is that these aspirations tend to stick to the ideals but lack the know-how for their realization. And when we stick to such ideals, we look down upon and condemn the non-pure, non-lofty, and non-blissful. In the early years of my practice, this was how it was. We 'did meditation' on our own in little huts in silence, and there was just one meal a day. That seemed like a good training: prior to entering the monastery, I'd been living

very casually with no restraints and I really wanted to turn that around. But through not being in touch with the heart, I turned restraint into an ideological compulsion.

My meditation practice then was the ‘Burmese satipaṭṭhāna’ method, which entails doing everything very slowly and making a mental note such as ‘moving, touching, lifting, bending.’ However, I’d only recently come out of India, where I’d spent months suffering from amoebic dysentery. So I was grossly underweight, in fact I was as thin as a rake. And with monastic life being so boring, that one meal of the day was of major interest! So when the food came in, the satipaṭṭhāna would go out the door. I’d think, ‘Intending to eat. Note: spoon, food,’ – and then there would be a blur. Something in me was eating the food really quickly. I’d determine to do better the next day ... but lose it again. After a period of time I started to wonder why I was eating the food so fast – it wasn’t going to run away! With some introspection, I recognized I was eating it quickly so that my mind wouldn’t be able to note it; because when my mind took note, it noticed I was feeling some excitement and happiness about eating food. And then it would become critical: ‘You shouldn’t be enjoying this.’ So the impulse was to eat quickly before the Tyrant came in. But the Tyrant always came in, even if he waited until I was washing up. Then he’d say, ‘You lost mindfulness as well. You’ve got a big food-defilement. And you’re not mindful either.’

So I decided to eat less. I got down to eating about the amount of food you could hold in two cupped hands. I felt if I could just eat that much per day, maybe the Tyrant would leave me alone. But he always caught me somewhere. I was meditating somewhere between fourteen to fifteen hours a day and still not feeling I was doing enough. Anything more than four hours sleep was not enough effort. It became obvious that, no matter what I did, there was always more effort than could be made, or more comfort that could be given up. The fact that I’d come from an easy-going kind of life to one of keeping precepts, abstaining from sex, music, entertainment and even companionship to live on one meal a day in a spartan hut in a country where I couldn’t speak the language – I never acknowledged that as being a sign of having made any effort at all.

Of course, we were offered teachings on kindness, compassion, appreciation and equanimity – ‘to others, as to myself.’ But I couldn’t get much out of all this, not because I’m a particularly nasty person but because when I was ‘doing meditation’ I wasn’t coming from the heart. I’d enjoy helping others, and be soft-hearted towards other creatures, but when it came down to ‘doing kindness’, especially to myself, there wasn’t much of a result. I could think, ‘May I be well ... may I be well ... may I be well ...’ ‘May you be well ... may you be well ...’, but then I’d think, ‘What good does that do?’ It was because whenever I was focused on doing, I operated through my non-empathic head. And without the presence of some living being to interact with, there wasn’t a relationship to support empathy.

* * *

Embodied intelligence: body, heart and head

When I did find a way of meditating rather than of trying to meditate, it came through widening my awareness. I knew my mind and approach needed to broaden; I just couldn’t keep working from being uptight and critical. So one of the things I worked on was to widen my attention by attuning to the bodily sense. By this I mean the body’s ‘inner’ sense, not the sensations that come from contact. For example, when you’re standing up and know whether you’re balanced or tilting over, that’s a bodily sense. When you feel tension or when you feel relaxed, that’s a bodily sense. It’s not focused on a particular point, it’s a reference to the whole; and it connects to the emotions. When you feel welcome and when you feel rejected, there’s a bodily sense there. When you feel frightened or angry, there’s a bodily sense. If you bring up images associated with ill-will, you can feel certain energies shift in your body. If you feel you have to defend yourself or prove that you’re good enough, something in your body has to tense up. This bodily sense is affected and responsive. And you can be sure that meditation based on its afflictions and tensions will never arrive at peace. Instead it will be marked by tension and a contraction in which one’s capacity for warmth, or ease is diminished; so much so that one gets too numb to even notice the loss.

Attuning to the bodily sense is a form of mindfulness of the body. It's essential to embody awareness in order to handle mind and feeling, because otherwise we have to rely solely on our conditioned thinking – and that is Tyrant territory. In other words, if awareness isn't embodied, then the domineering head is likely to be the default director of the practice. But with an embodied mind, assessment tunes in to the direct feel of anger, worry or craving in the nervous system. It's a very direct way of dealing with the Tyrant. In my own case, simply attuning to its effect on my bodily would bring around an immediate relaxation; not a slump but a relaxation, especially in the face, the shoulders, the belly and the hands. Rather than judge or complain, embodied awareness allows stress to discharge by softening, widening and releasing.

* * *

To wake up the embodied intelligence we need to tune into, steady and ease the bodily sense. To this end, when we have established an upright and steady body, and attuned to right intent, we bring the heart into the body with the question: 'How is my bodily sense now? Does this feel right? Do I feel settled here?' Such a question itself comes from right intent, and so it awakens heart-intelligence. Settling may be supported by walking slowly, standing or sitting 'as if in a warm and sheltered place' – whatever works. Then: 'Where is there balance? Can my body relax what isn't needed?' Then when the body eases, settles, and feels more spacious, it becomes possible, and is useful, to focus on breathing. But if I start out with the idea: 'Get focused on the breathing, and don't drift off!', the likelihood is that I won't have released residual tension in the body, and will therefore generate more stress.

This approach enabled me to note and include the intelligences of body, head and heart. I found this both transformational and at the same time very ordinary and obvious. I could establish kindness from knowing in my body how good it felt to be warm-hearted. Then I could develop the heart by collecting my thoughts on those occasions when others had manifested generosity, helpfulness or sympathy. These didn't have to be emotionally highly-charged, just instances of the ordinary decency that people manifest towards each other every day. It's all very natural; but for me it represented

a return from the ghost realm of imagined objects to the real world of feeling subjects. And it allowed me to sit in that real world for as long as it took until it felt right to share that space with others, to bring other people into mind and share the kindness, compassion, forgiveness and appreciation with them.

Embodiment shifts us to the real world. And this makes it possible to recollect one's virtues. The Tyrant really has a problem with doing this! But despite the poor ratings he gave me, I could slowly and deliberately recollect and take to heart: 'Today I didn't kill anything. Today I didn't steal anything. Today I didn't sexually abuse anybody. Today ... well, I could have said a lot worse! I held back the nasty stuff that was about to jump out. I could have lashed out there, but I didn't; that was pretty good.'

I imagine that such reflections would be possible for all of us, although they're not great performance stuff for the ego. But none of this is about making a self out of actions at all. The beauty is in the ordinariness of noticing actions that come from and point to right intent. This intent doesn't originate with thoughts; it's a heart-inclination rather than an ideal, but you can use simple sustained thinking to awaken it. This is a skilful use of head-intelligence.



“THE BEAUTY IS IN THE
ORDINARINESS OF NOTICING
ACTIONS THAT COME FROM
AND POINT TO RIGHT INTENT”

Daily panic is not your fault

Having established a foundation for practice, the key point for me was to keep the head from turning intents into ideals. For example, meditation in solitude is strongly renunciate, and certainly this is a skilful intention. Renunciation is an intention to keep things simple, an approach that supports ease of being, lightness of mind, and a wise use of energy. However when that inclination of the heart gets turned into an ideal in the mind, we become ideological about it. Then the Tyrant takes over, and renunciation becomes ‘the less, the better.’ And an ideological mind is mono-focused – it sees everything from the perspective of its ideology. So how much less is less enough? ‘Even less!’ says the Tyrant. An aspiration becomes a compulsion. That’s the way to lose balance. To counteract this, the ‘whole view’ approach is to get a feel for how an idea is affecting your entire system. If it’s causing contraction and pressure, then it’s not been handled properly, and it hasn’t translated into heart.

When you get a feel for energy and intelligence, it’s clear that the fundamental source and footprint of all the greed, hatred, restlessness and dogmatism that you can witness in yourself and others is this contracted and divided heart. However, in its contracted state the heart is too numb to know itself. So check your body: whether it’s anger that tightens, or dullness that makes you feel compacted, or greed that makes you feel you have to clench around some object – the body tightens up. It doesn’t do denial. Embodiment then serves as a reliable reference to our emotional and psychological states. If we can recognize them at that level and know how to release them, we undercut the base of all the hindrances.

This is not just a personal or internal matter. If you live in an urban environment, you have to deal with a certain amount of bodily tension that comes from impact: fast movements, unknown people, flashing lights, and cars charging at you every time you try to cross the street. The likelihood is that you’re going to feel contracted. That’s not your fault; that’s the body going into ‘defend’ or ‘urgent’ mode. But if that daily panic is not released or relaxed, it resonates emotionally as an ongoing sense of anxiety, irritability and restless need.

Of course, we can be nervous and still look like we're relaxed and at ease. Since being at ease is what we're supposed to be, we learn how to do it: we learn to adopt bodily stances that make us look cool and relaxed. But actually feeling it internally, really feeling free and feeling open is a very different thing. The real thing is uncontrived and natural, because the embodied mind is connected directly to the heart, not to what we should be.

* * *

Working towards aimless sanity

The aim of such practice goes beyond calm. It deals with intention, the impulse to do; and as creating a self-image is what we do, handling the doing is a key to liberation from self. So: whatever emotive effects we experience give rise to intention; the heart responds to contact. And 'me' appears as that which is affected, gladdened or troubled by that contact. Then, because we're touched, something in us jumps up: intention, our will, our interest to do. 'I' appear as an agent, with thoughts such as: 'Do that,' or, 'That's wrong. Don't do that.' So this response to a signal forms who we sense ourselves as being at that time: confident, nervous, threatened or caring. This is kamma: psychological action that forms who we feel ourselves as being.

There is a lot of volitional potential in the human mind. This is good, if it's used wisely. But when it's caught up with self-image it's always restless. You know: 'I need to fix something, get on with something. Don't waste time.' Then: 'Was that good enough?' This is especially relevant because these days, intention is not just about grabbing pleasure or bashing your enemies: we're strongly conditioned by the work-ethic. Self-image gets us twitching with the need to be useful and effective. The drawback is that the work never ends – because the intention that's associated with the need to achieve and perform is a vehicle for the Tyrant. We may feel that the right place of intention is to spur us ever onwards to the goal, but when the spurring and the rider are not on your side, and the goal is an idea in your head, the chances of arriving at a good place are not that great.

However, the mind doesn't always have to move into 'Do that' or 'Don't do that'; it can experience contact and learn to pause, widen and feel what's

going on right now. And with that shift of intention, the actions that form self with regard to that contact are curtailed. Then there isn't the creation of an 'I' that has to hurry, or worry about being inadequate. Of course, thoughts and emotions can still occur, but they're not knee-jerk reactions that repeat the same old habits. Instead there is freedom to choose, and to disengage from kamma. This letting go around intention is therefore an important aspect of the awakening process.

* * *

Consequently, I've worked hard at aimlessness! For example I used to get very obsessive about tidying the room I was given as a dwelling. I'd notice that I would endlessly fuss around my room, sweeping it and tidying it any time of the day or night. Then the curtain would look like it needed folding, so I'd do that and sit down again; then the grate of the fire needed sweeping ... and so on. So I determined to spend a week of not tidying the room; just putting things in their proper place, leaving them alone and letting the dust accumulate. I'd feel the volitional twitch and acknowledge it, contemplate the push of that intention and keep letting it go until the mind began to sink into a quiet place. With practice, I could come from that quiet place and then do what felt appropriate.

One of the most wonderful moments in this period came around the mealtime. Having received the meal, I was sitting there contemplating my bowl with the food in it, when the familiar litany of thoughts came up about 'How much?' and 'Am I eating more than...?' But this time, I really heard how petty the Tyrant's voice was. Then something clear in me told it to shut up. That I was going to eat my meal, so I needed to pay attention to what was actually happening, and we could get back to the judgements later. There was a sense of being startled – and the Tyrant slunk off.

So I recommend relaxing intention and having a period of alert aimlessness. Try five minutes of it as an experiment – and feel the sense of: 'What am I supposed to do right now? I don't feel very good. This is wasting my time. I should be...' It doesn't take long for the Inner Tyrant to get going; action is its primary domain. The Tyrant gets upset with aimlessness: 'What's the point of all this? Are you going to spend the rest of your life wasting your time?' But we're not doing aimlessness for the rest of our lives; we're doing

it for five or maybe ten minutes, just to feel the urge to do and question how valid it is.

Try it. Just allow whatever thought is there, whatever feeling is there to be felt, to be fully sensed as it is, as a visitor. You can even extend the practice over half an hour. If you feel like standing up, stand up. If you feel like walking, walk in an aware way. While staying attentive and embodied, let yourself loosen. Attune to the watchful space that opens in your mind. Trust it. Notice, but don't act upon or react to any impulse. Allow a more intuitive sense of direction to arise. When I do this, I don't go crazy. Instead there's a gentling of intention that takes me from moving onwards in time and space to deepening into the present moment, to where thinking slows down or stops. So it leads into the meditative process quite naturally.

* * *

*“allow whatever thought is there,
whatever feeling is there
to Be felt, to be fully
Sensed As it is, as a visitor”*

When we come out of the grip of the Tyrant, intention is no longer dominated from the programmed head-centre, but instead feels the sense of what's right. We feel balanced within our situation; and because of that the sense of oneself as some alienated object in the world begins to dissolve. It's a homecoming to the base of right intent. And it's only from here that we can offer our basic sanity to the world.

Then, even when going somewhere, you have a centre that isn't going anywhere. Even when the hands and mind are busy, you have a heart that is at ease. It knows that these actions are actions only. They can happen out of compassion and concern, or just to skilfully meet what arises. They don't need the heart to divide into self and other. Because real actions don't need actors, they don't have to employ a Tyrant.

* * *

Further resources

This book and many others from Venerable Ajahn Chah, Ajahn Sumedho, and their disciples are freely offered and available in various electronic formats as well as in print. You can find them via our monasteries and through the websites listed below, along with other resources such as audio talks, meditation instruction and retreats. Everything is free of charge, and everyone is welcome.

For books and audio:

www.forestsanghapublications.org

www.amaravati.org

For a list of Ajahn Chah community monasteries worldwide:

www.forestsangha.org

For further Theravada Buddhist literature including English translations of much of the Pali Canon:

www.accesstoinsight.org

Copyright

Unseating the Inner Tyrant

Amaravati Publications

Amaravati Buddhist Monastery
Great Gaddesden, Hertfordshire, HP1 3BZ
United Kingdom,

www.amaravati.org

Amaravati Publications is a part of The English Sangha Trust Ltd, UK
registered charity no. 231310

First published by Amaravati Publications 2014

This electronic edition published 2015

Digital Edition 1.0

ePub ISBN 978-1-78432-036-2

Copyright © Amaravati Publications 2015

This book is offered as a gift of Dhamma. It has been made available through the faith, effort and generosity of people who wish to share the understanding it contains with whomever is interested. This act of freely offering is itself part of what makes this a ‘Dhamma publication,’ a book based on spiritual values. Please do not sell this book in any form, nor otherwise use it for commercial purposes.

If you wish to help publications such as this one continue to be made available, you can make a contribution, however small or large, by either contacting one of our monasteries (for a listing see www.forestsangha.org) or by visiting www.amaravati.org or www.forestsanghapublications.org



This work is licenced under the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivs 2.0 UK: England & Wales Licence. To view a copy of this licence, visit: <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/2.0/uk/>

Summary:

You are free:

- to copy, distribute, display and perform the work

Under the following conditions:

- Attribution: You must give the original author credit.
- Non-Commercial: You may not use this work for commercial purposes.
- No Derivative Works: You may not alter, transform, or build upon this work.

With the understanding that:

- Waiver: Any of the above conditions can be waived if you get permission from the copyright holder.
- Public Domain: Where the work or any of its elements is in the public domain under applicable law, that status is in no way affected by the license.
- Other Rights: In no way are any of the following rights affected by the license:
 - Your fair dealing or fair use rights, or other applicable copyright exceptions and limitations;
 - The author's moral rights;
 - Rights other persons may have either in the work itself or in how the work is used, such as publicity or privacy rights.

- Notice: For any reuse or distribution, you must make clear to others the licence terms of this work.

The English Sangha Trust Ltd operating as Amaravati Publications asserts its moral right to be identified as the author of this book.

The English Sangha Trust Ltd requests that you attribute ownership of the work to Amaravati Publications on copying, distribution, display or performance of the work.