

4 practices for Election Season from Fish Lake Sangha:

“The answer is NOT out there...” (With apologies to Scully and Mulder)

1. **Guard your gates.** Your sensory organs are the gates to your consciousness. It is important to stay informed but only to the degree that you have capacity to look deeply and develop understanding. We are all letting too much in too fast via social media, television, radio and online news.
 - a. Take breaks from the input.
 - b. Select your sources intentionally.
 - c. Allow time to understand, not to only react.
 - d. Look for facts.
 - e. Use your mindfulness practice as a listening and viewing device and govern the pace of your input (information), processing (consideration) and output (understanding) before you take action (outcome-also known as KARMA which literally means ACTION)

2. **Stand on a solid base.** That means being able to truly answer the question **What’s going on with me right now, this moment?** The Buddha taught that we should practice the four foundations of mindfulness. Mindfulness trains us to remember to pay attention to the changes that are continually taking place inside our body and mind and in the world around us. Normally, we forget to pay attention because the countless things that are happening simultaneously distract our minds. We get carried away by the superficial and lose sight of the flow. The mind wants to see what is next, what is next, and what is next. We get excited by the show and forget that it is, indeed, simply a show. The 4 foundations are:
 - a. Awareness “of the body, in the body”,
 - i. How does my body feel? Can I recall what my body is made up of- its parts and how they come together?
 - b. Awareness “of the feelings in the feelings”,

- i. What feelings am I experiencing? Are they pleasant, unpleasant or neutral?
 - c. Awareness of the mind in the mind”
 - i. What am I thinking? Can I see those thoughts? Paying attention to the way each thought arises, remains present, and passes away, we learn to stop the runaway train of one unsatisfactory thought leading to another and another and another. We gain a bit of detachment.
 - d. Awareness of the dharmas in the dharma. (a “dharma” with a little “d” is any phenomenon—a tree, a smell, a feeling, a sound, etc.)
 - i. What phenomena are arising right now? Are they “out there” or, as the Buddha discovered, are they in me?
- 3. **Move from Insight to Action.** If you allow your mindfulness and concentration to take their natural course, you will have an insight. An insight that manifests as a result of mindfulness is different than a reaction or a dogma. It has the feeling of freshness and the power of a bell, calling you to the present moment. An insight is a precious gift and we can put it to use right away by letting it direct our thinking, speech and action. Moving from INSIGHT to ACTION is much safer and will have a better result than moving from FEAR or ANGER to ACTION. It is important to remember that an insight, even one arising from mindfulness, is subject to impermanence. Once an insight comes up, we have to be open to it changing because truth is found in life and we don’t want it to become dogmatic or we lose all of our freedom. Not everyone has the same talents and skills. A simple set of questions can be useful:
 - a. What can I say to bring the insight to life? Use poetry for some and science for others.
 - b. Who can I share my insight with and what is a good way to do that?
 - c. What actions does the insight suggest? What are the best channels for that action?
- 4. **Find and Build Community.** There are many many people who are also trying to take wise action in the world. A community of insightful action is a powerful force for good but it requires the insight of your mindfulness to be able to select or build one with the right intent.

- a. Churches, Synagogues and Mosques
- b. Workplace units-REQUIRES CARE!
- c. Non Profit NGO's-particularly non-partisan ones
- d. Family and Neighbors (Friends and Family Vote Plan)
- e. Gatherings-Host or attend
- f. People in action
 - i. Canvassers
 - ii. Fund raising
 - iii. Speaking
 - iv. Yard Sign distribution
 - v. Collaborative writing/blogging
 - vi. ?

Try putting this into practice this week!