

INTRO TO 9th

WHERE WE ARE IN THE SUTTA:

We've learned the steps that help us to become present and strengthen samatha, a way of being calm, through working with the body and the vedana.

In the body tetrad we can also begin to see how the breath, mind and body are interconnected and condition each other.

In the body tetrad learning about breath as kaya-sankhara, body-conditioner beginning to add an element of dharma vicaya (might happen very naturally without specific instruction when exploring "what's happening?" with precision and appreciative awareness).

In the vedana tetrad learning about vedana as citta-sankhara, mind-conditioner So whatever mind states we get into we begin to see how we are feeling at that time and how that feeling is interconnected with and influences our mind states. We can also see how our mind states set up conditions for different feelings to arise

Learning about how the breath, body, vedana and mind affect each other we begin to be with our experience in wiser ways and rather than creating hysteria and agitation we can learn to calm the body and mental processes.

Experiencing everything come and go the sense of self begins to loosen up.

We might start with a stance that I am my body, I am my feelings, I am my emotions – whether we like or dislike that self. I like my body, I don't like my body. I am an angry person. I am a nice person. Seeing everything come and go these stories start to unravel and we can notice letting that process happen or moments when we clamp up again. Sometimes we're caught by surprise by how different our sense of self has become, maybe it's calmed entirely and we're just one with the breathing or the vedana and a sense of tremendous beauty and ease may arise or a sense of tremendous fear. We just try to breathe with these states and stay with what's happening.

Exploring the body and vedana needs to be rooted in a direct experience and not theorizing about it abstractly or trying to fabricate experience we think is supposed to be happening.

Remembering Buddhadasa talking about exploring each object of the meditation as drinking it, really tasting the flavor

This "sensitive to" is patismvedin (Pali) which means experiencing, feeling, enjoying or suffering whatever the case may be. It comes from the verb patisamvedeti which means to feel, experience, undergo, perceive

Some of you might find yourselves getting heady or alienated so all the more important to be based in the body and use the body to help us. This is why the body tetrad comes first in the sequence.

What are we doing when we're aware of the body? We can be aware of everything that's happening in our experience in a grounded way through the bodily sensations that are happening right now. This is a way of knowing and is especially useful in daily life. In the first jhana the sense of the body being present is still there. Traditionally the benefit of the 1st jhana is said to be because thought is there so we can do dharma vicaya or vipasyana bhavana work. We can

We can explore all four tetrads directly in the body.

- Bodily sensation, vedana and thought and mind states of contraction and openness
- So bringing in an awareness of change, impermanence makes the first tetrad a complete practice in itself. Bringing in an awareness of change, impermanence makes the four stage mindfulness of breathing

We can also experience things directly in the mind and not through the body although the breath is always there and the body is always there. If you start feeling alienated then work more through the body (in meditation with a 4 stage mindfulness of breathing, or the sutta, or a period of metta practice or go for a run or walk or do some yoga...)

4 factors contribute to alienation and they might not both be going on. This is not a traditional teaching but just my own thinking.

1. Losing samatha basis so losing track of what's happening now (either through forgetfulness or because we need to give more attention to this aspect of practice)
Alienation through the clouded mind

What to do? Focus on samatha and simple methods that bring you back to what's happening now very directly. Develop your proficiency with these methods and working with your mind

2. Not being willing to experience what's happening

Alienation through aversion

We all have this going on so it's a matter of degree. When we can catch it before it hardens we're not getting alienated. If it's hardening and solidifying then it leads to more of an overall state of alienation

What to do? More metta practice. One of the benefits of the metta practices we've been doing in the evenings is to help us be willing to experience the whole of our experience with a friendly attitude – pleasant, painful, neutral, likes, dislikes, wanting not wanting

Come back to the body

Note about mindfulness of breathing and metta practice merging over time

3. Confidence – trusting your experience, being based in your experience

Alienation through doubt

Applying the dharma to that but not losing confidence in what you're actually experiencing (even if you come to see that your experience is confused)

Knowing what's happening in you to be what's happening without external confirmation

4. Pacing

Alienation from unwise effort

Pushing too hard and getting fatigued

Relates to letting things be (less exhausting way of being)

Knowing when to play and laugh when to lie down and just rest

Finding ways to do that here in the silence within yourself (don't have to be somber and serious – don't have to be laughing either). What I love about Ryokan – he's a committed practitioner, living in his hut through very cold winters but he also comes out

Every day, day after day
I spend at my ease playing with the children
In the sleeves of my robe, two or three balls
A useless fellow, yes
But I know how to make myself drunk
Sipping my fill of the peaceful springtime

There's a sense in Ryokan's poetry of freedom. Of releasing the pressure valve, loosening the belt, and just letting yourself be human. You don't have to be a Buddhist. Really, there's nothing in our experience that is non-Buddhist. What's happening is what's happening. The willingness to experience anything is a crucial factor in integration. It's the process of being aware that is Buddhist, not the content.

Maybe what we're getting heady about what it means to move from feeling to dukkha to sraddha. So I thought I'd read a little something from Sangharakshita about this to clarify what this means (Meaning of conversion of Guide to the Buddhist path)

The dukkha corresponds with the moment the feeling arises

The sraddha is an alternative to craving

Larry Rosenberg, even piti and rapture have a "certain existential loneliness to them, a trace of me and mine."

So this is the calming mental processes

And in the spiral conditionality teaching the process continues to joy, then piti, then passadhi, then sukha, then concentration or samadhi and then knowledge and vision of things as they really are, beginning to see Reality

So we can see that the sutta only hints at one order in which things might unfold – don't solidify the sutta and get too literal with how things are described as unfolding

In this formulation we work a little more with vedana first (Ratnadevi's question)

Learning how you can most skillfully build samatha

Another question about sukha arising without piti. We can concentrate the mind through the door of a couple of the jhana factors and the others just start arising so they're not sequential but a cluster. Piti and sukha experientially are along a spectrum not two completely separate things.

MOVING ON TO THE MIND TETRAD

The previous contemplations have already brought to our awareness the mind itself.

We've focused on certain things the body and vedana, the mind experiences and seen how they affect the mind:

For example sensitive to feelings (whether in the body or mind) and our reactions to feelings – does the mind contract or remain open

Doing the work of building stability in our mind we have the capacity to look directly at the mind with sati.

THE BENEFITS OF STUDYING THE MIND ITSELF:

We are turning around and making the subject the object.

This short circuits the habitual subject object duality where we are searching outside of ourselves for the cause of our happiness and unhappiness. Seeking outwardly for answers, remedies and what to blame. That person really is evil and she's the cause of my unhappiness. That thing is really desirable and could be the cause of my happiness if I could just have it.

Just for myself yesterday I caught a thought about a person coming in through the mind sense that was unpleasant because of my views which gave rise to an emotion of aversion towards that person. All that mostly based on my views and not really about that person at all. It was very quick and very subtle so without the slow walking I might never have caught it and then my projection about what's out there, who that person is, which is completely nothing about them, would have further hardened and more suffering created by me within me and to the degree I acted on them in body language or unfriendly speech suffering for them.

Turning our attention inward, exploring our part in things, studying the self, we can liberate ourselves from the myriad ways that *we* create suffering through confusion about who we really are and what's happening.

We can begin to find another kind of happiness through mindfulness that is wise.

Upekkha, wise emotion that is with things as they are with non-violence.

Sometimes this sounds dry and unattractive but upekkha is not indifference. I know for myself practicing Buddhism is about becoming more alive and language that is more evocative of that is helpful. So upekkha is emotionally rich. I like to think in terms of passionately letting go or letting be instead of passionately clinging.

Buddhist teaching on the nature of reality always talks about experiential reality because it's a teaching for human beings

So mind is always of utmost importance. The mind and the objects we're aware of co-arise. If we're going to be more aware of reality, of other people, of a bumble bee or a tree of anything, we need to understand the mind and it's part in creating the world we perceive and live in. Our mind and our mind states create the world we live in.

WHAT IS THE MIND? WHAT ARE WE BECOMING AWARE OF?

Handout – emphasize mind as process, sixth sense and 5 skandha view

WHAT DOES SENSITIVE TO THE MIND MEAN?

Experiencing the mind and the flavor of what's going on and learning from that mindfulness.

There are traditional characteristics of mind we can notice (much as we noticed location, duration and quality as ways into become intimate with the breath)

We know the mind through thought often
We can also know the mind directly without labeling without thought
We'll work in both these ways (VJ leading the afternoon session and will be helping us work with thoughts)
There are many different characteristics of the mind to contemplate, but they all must happen naturally by themselves. We observe these characteristics as they really exist, in the very moment of their existence. Buddhadasa, p. 80

Handout:

Greed, wanting, craving (hindrance of craving for sense pleasure)
Hatred, aversion, not wanting (hindrance of ill-will)
Ignorance, not knowing whether we want or not want, confusion (hindrances of sloth/torpor, restlessness/anxiety and doubt/indecision)

The alternative, the mind free from the kilesas of greed and hatred is upekkha
Upekkha: initially a state of rest. Can deepen. The mind poised in a collected and deeply happy state that is unaffected by pleasure and pain. Full blown, synonymous with Enlightenment. I think we've contacted this a bit, in my sense. The sitting through the pain and the pleasure and the neutral feelings. Letting them be, arising and falling in dependence upon sense contact.
We talked about rapture being contained into bliss. The process continued is bliss contained into upekkha.

Examine these states without trying to eliminate them.

Learn what has the taste of freedom?
What conduces to suffering?

A different way of being ethical in this practice. Not the only way, more active discipline is also very helpful at times (e.g., a precept not to drink if we have an addictive relationship to alcohol)

We're letting the experience be there so we can learn from it
So there's mindfulness and we're taking responsibility for our mind
..."silent and non-reactive observation can at times suffice to curb unwholesomeness, so that an application of sati can have quite active consequences." (Analyo)
Just working in that release way, "*Instead of applying specific antidotes to all the toxins in the mind, one simply tries to stop polluting one's mind-stream with grasping onto afflictive thoughts and emotions.*" Alan Wallace
We're meditating and we experience craving or hatred. Some of you have already noted that hatred can be pleasurable, craving can be pleasurable. We do them because we love doing them. But if we stay with it we can experience the dukkha, the suffering that deeper in those states firsthand. The dukkha of depending in a reactive way on mental and physical stimulus which we can never totally control. So seeing the impermanence of vedana, how it's always changing, shows up the futility of being buffeted around by pain and pleasure. When we aren't so reactive from having the stability of the breath we also can experience just letting the klesha come and go and experience the pleasure of being without craving. The same with confusion. It can feel

pleasant in meditation to float around dreamily but then when we taste how clear the mind can be and the deeper pleasure of that then relatively that dreamy state is marked with unsatisfactoriness. We now know the flavor of that experience and it is delusion. There is vedana that is contaminated by the afflictions and vedana that an arhant feels that is free from any affliction, that is more pleasurable in an unworldly way. If we fully experience the mind and what it's doing and the effect of its different ways of being we stop relying on the kilesas as coping mechanisms to make our life better. We see that they aren't making our life better really and when we rely on them they don't make life better for the world around us. So there's a natural morality as opposed to a conventional morality that can arise based on experience. Over time we can love being selfless or interconnected more than being self centered and self obsessed (this is the direction of metta practice).

Our mind states condition future feeling. In Mind and Its Function Geshe Rabten writes that the function of feeling is to fully experience the ripening effects of our previous actions.

“We can change feelings that arise in various ways by changing the conditions that give rise to them – opening a window when we're hot, to take the simplest of examples. But there is a certain kind of painful feeling against which we can do nothing to protect ourselves: the feelings that arise as a result of our past unskillful karma. These must simply be borne, although of course we can protect ourselves from future pain by making the effort to create fresh positive karma, even while we are experiencing pain.” Sangharakshita

We can be grateful to the feeling of pain to help us become more skillful and learn how not to repeat unhealthy patterns

Much like we can be grateful for the nerves that let us know when our fingers are being burned by the candle wax from the offering candles!

Walking begins to change. Less structured noticing the mind with some activity.

And you may want to try meditating with your eyes open.

The practice being less quietistic and withdrawing of senses and more one of taking mindfulness into everything.

This morning we'll continue our work

We're going to turn around and look right at distraction

So hindrances are manifestations of the kilesas and they happen not just in meditation but throughout our day

So instead of thinking of them as stopping us from meditation we're going to meditate with them

In Mind and Its functions by Geshe Rabten, he says that distraction is a state of mind in which the mind has been led away from the object of concentration by attachment, hatred or bewilderment. So distraction is a manifestation of the kilesas and studying distraction itself we can learn a bit about the kilesas.