

BBCRMC 2023 HEARTWOOD OF THE DHAMMA EIGHTFOLD PATH RETREAT BOOK

SESSION 1

RETREAT INTRODUCTION AND PURPOSE, SIMSAPA AND BHADDEKARATTA SUTTAS – TWO DEFINING SUTTAS

HEARTWOOD OF THE DHAMMA NOBLE EIGHTFOLD PATH RETREAT INTRODUCTION & WELCOME

Dear Friends,

Thank you for allowing me the honor of leading our Heartwood of the Dhamma Noble Eightfold Path 2023 BBCRMC Retreat. My fellow Dhamma Teacher's and I hope to establish a most skillful retreat environment.

Much like the setting of the first Buddhist Sangha, a retreat guided by the Eightfold Path will provide refuge from the entanglements of the world and the opportunity to deeply engage with the Buddha's Dhamma. To that end, be mindful of the eight factors of the Eightfold Path.

The Buddha's words offer simple and profound guidance:

- Be mindful of wrong view and remain in Right View.

- Be mindful of wrong intention and remain in Right Intention.
- Be mindful of wrong speech and remain in Right Speech.
- Be mindful of wrong action and remain in Right Action.
- Be mindful of wrong livelihood and remain in Right Livelihood.
- Be mindful of wrong effort and remain in Right Effort.
- Be mindful of wrong mindfulness and remain in Right Mindfulness
- Be mindful of wrong meditation and practice Right Meditation.
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Wednesday's and Monday's lunch will be an opportunity to practice Right Speech. Our other meals will be taken in Noble Silence. All other times please support yourself and others in the Dhamma and observe Right Speech.

Retreats guided by the Buddha's Dhamma are not retreats *from the Dhamma* or from the opportunity for skillful interaction with each other, and so are not silent. Our retreat environment will be very similar to the Buddha's Sangha 2,600 years ago. The first Sangha was guided by a simple observance: When gathered as a sangha be mindful of the Dhamma and support others in remaining mindful of the Dhamma.

As with the first Sangha, the Eightfold Path will guide our thoughts, our speech, and our actions, providing the ongoing experiential opportunity to deepen and refine mindfulness of all aspects of the Path.

A retreat guided by the Buddha's Dhamma is an auspicious time to engage deeply in the Dhamma. This is how useful insight is developed – from a quiet and well-concentrated mind that supports the refined mindfulness to view Three Marks Of Existence from Right View.

This is your retreat. This truly is an auspicious time. Gently leave the world, its "spiritual" concepts and ideologies, and its distractions behind, and engage wholeheartedly with these profound teachings.

The world will still be the world Sunday afternoon. By recognizing and abandoning clinging to wrong views you may very well be quite different!

Be mindful of Right Speech and the entire Eightfold Path. Deepen your understanding. Be gentle with yourself and in your skillful interactions with others. This is how practical understanding is developed within the Framework of The Eightfold Path.

Take true refuge in the Buddha, his Dhamma, and our wonderful and well-focused Sangha.

Please speak with myself or our other Dhamma Teacher's with questions or concerns regarding our retreat and what is presented.

Peace, Dhamma Teacher John Haspel

SIMSAPA SUTTA INTRODUCTION

The Simsapa Sutta is more commonly known as the "Handful Of Leaves" sutta. Here the Buddha is describing the pure and direct focus of his Dhamma. He knew the foolishness and cruelty of continuing ignorance of Four Noble Truths by teaching any "dharma" that would develop further confusion and deluded thinking. With great clarity and profound insight grounded in unsurpassed wisdom, and from awakened compassion, he taught a Dhamma free of anything extraneous, protective, or self-serving. It is due to this awakened man's unconditioned commitment to only Four Noble Truths that the Buddha's Dhamma continues in relevance and effectiveness 2,600 years after he first taught.

SIMSAPA SUTTA: THE SIMSAPA LEAVES

SAMYUTTA NIKAYA 56.31

On one occasion the Buddha was staying with a group of disciples in a Simsapa (Indian Rosewood) forest in Kosambi. He reached down picking up a handful of leaves. He then asked those gathered: What is greater in number, the leaves in my hand or those in the trees?

The disciples replied "The leaves in your hand are few, the trees have many more."

“Just as the leaves in the trees are more numerous, the things that I know from direct knowledge are far more numerous than what I teach as my Dhamma. The reason I do not teach these other things is that they are not a part of my Dhamma, they are not related to my Dhamma, and they do not support the principles of a life integrated with the Eightfold Path. These other things do not lead to disenchantment, to dispassion, to calm, to direct knowledge, to cessation, or to self-awakening. These other things do not lead to unbinding (from views ignorant of Four Noble Truths.)

I teach Four Noble Truths:

- 1.This is stress.
- 2.This is the origination of stress.
- 3.This the cessation of stress.
- 4.The Eightfold Path is the path developing the cessation of stress.

This is what I teach.

“I teach these things because they are related to my Dhamma and they support the principles of a life integrated with the Eightfold Path. These things that I teach lead directly to disenchantment, to dispassion, to calm, to direct knowledge, to cessation, and to self-awakening. These things that I teach lead directly to unbinding (from views ignorant of Four Noble Truths.)

“This is why I teach these things.

“So this is your practice:

- Understanding stress
- Understanding the origination of stress
- Experiencing the cessation of stress.
- Developing the Eightfold Path leading to the cessation of stress.

End of Sutta

BHADDEKARATTA SUTTA

INTRODUCTION

The Bhaddekaratta Sutta teaches the importance of being mindfully present of life as life unfolds. Everything the Buddha taught during his forty-five-year teaching career was taught in the context of developing understanding of Four Noble Truths and release from clinging to self-referential views rooted in ignorance of these four truths.

The title of this Sutta means “an auspicious day.” An auspicious day in this context refers to a day that is significantly favorable towards developing awakening as the Buddha defines awakening: Developing a profound understanding of Dukkha and recognizing and abandoning all self-referential views rooted in ignorance of Four Noble Truths.

Here the Buddha references The Five Clinging Aggregates of form, feelings, perceptions, mental fabrications, and confused consciousness to describe an ignorant view of self. The Buddha teaches the importance of not being distracted to the past or to the future and to remain mindfully present with life as life occurs.

My comments below are in italics.

THE BHADDEKARATTA SUTTA

MAJHIMA NIKAYA 131

The Buddha was staying in Savatthi, at Jeta’s Grove, Anathapindika’s monastery. There he addressed the monks: “Friends, I will teach you the meaning of an auspicious day:

- Do not chase after the past or project your thoughts to the future.
- Not entangled with the world, be mindful only of what is occurring.
- Free of distraction, well-concentrated, develop compassion informed by wisdom.

- Mindfully engage with what is skillful.
- The future is uncertain and death occurs equally for all.
- Those who remain mindfully engaged with life as life occurs throughout the day have had a truly auspicious day.

“And how does one avoid chasing after the past? One does not get carried away with the delight that ‘in the past, I had such a form (body), in the past, I had such a feeling, in the past, I had such a perception, in the past I had such a fabrication, in the past I had such a consciousness.’ This is called not chasing after the past.

“And how does one not project their thoughts onto the future? One does not get carried away with delight that ‘in the future I might have such a form, in the future I may have such a feeling, in the future I might have such a perception, in the future I might have such a fabrication in the future, I might have such a consciousness.’ This is called not projecting thoughts onto the future.

Notice the I-making through self-referential views in these statements.

“And how does one become entangled with the world? An uninstructed ordinary person lacking understanding of the dhamma sees form as the self or the self as form. Confused, they see feeling as self or the self as possessing feeling. Confused, they see their perceptions as self or the self as possessing perceptions. Confused, they see their fabrications as self or their self as their fabrications. Confused, they see their consciousness as self or their self as their consciousness. This is what is meant by becoming entangled with the world.

“And how is one not entangled with the world? A follower of the dhamma, who is well-versed and well-trained in the dhamma does not see form as self or the self possessing form. With Right View established they do not see feeling as the self or the self possessing feelings. With Right View established they do not see perceptions as self or the self possessing perceptions. With Right View established they do not see fabrications as self or the self possessing fabrications. With Right View established they do not see consciousness as the self or the self possessing consciousness. This is called not being entangled with the world.

“To develop an auspicious day remain present with your life as your life occurs. Do not chase the past or project your thoughts to the future. Remain free of entanglements with the world and mindful of what is occurring. Be mindful of impermanence and uncertainty. Those that do so will have an auspicious day. So says this Peaceful Sage.”

End of Sutta

SESSION 2

NAGARA SUTTA

SIDDARTHA GOTAMA, A HUMAN BEING, DESCRIBES HIS AWAKENING

THE NAGARA SUTTA

SAMYUTTA NIKAYA 12.65

The Buddha describes his awakening

The Buddha was at Savatthi at Jeta's Grove, Anathapindika's monastery. There he addressed those gathered:

"Friends, before my awakening, when I was only an unawakened Bodhisatta, (Sanskrit: Bodhisattva) I came to the realization of the difficulties of the world. The world is born, it ages, it dies, it falls away and returns, but there is no understanding of ending the stress and suffering of aging and death. When will the world understand the cessation of the stress and suffering from aging and death?

"Then I had the thought: What initiates aging and death? What is the requisite condition that aging and death are dependent on for arising?

"From my appropriate mindfulness came a breakthrough of understanding: From birth as the requisite condition comes aging and death.

"Then I had the thought: What initiates birth? What is the requisite condition that birth is dependent on for arising?

From my appropriate mindfulness came a breakthrough of understanding: From becoming as the requisite condition comes birth.

“Then I had the thought: What initiates name-&-form? What is the requisite condition that name-&-form is dependent on for arising?”

Name-and-form (Pali: nama-rupa) means self-identification through clinging to forms and self-referential views.

“From my appropriate mindfulness came a breakthrough of understanding: From consciousness as the requisite condition comes name-&-form.

In the Patirika-Saddam-Vibhanga Sutta, the sutta on Dependent Origination the Buddha shows that it is ignorance of Four Noble Truths that is the condition that the arising of mental fabrications are dependent on, and that the arising of consciousness is dependent on mental fabrications. Consciousness then in this context is ordinary ongoing thinking arising from ignorance. What arises from ignorance can only further ignorance.

“Then I had the thought: What initiates consciousness? What is the requisite condition that consciousness is dependent on for arising?”

“From my appropriate mindfulness came a breakthrough of understanding: From name-&-form as the requisite condition comes consciousness.

What the Buddha is beginning to describe here is the feedback loop caused by self-referential views and relying on these views, rooted in ignorance, to describe reality. This much like “I think; therefore I am” the famous quote from Rene Descartes who hoped to find an irrefutable statement. His reasoning was that since he could not refute his own existence it must be that his (self-referential) thoughts prove that he existed (as a substantial and sustainable “self.”

Lacking understanding the resulting reality described ignores (continues ignorance) any thought, word, or idea that arises that would challenge these views now conditioned by ongoing ignorance. Once established, a framework for recognizing this feedback loop is now necessary in order to recognize and abandon these wrong views.

When the Dhamma is developed it is clearly understood that what constitutes a “self” is always in a constant state of becoming. Consciousness rooted in ignorance can only continue this feedback loop furthering ignorance. The world becomes the mirror feeding back wrong

views. As the Buddha's path is developed consciousness is framed by the Eightfold Path and becoming awakened, becoming Buddha, is now possible.

“Then I had the thought: This consciousness turns back at name-&-form, and goes no farther. It is to this extent that there is birth, aging, death, falling away and returning. This is where ignorance is established. From (self-referential views) name-&-form is the requisite condition that brings consciousness and from (self-referential views) consciousness is the requisite condition that brings name-&-form.

“Then I had the thought: The six-sense base (five physical senses and consciousness) is dependent on the condition of name-&-form, dependent on self-referential views, and this is the origination of the entire mass of suffering.

The Buddha is stating that it is being stuck in the feedback loop of self-referential views, seeing all objects, events, views, and ideas from the perspective of “ME” and how objects, events, views, and ideas may affect ME one way or another I.e: not getting what is wanted, receiving what is not wanted, ongoing disappointing and unsatisfactory experiences, all arise from the initial ignorance of Four Noble Truths.

“Vision arose, understanding arose, discernment arose, knowledge arose, illuminating insight arose within me with regard to things never known before.

“Then I had the thought: What is the condition that the cessation of the stress of aging and death is dependent on?

“From my appropriate mindfulness came a breakthrough of understanding: From the cessation of birth (birth of ignorance) as the requisite condition comes the cessation of the stress of aging and death.

“From my appropriate mindfulness came a breakthrough of understanding: From the cessation of consciousness (thinking rooted in ignorance) as the requisite condition comes the cessation of name-&-form.

“From my appropriate mindfulness came a breakthrough of understanding: From the cessation of name-&-form as the requisite condition comes the cessation of consciousness.

“I have attained the following path to awakening:

- From the cessation of name-&-form comes the cessation of consciousness.
- From the cessation of consciousness comes the cessation of name-&-form.
- From the cessation of name-&-form comes the cessation of the six sense media.
- From the cessation of the six sense media comes the cessation of contact.
- From the cessation of contact comes the cessation of feeling.
- From the cessation of feeling comes the cessation of craving.
- From the cessation of craving comes the cessation of clinging and maintaining.
- From the cessation of clinging and maintaining comes the cessation of becoming.
- From the cessation of becoming comes the cessation of birth.
- From the cessation of birth, then aging & death, sorrow, regret, pain, distress, & despair all cease.

“This is the cessation of the entire mass of stress. Vision arose, understanding arose, discernment arose, knowledge arose, illuminating insight arose within me with regard to things never known before.

The confusion that often arises in modern Buddhism is taking these teachings out of the context of Dependent Origination and The Four Noble Truths. Each of these statements, when seen in the proper context, shows that ignorance of Four Noble Truths originates the process of becoming stuck in a feedback loop of wrong views, a thicket of views.

When wisdom and understanding is developed through the Eightfold Path then “giving birth” to further views rooted in ignorance ceases and the conditions that the stress of aging and death, of sorrow, regret, pain, distress, & despair are dependent on all cease.

“In this way I saw a timeless path to be traveled by the Rightly Self-awakened Ones. And what is this timeless path traveled by the Rightly Self-awakened Ones?* Just this noble eightfold path:

1. Right View
2. Right Intention
3. Right Speech
4. Right Action
5. Right Livelihood
6. Right Effort
7. Right Mindfulness
8. Right Meditation.

“This is the ancient timeless path traveled by the Rightly Self-awakened Ones. I followed this path. Following it, I came to direct knowledge of (the stress of) aging & death, direct knowledge of the origination of (the stress of) aging & death, direct knowledge of the cessation of (the stress of) aging & death, direct knowledge of the path leading to the cessation of (the stress of) aging & death.

“I followed this path. Following it, I came to direct knowledge of birth... becoming... clinging... craving... feeling... contact... the six sense media... name-&-form... consciousness, direct knowledge of the origination of consciousness, direct knowledge of the cessation of consciousness, direct knowledge of the path leading to the cessation of consciousness.

“I followed that path.

“Following it, I came to direct knowledge of fabrications, direct knowledge of the origination of fabrications, direct knowledge of the cessation of fabrications, direct knowledge of the Eightfold Path leading to the cessation of fabrications. Knowing this directly, I have revealed it to monks, nuns, male lay followers & female lay followers, so that this undefiled life has become powerful, rich, detailed, well-populated, wide-spread, proclaimed among many beings.”

End Of Sutta

SESSION 3

ASSUTAVA SUTTA

DEPENDENT ORIGINATION AND FIVE CLINGING AGGREGATES

INTRODUCTION

The Buddha awakened to the profound understanding that it is ignorance of Four Noble Truths that confusion, deluded thinking, and ongoing unsatisfactory experiences are dependent on for origination. The Assutava Sutta is another simple and direct sutta on Dependent Origination that also references the Five Clinging Aggregates.

It is interesting particularly because the Buddha addresses ongoing thinking rooted in ignorance as being more difficult in recognizing I-making, or conceit, than identification with the physical form, or the body. What this shows in a somewhat subtle fashion is the way that Dhamma practice develops gradually from wrong view to a profound Right View within the entire framework of the Eightfold Path. This way of presenting the Dhamma avoids the “relative” and “absolute” debate that leads to the mistaken wrong view of a non-dual reality.

An understanding of the Buddha’s teachings on the three marks of existence within the proper context of Dependent Origination shows that all things including awakening, or developing full human maturity, is an ongoing process. If that process is rooted in the framework of the Eightfold Path awakening is the end result. If the process is rooted in continued ignorance of Four Noble Truths then only continued ignorance can follow.

THE ASSUTAVA SUTTA

SAMYUTTA NIKAYA 12.61

The Buddha was at the Savatthi in Jeta's Grove, Anathapindika's monastery. There he addressed the assembled monks:

“Monks, an uninstructed ordinary person might grow disenchanted with their body composed of the four great elements. They might grow dispassionate toward their body and gain release from clinging to it. How does this occur? Due to aging and decline, the impermanence of their body composed of the four great elements becomes apparent. In this way, the uninstructed ordinary person might grow disenchanted with their body and gain release from clinging to physical form.

Much is made of the four elements of earth, air, fire, and water, and these elements are often embellished to give them more meaning than is intended here. The four elements simply describe in a general way what constitutes the makeup of a human being and is used here to avoid creating specialness and simply point out the commonality and impersonal nature of having a human life. All things in the phenomenal world are made up of these four elements and these four elements are subject to constant change.

“But what is often called mind, intellect, or consciousness, the uninstructed ordinary person is unable to develop disenchantment or develop dispassion towards thinking (rooted in ignorance of Four Noble Truths) and gain release from it. How does this occur? Once ignorance arises, the mind, intellect, or consciousness is relished, revered, grasped after, and clung to by the uninstructed ordinary person. They see this mind rooted in ignorance as ‘this is me, this is myself, this is what I am.’ From this self-referential view it is impossible to grow disenchanted or dispassionate towards the mind or to gain release from clinging to it.

A mind rooted in ignorance is conditioned to ignore anything that would challenge this initial ignorance. This is why all the attempts to adapt or accommodate the Buddha's original teachings to fit individual or culturally influenced views invariably results in a “Buddhist” practice that contradicts or ignores completely the Buddha's direct teachings resulting in a modern “thicket of views.”

“It would be more skillful for the uninstructed ordinary person to cling to their body more so than the mind as the self. Why is this? Because the body composed of the four elements can more easily be seen as impermanent and prone to decay. What is identified as mind, or intellect, or consciousness is seen as one thing that continues to attach to another thing?

(E.G. constantly changing self-referential views resulting in confused views such as interdependence, interconnectedness, and inter-being)

“Just as a monkey swinging through the forest grabs one branch after another, in the same way, what is seen as mind, intellect, or consciousness constantly grasps after one thing or another.

“The well-instructed disciple of the Dhamma attends mindfully and appropriately to Dependent Origination:

- When this is, that is.
- From the arising of this comes the arising of that.
- When this isn't, that isn't.
- From the cessation of this comes to cessation of that.

These phrases are often taken out of the context in which they are intended to further the confused belief in interdependence, interconnectedness, and inter-being. When taken in the context of the Buddhist direct teachings it is clear the Buddha is referring to ignorance of Four Noble Truths as the required condition for confusion, deluded thinking, and ongoing unsatisfactory experiences. When there is ignorance of Four Noble Truths, confusion, deluded thinking, and ongoing suffering arises. It is for this reason that the teaching on Dependent Origination is altered or ignored to allow for all the accommodations and embellishments attached to the Buddhist teachings.

“In other words,

- From ignorance as a requisite condition comes fabrications. (when this is that is)
- From fabrications as a requisite condition comes consciousness.

- From consciousness as a requisite condition comes Name-And-Form.
- From Name-And-Form as a requisite condition comes to Six Sense Base.
- From the Six Sense Base as a requisite condition comes contact.
- From contact as a requisite condition comes feeling.
- From feeling as a requisite condition comes craving.
- From craving as a requisite condition comes clinging and maintaining.
- From clinging and maintaining as a requisite condition comes becoming.
- From becoming as a requisite condition comes birth.
- From birth as the requisite condition comes sickness, aging, death, sorrow, regret, pain, distress, and despair

“Such is the origination of the entire mass of confusion, deluded thinking, and suffering.

“Now, from the complete cessation of ignorance of Four Noble truths comes the cessation of fabrication. (*when this isn't, that isn't*)

- From the cessation of fabrications comes the cessation of consciousness.
- From the cessation of consciousness comes a cessation of Name-And-Form.
- From the cessation of Name-And-Form comes the cessation of the Six Sense Base.
- From the cessation of the Six Sense Base comes the cessation of contact.
- from the cessation of contact comes the sensation of feeling.
- From the cessation of feeling comes the cessation of craving.
- From the cessation of craving comes the cessation of clinging/maintaining.
- From the cessation of clinging/maintaining comes the cessation of becoming.

- From the cessation of becoming comes the cessation of birth.
- From the cessation of birth comes the cessation of sickness, aging, death, sorrow, regret, pain, distress, and despair. From the cessation of birth comes the cessation of the entire mass of confusion, deluded thinking, and suffering.”

Understanding this clearly (and within the proper context) the well-instructed disciple of the Dhamma grows disenchanted with form, disenchanted with feelings, Disenchanted with perception, disenchanted with fabrications, disenchanted with consciousness. Disenchanted they become dispassionate. Through dispassion, they are fully released (from the Five Clinging Aggregates.) With complete release, they know they are fully released. They know that giving birth to additional views rooted in ignorance has ended. They know that a life well integrated within the Eightfold Path has been fulfilled and that the task is done. They know that clinging to the world has ended.”

End of Sutta

SESSION 4

DHAMMACAKKAPPAVATTANA SUTTA – FOUR NOBLE TRUTHS – CONTEXT FOR DHAMMA PRACTICE & SACCA- VIBHANGA SUTTA – ANALYSIS OF FOUR NOBLE TRUTHS

DHAMMACAKKAPPAVATTANA SUTTA INTRODUCTION

The Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta is the very first teaching ever presented by the Buddha. It occurred a few weeks after Siddhartha Gotama awakened and gained full human maturity – complete understanding of the human life experience.

For a few weeks after his awakening, Siddhartha carefully considered if it was possible to teach to others his profound understanding of the nature of suffering (Dukkha) arising due to wrong views of self (Anatta) within an impermanent, ever-changing environment (Anicca). Developing the wisdom of a Buddha is developing insight into these Three Marks Of Existence.

As described in the Paticca-Samuppada Sutta, the primary sutta on Dependent Origination, the conditions that Dukkha is dependent on arise from ignorance of Four Noble Truths. As shown and taught in the Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta, the Eightfold Path is the middle-way that avoids extreme views that would continue wrong views rooted in ignorance of the Four Noble Truths described in this sutta. The Eightfold Path is the path developed by Dhamma practitioners that brings wisdom and awakening.

It is the self-identification with ongoing suffering – clinging or joining with suffering – that obscures impermanence through the continuation of self-referential unsatisfactory experiences.

The Buddha taught an Eightfold Path to develop the concentration supporting the refined mindfulness necessary to integrate the Eightfold Path as the framework for recognizing and abandoning all wrong views rooted in ignorance.

The entire forty-five-year teaching career of the Buddha was taught in the context of Dependent Origination and Four Noble Truths to bring wisdom, understanding, and profound insight into Three Marks Of Existence.

This very first teaching was presented to the five ascetics he had previously befriended, all seeking understanding.

My comments below are in italics.

DHAMMACAKKAPPAVATTANA SUTTA: SETTING THE WHEEL OF DHAMMA IN MOTION

SAMYUTTA NIKAYA 56:11

I have heard that on this occasion the Buddha was staying at Varanasi in the Game Refuge at Isipatana. There he addressed the group of five:

“There are these two extremes that are not to be indulged in by one who has gone forth. Which two? That which is devoted to sensual pleasure with reference to sensual objects. This behavior is base, vulgar, common, ignoble, unprofitable. It is devoted to self-affliction. That which is devoted to self-affliction is (always) painful and ignoble. Avoiding both of these extremes the middle way is realized by the Tathagata. This middle way produces vision and knowledge. This middle way leads to calm, to direct knowledge, to self-awakening, to Unbinding.

One who has gone forth” refers to one who has gained understanding framed by the Eightfold Path and no longer craves after or clings to the impermanent objects, events, views, and ideas of the world.

“And what is the middle way realized by the Tathagata that brings vision and direct knowledge, that leads to calm and to self-awakening and Unbinding? The middle way is precisely this Noble Eightfold Path:

1.Right View

2.Right Intention

3.Right Speech

4.Right Action

5.Right Livelihood

6.Right Effort

7.Right Mindfulness

8.Right Meditation

“This is the middle way realized by the Tathagata that brings vision and direct knowledge, that leads to calm and to self-awakening and Unbinding.

“Tathagata” means “One who has gone forth” and is the word the Buddha used when referring to himself. By using this word the Buddha established his life and his teachings as a continual reference to the Eightfold Path. “Unbinding” refers to the culmination of the path – abandoning clinging to views rooted in ignorance of these Four Noble Truths.

“I teach the truth of stress (Dukkha) and the truth of the path leading to the cessation of stress. Nothing More.

“This is the noble truth of stress: Birth is stressful, aging is stressful, death is stressful. Sorrow, regret, pain, distress, and despair are stressful. Furthermore, association with the unbeloved is stressful and separation from is loved is stressful. Not getting what is craved for is stressful.

“In short, the Five Clinging Aggregates are stressful.

Five Clinging Aggregates” are form, feelings, perceptions, mental fabrications, and ongoing thinking rooted in ignorance of Four Noble Truths. Five Clinging Aggregates describe the

ongoing personal experience of stress. Gaining insight into Five Clinging Aggregates is gaining insight into Three Marks Of Existence.

“And this, monks, is the noble truth of the origination of stress: the craving that makes for further becoming (rooted in ignorance) and accompanied by passion and delight, (in becoming) relishing now here and now thereby craving for sensual pleasure, craving for becoming, craving for non-becoming.

Relishing nowhere and now thereby craving for sensual pleasure, craving for becoming, craving for non-becoming” means compulsive seeking to establish a “self” rooted in ignorance in every thought, word, and idea that occurs.

“And this, monks, is the noble truth of the cessation of stress: the remainderless fading & cessation, renunciation, relinquishment, release, and letting go of that very craving.

The previous statement describes the purpose of a Buddha’s Dhamma. The following statement provides the focus and framework for Dhamma practice and points directly to the Eightfold Path:

“And this, monks, is the noble truth of the way of practice leading to the cessation of stress: precisely this Noble Eightfold Path:

1. Right View
2. Right Intention
3. Right Speech
4. Right Action
5. Right Livelihood
6. Right Effort
7. Right Mindfulness
8. Right Meditation

“Vision arose, insight arose, discernment arose, knowledge arose, illumination arose within me with regard to things never heard before: ‘Dukkha (stress) occurs.’ *(First Noble Truth)*

“Vision arose, insight arose, discernment arose, knowledge arose, illumination arose within me with regard to things never heard before: The noble truth of stress is to be understood.

Understanding the nature of stress, its arising and passing away, is the task associated with the First Noble Truth. Understanding that ignorance of the impermanence of all conditioned phenomena, including what constitutes a “self,” initiates craving and clinging. This initial ignorance then allows for “clinging” wrong views of self – mental fabrications – to impermanent objects, events, views, and ideas.

This unknowingly – mindlessly – establishes disappointing and unsatisfactory experiences, Dukkha, as personal experiences given an individual personality from this initial ignorance. Life experience established in ignorance can only lead to continuing confusion, deluded thinking, and ongoing disappointing experiences.

It is insight into Anicca, impermanence, and Anatta, the Not-Self characteristic, that brings wisdom and knowledge of “things never heard before” and results in awakening as the Buddha describes awakening:

“Vision arose, insight arose, discernment arose, knowledge arose, illumination arose within me with regard to things never heard before:

- The noble truth of stress has been understood.

This is the First Noble Truth.

The Eightfold Path develops the skills of concentration and refined mindfulness necessary to support accomplishing the tasks associated with developing understanding of Four Noble Truths. Profound and penetrative understanding of the origination and cessation of stress, of Dukkha, is awakening:

“Vision arose, insight arose, discernment arose, knowledge arose, illumination arose within me with regard to things never heard before:

- This is the noble truth of the origination of stress.
- This noble truth of the origination of stress is to be abandoned.
- This noble truth of the origination of stress has been abandoned.

This refers to the Second Noble Truth.

“Vision arose, insight arose, discernment arose, knowledge arose, illumination arose within me with regard to things never heard before:

- This is the noble truth of the cessation of stress.
- This noble truth of the cessation of stress is to be directly experienced.’
- This noble truth of the cessation of stress has been directly experienced.’

This refers to the Third Noble Truth.

“Vision arose, insight arose, discernment arose, knowledge arose, illumination arose within me with regard to things never heard before:

- This is the noble truth of the way of practice leading to the cessation of stress.
- This noble truth of the way of practice leading to the cessation of stress is to be developed.
- This noble truth of the way of practice leading to the cessation of stress has been developed.

This last refers to the Fourth Noble Truth, the truth of the path developing profound and penetrative insight into Three Marks Of Existence. The Eightfold Path provides simple and direct guidance of an awakened human beings Dhamma.

“Monks, as long as my knowledge & vision concerning these Four Noble Truths was not pure, I did not claim to have directly self-awakened. My self-awakening is unexcelled in the cosmos even with its deities, Maras, & Brahmas, with its contemplatives & brahmans, its royalty & common folk.

Here the Buddha is declaring that his Dhamma surpasses the “spiritual” practices of his time for all beings regardless of their understanding or social position.

The Buddha continues:

“But as soon as my knowledge & vision concerning these Four Noble Truths was truly pure, then I did claim to have directly self-awakened, an awakening unexcelled in the cosmos. Knowledge & vision arose in me: ‘Unprovoked is my release. This is the last birth. There is now no further becoming.’

Unprovoked is my release” refers to the emptiness of ignorance in the Buddha’s mind. Having become empty of ignorance there is no longer the condition present – ignorance – to “provoke” craving, clinging, or any thought, word, or deed rooted in ignorance of Four Noble Truths.

This is the last birth” is the Buddha’s declaration that the conditions giving rise to the birth of life experiences arising from ignorance of Four Noble Truths and resulting in Dukkha no longer exist. The Buddha has emptied himself of ignorance.

There is now no further becoming” means that having emptied himself of ignorance, becoming further established in ignorance is abandoned and becoming awakened, Becoming Buddha is achieved.

That is what the Buddha said. The group of five monks were delighted at his words. While this discourse was being given, Venerable Kondañña declared: “All conditioned things that arise are subject to cessation.”

Kondana now understands the impermanence of all phenomena arising from the “condition” of ignorance.

Having heard Kondanna the Buddha exclaimed: “So you really know, Kondañña? So you really know? You are now “Anna Kondanna – Kondañña who knows understands.”

End Of Sutta

SACCA-VIBHANGA SUTTA INTRODUCTION

In the Sacca-Vibhanga Sutta, one of the Buddha’s chief disciples, Sariputta, presents a complete analysis of the Four Noble Truths including a simple and direct explanation of the Eightfold Path.

Sariputta teaches in plain and simple terms the qualifications one should look for in choosing a skillful Dhamma teacher and what an authentic Dhamma practice must be based on: “Sariputta is able to declare, teach, describe, set forth, reveal, explain, and make plain the Four Noble Truths in detail.”

The reference in this sutta to established brahmins, disincarnate “beings”, and imagined creator gods as having no more understanding of Four Noble Truths as ordinary human beings is common throughout the Buddha’s Dhamma.

A critical aspect of the Dhamma is that ignorance that arises within, and is resolved within individual human beings through their own individual Right Effort, as described in this sutta, through direct engagement with an Eightfold Path. The Buddha referred to imaginary, disincarnate beings, devas, and gods to show that even though these fabricated beliefs were as widespread then as they are today, they are merely metaphors for a confused, distracted, and conflicted minds lacking understanding of Four Noble Truths.

Simply put, an awakened human being’s Dhamma, as seen here and throughout the Buddha’s Dhamma, resolves solely within the mind and body of each individual Dhamma practitioner.

My comments below are in italics.

THE SACCA-VIBHANGA SUTTA ANALYSIS OF FOUR NOBLE TRUTHS

MAJJHIMA NIKAYA 141

On one occasion the Buddha was staying at the Deer Park in Isipatana. He addressed those gathered:

“Friends, it was here that I set in motion the unexcelled Wheel Of Dhamma. My Dhamma cannot be corrupted by any brahman, deva, Mara, Brahma, or any one in the entire world.

“No one can corrupt the revelation, declaration, the description, the structure, the explanation, and the clear and direct teaching of Four Noble Truths:

- 1.The Noble Truth of stress and suffering.
- 2.The Noble Truth of the origination of stress.
- 3.The Noble Truth of the cessation of stress.
- 4.The Noble Truth of the Eightfold Path of practice leading to the cessation of stress.

“Friends, associate with wise disciples such as Sariputta and Moggallana. Sariputta and Moggallana are well-trained, focused, wise, and sympathetic to those developing a life integrated with the Eightfold Path.

“Sariputta is like a mother giving birth and Moggallana is like the nurse that attends to the baby. Sariputta trains others on developing the Dhamma, Moggallana, to the highest culmination.

This last may seem to show Sariputta as a lesser teacher. The Buddha always held Sariputta as his most effective Dhamma teacher. When seen clearly it is much more difficult to introduce an ordinary person to the Dhamma than to continue to support the development of one already engaged with the Eightfold Path. Both Sariputta and Moggallana were critical support to the Buddha and the original Sangha.

“Sariputta is able to declare, teach, describe, set forth, reveal, explain, and make plain the Four Noble Truths in detail.”

Having said these words, the Buddha left for the days abiding.

Sariputta then addressed those gathered:

“Friends, it was here that the Tathagata set in motion the unexcelled Wheel Of Dhamma. This Dhamma cannot be corrupted by any brahman, deva, Mara, Brahma, or any one in the entire world. No one can corrupt the revelation, declaration, the description, the structure, the explanation, and the clear and direct teaching of Four Noble Truths:

- 1.The Noble Truth of stress and suffering.

2.The Noble Truth of the origination of stress.

3.The Noble Truth of the cessation of stress.

4.The Noble Truth of the Eightfold Path of practice leading to the cessation of stress.

Friends, what is the noble truth of stress and suffering?

- Birth is stressful.
- Sickness is stressful.
- Aging is stressful.
- Death is stressful.
- Sorrow, regret, pain, distress, and despair are all stressful.
- Not getting what is desired is stressful.
- Receiving what is undesired is stressful.
- In short, the Five-Clinging-Aggregates are stressful.

The Five Clinging-Aggregates are the ongoing personal experience of stress and suffering in an impermanent world – the personal experience of Anicca, anatta, and Dukkha.

It is the Eightfold Path that develops useful Vipassana, useful introspective insight, into these Three Marks Of Existence.

“And what is birth? Whatever takes birth. The descent, the coming-to-be, the coming forth, the arising of the Five-Clinging-Aggregates, the fabrication of sensuous realms of diverse beings. This is called birth.

One of the grossest misunderstandings of the Buddha’s Dhamma is what he taught as Karma and Rebirth. Rather than teaching Karma and Rebirth as a magical and mystical system of behavior modification through reward and punishments, reward based on ambiguous “merit” and good deeds with the ultimate reward in a vague realms of emptiness or nothingness or eternal establishment in some form of Buddhist “heaven” and punishment similar to all other salvific religions in some type of “hell”, the Buddha taught that Karma is the conditioning of

past intentional acts manifesting in the present moment that is moderated by the present level of mindfulness. If what is held in mind continues to be rooted in ignorance of Four Noble Truths than individual experience of what one is “giving birth” to in the present moment can only “give birth” to continued ignorance in the present moment.

Holding in mind the framework and guidance of the Eightfold Path will “give birth” to a present-moment-experience that continues the non-distracted development of wisdom of Four Noble Truths.

Many translations state “acquisition of (sense) spheres of the diverse beings in this or that group of beings, that is called birth” rather than the content-relevant “the fabrication of sensuous realms of diverse beings. This is called birth.” The improper (relevant to context) translation encourages a subtle grasping-after establishment on speculated and imaginary non-physical realms that the Buddha consistently and emphatically taught to abandon.

“And what is aging? Aging is (*increasing*) decrepitude, brokenness, graying, wrinkling, decline of life-force, diminishing of mental faculties, of diverse beings. This is called aging.

“And what is death? Death is the passing away, the breaking up, the disappearance, the completion of time, the casting off of the body, the interruption of the life faculty, and the dissolution of the Five Clinging-Aggregates of diverse beings. This is called death.

“And what is sorrow? Sorrow is sadness, this suffering of misfortune, being touched by pain. This is called sorrow.

“And what is regret? Regret is the grieving, the crying, the weeping, the wailing, the regret of suffering from misfortune, of being touched by pain, this is called regret.

“And what is pain? Pain is bodily pain. bodily discomfort, pain or discomfort from bodily contact this is called pain.

“And what is distress? Distress is mental pain and mental discomfort, pain or discomfort from mental contact. This is called distress.

“And what is despair? Despair is despondency and desperation of anyone suffering from misfortune or touch by a painful thing. This is called despair.

“And what is the stress of not getting what is desired? In those beings subject to birth, the wish arises, ‘May I not be subject to birth, may birth not come to me.’ Wishing does not bring cessation. This is the stress of not getting what is desired.

“Furthermore, In uninformed human beings subject to birth, sickness, aging, death, sorrow, regret, pain, distress, and despair the wish arises ‘O, may I not be subject to birth, sickness, aging, death, sorrow, regret, pain, distress, and despair. May these not befall me.’ These things are not avoided by wishing. This is the stress of not getting what is desired.

The result of continued grasping after continued establishment of a fabricated view of self clinging to any impermanent phenomena, including the fabricated phenomena of external realms and the fabricated belief of salvific intervention of beings from external imaginary realms is what is referred to here. Wishing to avoid any experience that is determined by simply having a human life is rooted in self-referential wrong views self and always results in continued distraction and continued stress and suffering.

“And what are the Five Clinging-Aggregates that continue stress?”

1. The clinging-to-form-aggregate.
2. The clinging-to-feeling-aggregate.
3. The clinging-to-perception-aggregate.
4. The clinging-to-fabrication-aggregate.
5. The clinging-to-consciousness-aggregate.

“These are the Five Clinging-Aggregates that continue stress.

“This, friends, is the Noble Truth of Stress.

“And what is the Noble Truth of the origination of stress? The very craving that makes for becoming father ignorant, craving clinging to passion and delight (*after what is craved including adapted, accommodated and/or embellished modern dharmas*), entranced here and there with craving for sensuality, craving for continued becoming (*further ignorant*), craving for non-becoming (*escape from the effects of ignorance rather than cessation of ignorance, annihilation into nothingness, emptiness, non-duality*).

“This is called the Noble Truth of the origination of stress.

Wise and skillful disciples understand that the Dhamma is practiced within individual life as life unfolds. Each moment holds the potential to become further ignorant or become further awakened.

“And what friends is the Noble Truth of the cessation of stress? The renunciation, the relinquishment, the release, the letting go, the remainderless fading away and complete cessation of craving. This is called the Noble Truth of the cessation of stress.

“And what is the Noble Truth of the path of Dhamma practice that leads directly to the cessation of stress? This path is the Noble Eightfold Path:

1. Right View. Right View is knowledge with regard to stress, knowledge with regard to the origination of stress, knowledge with regard to the cessation of stress, knowledge with regard to the Eightfold Path of practice leading to the cessation of stress. This is Right View.
2. Right Intention. Right Intention is maintaining mindfulness of the intention for renunciation, for freedom from ill-will, for harmlessness, for cessation. This is Right Intention
3. Right Speech. Right Speech is abstaining from lying, abstaining from divisive speech, abstaining from abusive speech, and abstaining from gossip and idle chatter. This is right Speech.
4. Right Action. Right Action is abstaining from taking life, abstaining from stealing, and abstaining from sexual misconduct. This is Right Action.
5. Right Livelihood. Right Livelihood is when a skillful disciple of the Noble Ones has abandoned dishonest livelihood and provides for themselves with honesty. This is Right Livelihood.
6. Right Effort. Right Effort is when a skillful disciple of the Noble Ones (internally) generates the skillful desire, who is persistent, who remains mindful of their intent for the non-arising of unskillful qualities that have yet arisen, who remains mindful of their intent for the abandoning of unskillful qualities that have arisen, who remains mindful for maintaining non-confusion and for increasing, developing, and the culmination of skillful qualities that have yet arisen. This is Right Effort.
7. Right Mindfulness. Right Mindfulness is when a skillful disciple of the Noble Ones remains mindful of the body in and of itself while remaining ardent, alert, and mindful of putting aside

greed and distress with reference to the world. Right Mindfulness is when a skillful disciple of the Noble Ones remains mindful of feelings in and of themselves while remaining ardent, alert, and mindful of putting aside greed and distress with reference to the world. Right Mindfulness is when a skillful disciple of the Noble Ones remains mindful of thoughts in and of themselves while remaining ardent, alert, and mindful of putting aside greed and distress with reference to the world. Right Mindfulness is when a skillful disciple of the Noble Ones remains mindful of the (present) quality of mind in and of itself while remaining ardent, alert, and mindful of putting aside greed and distress with reference to the world. This is right mindfulness.

8. Right Meditation. Right Meditation is when a skillful disciple of the Noble Ones has established seclusion from sensuality and unskillful mental qualities. They enter and remain in the First Jhana. This First Jhana is experienced as rapture born of that very seclusion. It is accompanied by directed thought and evaluation.

This first Jhana is simply the initial pleasant calming that occurs from taking refuge in seclusion and becoming mindful of the breath in the body.

“Furthermore, the ending of the defilements depends on the Second Jhana which is the stilling of directed thought and evaluation. This Second Jhana is experienced as rapture and pleasure born of concentration. Free of directed thought and evaluation, the joy of concentration permeates their entire mind and body.

This second Jhana is a deepening awareness of the mind calming in the body as a point of concentration.

“Furthermore, the ending of the defilements depends on the Third Jhana which is the fading of rapture. They remain equanimous, mindful, alert, sensitive to pleasure. With the fading of rapture, this pleasant abiding permeates their entire mind and body.

This third Jhana is characterized by the stilling of directed thought and evaluation and now able to experience the subtle pleasure of a mind calmly united with the body. This is a pleasant abiding free of comparison to what is no longer present.

“Furthermore, the ending of the defilements depends on the Fourth Jhana which is the abandoning of evaluation. They enter and remain in the Fourth Jhana which is pure equanimity and mindful. Being pure, neither pleasure nor pain is seen. They sit permeated in mind and body with pure, bright awareness. The Fourth Jhana which is a pleasant abiding.

“This is Right Meditation.

This fourth Jhana is simply a deepening level of concentration and resulting pleasant abiding that remains at peace no matter what arises. This pleasant abiding is the defining characteristic of a well-concentrated mind having integrated the Eightfold Path.

“This is the Noble Truth of the Eightfold Path of practice that leads directly to the cessation of stress.

“Friends, it was here that the Tathagata set in motion the unexcelled Wheel Of Dhamma. This Dhamma cannot be corrupted by any brahman, deva, Mara, Brahma, or any one in the entire world. No one can corrupt the revelation, declaration, the description, the structure, the explanation, and the clear and direct teaching of Four Noble Truths.”

This is what Venerable Sariputta said. Gratified, those in attendance were delighted in Venerable Sariputta words.

End Of Sutta

SESSION 5

MAGGA-VIBHANGA SUTTA

ANALYSIS OF THE NOBLE EIGHTFOLD PATH

INTRODUCTION

In the Nagara Sutta the newly awakened Siddhartha Gotama, now a Buddha, explains the path he discovered and then taught as the path to becoming free of ignorance and become Rightly Self-Awakened:

“In this way, I saw a timeless path to be traveled by the Rightly Self-awakened Ones. And what is this timeless path traveled by the Rightly Self-awakened Ones? Just this noble eightfold path:

1. Right View
2. Right Intention
3. Right Speech
4. Right Action
5. Right Livelihood
6. Right Effort
7. Right Mindfulness
8. Right Meditation

The Eightfold Path is the Fourth Noble Truth, the truth of the path developing the cessation of confused and deluded thinking ignorant of Four Noble Truths. It is ignorance of Four Noble Truths that results in all manner of distracting, disappointing, and unsatisfactory experiences.

Timeless” refers to the timeless nature of these Four Truths. These Four Truths remain true throughout the unfolding of time. Ongoing ignorance requires a reference to linear time, a mind constantly reverberating between past experiences and future desires, distracted from what is occurring. (Thank You, Jen for this description!)

The Buddha awakened to Dependent origination which clearly states that from ignorance of Four Noble Truths all manner of confusion, deluded thinking, and ongoing suffering (Dukkha) arises. Everything the Buddha would teach for his forty-five-year teaching career was taught in the context of Dependent Origination and Four Noble Truths to develop profound insight of Three Marks Of existence. The single path the Buddha taught to overcome ignorance of Four Noble Truths is this Eightfold Path. Adapting, accommodating, embellishing, diminishing, or dismissing outright the Eightfold Path only results in a “spiritual” or “religious” practice that can only ignore an awakened human being’s teaching. This is a common, subtle, and powerful strategy of a mind rooted in ignorance of these Four Truths to continue to ignore its own ignorance.

The simple and direct path that an awakened human being established as the “Heartwood of His Dhamma” brings a calm and peaceful mind, a mind resting in equanimity, to anyone who avoids distraction and wholeheartedly engages with the path.

The title of this sutta literally means Suffering-Analysis.

MAGGA-VIBHANGA SUTTA

THE ANALYSIS OF THE EIGHTFOLD PATH

SAMYUTTA NIKAYA 45.8

I have heard that at one time the Buddha was staying in Savatthi at Jeta’s Grove, Anathapindika’s monastery.

There he addressed those assembled:

“Friends, I will now give you a detailed analysis of the Noble Eightfold Path. Listen mindfully.

“This is the Noble Eightfold Path:

1.Right View

2.Right Intention

3.Right Speech

4.Right Action

5.Right Livelihood

6.Right Effort

7.Right Mindfulness

8.Right Meditation

“And what is Right View?

- Knowledge with regard to stress
- Knowledge with regard to the origination of stress
- Knowledge with regard to the cessation of stress
- Knowledge with regard to the way of practice leading to the cessation of stress

“This, friends, is Right View.

“And what is Right Intention?

- Being mindful of the intention to recognize and abandon wrong views
- Being mindful of the intention to remain free from ill will
- Being mindful of the intention to remain harmless to all beings

“This, friends, is Right Intention

“And what is Right Speech?

- Abstaining from lying
- Abstaining from divisive speech
- Abstaining from abusive speech

- Abstaining from gossip
- Abstaining from idle chatter

“This, friends, is Right Speech.

“And what is Right Action?

- Abstaining from taking life
- Abstaining from taking what is not freely given
- Abstaining from sexual misconduct
- This, friends, is Right Action.
- And what is Right Livelihood?
- Right Livelihood abandons dishonest livelihood.
- Right Livelihood is honest Livelihood.

“This, friends, is Right Livelihood.

“And what is Right Effort?

- Right Effort is effort developing the skillful desire and ongoing persistence to avoid unskillful qualities that are not present.
- Right Effort is effort developing the skillful desire and ongoing persistence to to abandon unskillful qualities that are present
- Right Effort is effort developing the skillful desire and ongoing persistence to establish skillful qualities that are not yet present
- Right Effort is effort developing the skillful desire and ongoing persistence to end confusion and increase the full development of skillful qualities that are present

“This, friends, is Right Effort.

“And what is Right Mindfulness?

- Right Mindfulness is remaining mindful of the body free of distraction, ardent, alert, and mindful of abandoning greed and reaction to worldly events.
- Right Mindfulness is remaining mindful of feelings arising and passing away free of distraction, ardent, alert, and mindful of abandoning greed and reaction to worldly events.
- Right Mindfulness is remaining mindful of mental qualities arising and passing away free of distraction, ardent, alert, and mindful of abandoning greed and reaction to worldly events.
- Right Mindfulness is remaining mindful of the quality of mind arising and passing away free of distraction, ardent, alert, and mindful of abandoning greed and reaction to worldly events.

“This, friends, is Right Mindfulness.

“And what is Right Meditation?

- For one who has developed Right Meditation their concentration increases and they withdraw from the need for sensual stimulation
- For one who has developed Right Meditation their concentration increases and they withdraw from unskillful mental qualities
- For one who has developed Right Meditation their concentration increases and they enter and remain in the first Jhana, the first level of meditative absorption, which is

joyful engagement and pleasure in the Dhamma born from withdrawal, and accompanied by directed thought and mindful evaluation.

- For one who has developed Right Meditation their concentration increases and their directed thoughts and mindful evaluation quiets. They enter and remain in the second Jhana, the second level of meditative absorption, which is joyful engagement and pleasure born of deepening concentration free from directed thought and mindful evaluation and confident within.
- For one who has developed Right Meditation their concentration increases and their joyful engagement fades. Equanimity arises with mindfulness of pleasure in a mind united with the body. They enter the third Jhana. The wise know this as equanimous and mindful – a pleasant abiding.
- For one who has developed Right Meditation their concentration increases, their mind rests in equanimity, neither pleasure nor pain have a footing. They enter and remain in the Fourth Jhana. Their mindfulness and equanimity is pure, free of wrong views rooted in ignorance of Four Noble Truths.

“This, monks, is Right Meditation.”

This is what the Buddha declared. Those gathered were gratified and delighted at his words.

End Of Sutta

SESSION 6

SATIPATTHANA SUTTA

FOUR FOUNDATIONS OF (REFINED) MINDFULNESS

INTRODUCTION

In the Satipatthana Sutta, the Buddha teaches the Four Foundations of Mindfulness as the framework for what occurs during meditation and as a reference for mindfulness in all areas of a Dhamma practitioner's moment-by-moment life.

Four Noble Truths is the context for meditation practice. Jhana meditation is practiced for deepening concentration. It is the concentration developed during meditation that supports the refined mindfulness necessary for integration of the Eightfold Path as the framework for Dhamma Practice.

In the Satipatthana, the Buddha first teaches the Four Foundations of Mindfulness as instruction for Jhana meditation.

Much is made of the detailed account of the different breaths and bodily functions to imply that the Buddha is teaching to manufacture the experience of these differences. This contradicts the fundamental teaching to not establish a self in any event or isolated experience. What is described here is a simple dispassionate mindfulness of what is occurring.

My comments below are in italics.

THE SATIPATTHANA SUTTA

MAJJHIMA NIKAYA 120

On one occasion the Buddha was in Kammasadhamma where he addressed those assembled:

“Friends, there are four frames of reference – four foundations of mindfulness – that are required for the purification of all beings, for the overcoming of sorrow and regret, for the disappearance of pain and distress, for establishing the right method of practice, and for complete unbinding. What are these four?

1. Being mindful of the breath in the body, determined and alert and abandoning craving and aversion to what is occurring.
2. Being mindful of feelings arising from the six-sense base, determined and alert and abandoning craving and aversion to what is occurring.
3. Being mindful of thoughts arising from the six-sense base, determined and alert and abandoning craving and aversion to what is occurring.
4. Being mindful of the present quality of mind, determined and alert and abandoning craving and aversion to what is occurring.

The six-sense base is the five physical senses and conscious thought. It is through the six-sense base that self-referential contact and self-identification (attachment) with phenomena is established. Feelings in this reference is any disturbance in the mind and conscious thought is ongoing thinking that is rooted in ignorance prior to awakening.

THE BREATH IN THE BODY The First Foundation of Mindfulness

“And how does one remain mindful of the breath in the body in and of itself?

“Finding a secluded spot – the shade of a tree or an empty hut – sitting erect with legs crossed in front, placing attention on the breath.

“Remaining mindful of the breath – breathe in and breathe out. Mindful of the breath, long or short, breathe in and breathe out. Training yourself to be sensitive to the breath and calming

any bodily fabrication. Ever mindful calming the body with each in-breath and each out-breath.

“Remaining mindful of the breath in the body – mindful of the in-breath and the out-breath – the arising and passing away of phenomena with regard to the body.

“In this way one remains mindful internally and externally with regard to the body. With no self-reference, calmly noticing ‘there is a body,’ remaining independent of, and not clinging to anything in the world.

The first foundation of mindfulness is being mindful of the breath in the body. This is the initial establishment of the breath in Jhana meditation. Quietening the mind and developing concentration begins by putting aside thoughts as thoughts arise and becoming mindful of the breath.

- Concentration is the foundation that supports refined mindfulness.
- Being mindful of what is occurring in relation to The Eightfold Path is refined mindfulness.
- Being mindful of the breath in the body is the foundation of developing understanding of an ego-personality and its relation to the distraction of stress.
- Being mindful of the breath in the body interrupts outer-focused clinging conditioned thinking and begins to quiet the mind with directed inner mindfulness.
- Being mindful of the in-breath and the out-breath brings mindfulness to the arising and passing away of all phenomena. Notice that there is no specialness or applied emphasis attached to the normal breathing cycle.

What is being described here is simple and direct mindfulness of the breath.

Supported by the concentration developed in Jhana meditation, the Buddha then teaches how to apply mindfulness outside of formal meditation:

- When walking, be mindful of walking.
- When standing, be mindful of standing.
- When sitting, be mindful of sitting.
- When lying down, be mindful of lying down.
- In any function, be mindful that ‘there is a body.’
- When going about, looking this way and that, be fully mindful.
- When bending or reaching, be fully mindful.
- When carrying a bowl or a cloak, be fully mindful.
- When eating, drinking, or savoring food, be fully mindful.

- When eliminating waste, be fully mindful.
- When walking, standing, sitting, sleeping, waking, talking or silent, be fully mindful.

“In this way, one remains mindful of the breath in the body – the in-breath and the out-breath.

“In this way, one remains mindful of the breath in the body – the arising and the passing away of the body – independent of and not clinging to anything in the world.

“Just as a person with good eyesight, emptying a bag full of mixed grains, would know ‘this is wheat, this is rice, these are beans, these are sesame seeds.’ In this same way one remains mindful from the soles of the feet to the top of the head, encased in skin, there is hair, nails, teeth, tendons, bones, marrow, organs, feces, phlegm, blood, urine, sweat, fat, tears, saliva, mucous, and fluid in the joints.

“In this way, one is mindful of the four elements – the earth element, the water element, the fire element, and the wind element.

The four elements that comprise a human being are impermanent.

“Be mindful of the impermanence of the body to develop dispassion. If left unattended, a corpse decays quickly. It becomes bloated and infested. It is picked at by birds and dogs and other creatures. Eventually, nothing is left but dust.

“Be mindful that ‘this very body, too’ will die and pass away. This the nature of the world – and unavoidable fate.

“In this way, one remains mindful of the breath in the body – the in-breath and the out-breath.

“In this way, one remains mindful of the arising and the passing away of the body – independent of and not clinging to anything in the world.

“This how one remains mindful of the breath in the body.”

Without creating and specialness or over-analysis of normal bodily activities or functions, including the impermanence of the body itself, maintain mindfulness of life as life occurs.

What follows teaches a dispassionate mindfulness of feelings arising and passing away, and thoughts arising and passing away. Finally, one becomes mindful of the arising and passing away of the quality of mind.

MINDFULNESS OF FEELINGS

The Second Foundation of Mindfulness

“And how does one remain mindful of feelings in and of themselves?”

“When feeling pain be mindful that there is pain. When feeling pleasure be mindful that there is pleasure. When feeling neither pleasure nor pain (ambivalence) be mindful that there is neither pleasure nor pain.

“When feeling the pain of the body be mindful that there is pain of the body. When feeling pain not of the body (a disturbance in the mind) be mindful that there is pain not of the body.

“When feeling pleasure in the body be mindful that there is pleasure in the body. When feeling pleasure not in the body (an excitement in the mind) be mindful that there is pleasure not in the body.

“When feeling neither pleasure nor pain in the body be mindful that there is neither pleasure nor pain in the body. When feeling neither pleasure nor pain not in the body be mindful that there is neither pleasure nor pain not in the body.

“In this way, one remains mindful of feelings and the arising and the passing away of feelings – independent of and not clinging to anything in the world.

“In this way, one remains mindful internally and externally with regard to feelings. This is how one remains mindful of feelings in and of themselves.

The second foundation of mindfulness is being mindful of feelings. Mindfulness of feelings becomes possible once the mind has quieted enough to be able to hold in mind the breath in the body for a few moments.

Once a tranquil mind state has been achieved and mindfulness of the breath is maintained, notice any feelings, emotional or physical, that arise. If physical pain arises, let go of any thoughts in reference to the feeling. If an emotion such as frustration, anger, fear, resentment, joy, bliss, etcetera, simply recognize that a feeling has arisen. While maintaining mindfulness of the breath, let go of any thoughts in reference to the feeling.

You may want to begin to blame yourself or others to justify the feeling. Put these thoughts aside. You may be drawn to analyze the feeling in some other way. You may ask yourself where did the feeling come from, what circumstances took place to bring a rise to the feeling?

Put these thoughts aside. It is enough to recognize the feeling for what it is while maintaining mindfulness of your breath.

With mindfulness of your breath let go of the feeling. Let go of the judgment attached to the feeling. Judging a feeling creates clinging and develops emotion. An emotion is a reaction to an event, judging an event in some way.

Reaction caused by judgment further intensifies feeling and further conditions conditioned mind.

Notice that there is no instruction by the Buddha to create self-referential attachment by “embracing” pain or to “breathe into the pain.” This will only further personalize what is intended to be a dispassionate experience of mindfulness of what is occurring. This will only continue clinging self-referential views.

Notice that this is not instruction to perform an elaborate body scan. This is a subtle way of encouraging further distraction through self-identification with the body. The Buddha’s instruction develops a dispassionate awareness of ‘remaining mindful of feelings and the arising and the passing away of feelings – independent of and not clinging to anything in the world’ including impermanent phenomena arising and passing away within the body.

Notice that it is often a reaction to an external event that was perceived through one or more of the six senses that initiated the feeling. It is at the point of contact with the external experience that a personal, self-referential, attachment is made.

Mindfulness of this process develops useful insight into impermanence.

Mindfulness of this process brings understanding of the subtle but pervasive and continual establishment of a self that is prone to confusion and suffering. This is the ongoing process of “I-making” also known as conceit.

Recognition of the initiation of I-making develops the ability to bring continued I-making to cessation.

Mindfulness is a dispassionate focused awareness on whatever is arising in the present moment without being distracted by judgments or discriminating thoughts. Being mindful of feelings as feelings arise allows the feeling to dissipate and allows a tranquil mind to deepen.

If a physical sensation arises such as pain or discomfort in some area of your body, remain mindful of the sensation of breathing. Note the physical sensation and the immediate self-identification and return your mindfulness to your breath. Again, do not judge the physical

sensation in any way. Do not wish that you are not having the experience of discomfort or agitation. Simply note the experience while maintaining mindfulness of your breath.

Being mindful of physical sensations without further judgment often will minimize the sensation. Returning mindfulness to the breath interrupts reaction to physical and emotional feelings.

This is the second foundation of mindfulness: being mindful that through contact with the five physical senses and consciousness, feelings arise. Being mindful of feelings, being ardent and aware of feelings as feelings arise, begins to de-condition conditioned mind by interrupting the discursive and self-perpetuating judgment and analysis of feelings.

Simply and dispassionately be mindful of feelings as feelings arise while maintaining mindfulness of the breath.

MINDFULNESS OF THOUGHTS

The Third Foundation of Mindfulness

“And how does one remain mindful of thoughts in and of themselves?”

“When thoughts are passionate be mindful that thoughts are passionate. When thoughts are dispassionate be mindful that thoughts are dispassionate.

“When there are thoughts of aversion be mindful that there are thoughts of aversion. When thoughts are free of aversion be mindful that thoughts are free of aversion.

“When thoughts are deluded be mindful that thoughts are deluded. When thoughts are free of delusion be mindful that thoughts are free of delusion.

How does one know delusion? Thoughts and actions that contradict the Eightfold Path are deluded.

“When the mind is constricted be mindful that the mind is constricted. When thoughts are scattered be mindful that thoughts are scattered. When the mind is spacious be mindful that the mind is spacious.

“When thoughts are common be mindful that thoughts are common. When thoughts are unsurpassed be mindful that thoughts are unsurpassed.

“When the mind is not concentrated be mindful that the mind is not concentrated. When the mind is concentrated be mindful that the mind is concentrated.

“When the mind is not released be mindful that the mind is not released. When the mind is released be mindful that the mind is released.

“In this way one remains mindful internally and externally with regard to thoughts.

The third foundation of mindfulness is being mindful of the thinking process. With dispassionate mindfulness notice how thoughts cling to impermanent qualities of mind. Notice if the present quality of mind is agitated or peaceful. Notice if the present quality mind is constricted or spacious. Dispassionately notice thoughts attached to the quality of mind, often driven by feelings. This begins to develop insight into how thoughts have created confusion and suffering. With insight you can begin to incline your mind towards release from clinging conditioned mind.

Remember that Jhana meditation is primarily used to develop unwavering concentration. This entire process of noting feelings and thoughts is done with dispassionate mindfulness. Feelings arise that take your attention. Note that a feeling has your attention and return your mindfulness to your breathing. When you find that you are distracted by discriminating thoughts related to the changing quality of your mind simply note the quality of your mind and return your mindfulness to your breath.

The sequence of this sutta is not meant to imply a fixed sequence. In meditation one becomes mindful of the breath. As the mind calms one may become mindful of feelings followed by thoughts driven by feelings or awareness of thoughts may initiate a reaction – a feeling.

Mindfulness during meditation is holding in mind the breath while feelings and thoughts arise and pass away. Being mindful that thoughts are flowing develops your innate ability to control thoughts. Being mindful of thoughts is recognizing that thinking is taking place. Unless concentration is developed, thoughts will “feed” themselves from conditioned thought patterns. This is discursive thinking and is an aspect of clinging mind.

Through refined mindfulness it becomes clear that thoughts are an ongoing evaluation or judgment of feelings and mental states. Much mental energy and distraction is spent on recollecting harsh or extreme judgments. This is a form of unskillful or unrefined mindfulness. This type of unrefined mindfulness can be debilitating. If left unchecked, this can lead to ever intensifying emotions that can result in depression and anxiety, or other mental diseases.

Dispassionately remaining ardent and aware of thinking while maintaining mindfulness of the breath in the body will interrupt discursive thinking. This allows the mind to quiet and for concentration to develop. As mindfulness and concentration develops, the afflictions caused by discursive thinking subside and a mind of equanimity, a non-reactive mind, is maintained.

THE PRESENT QUALITY OF MIND

Being at peace with less than peaceful mind-states: The Fourth Foundation of Mindfulness

“And how does one remain mindful of the present quality of mind in and of itself? One remains focused on the mind internally or externally on the mind itself. One remains focused on the origination of the mind and the arising and the passing away of with regard to the mind itself. One knows ‘there is a mind.’ They remain independent of and not clinging to anything in the world. This how one remains mindful of thoughts in and of themselves.”

The fourth foundation of mindfulness is being mindful of the present (but impermanent) quality of your mind. Is your present quality of mind inclined towards craving, clinging, and the continuation of stress? Is your present quality of mind inclined towards developing wisdom and release from craving and clinging?

Knowing that ‘there is a mind’ is mindfulness of the process resulting in the present quality of mind and that one has control over the present quality of mind.

During meditation ‘remaining mindful of the present quality of mind’ is dispassionate awareness of the process of feelings and thoughts affecting the present quality of mind and noticing the impermanent quality of all mind states – the arising and passing away of qualities of mind.

During meditation ‘remaining mindful of the present quality of mind’ is dispassionate awareness of the process of feelings and thoughts affecting the present quality of mind while being mindful of the impermanent nature of all mind states. Concentration supports mindfulness and insight of the arising and passing away of qualities of mind. This develops the singular quality of samadhi, non-distraction – remaining at peace with less than peaceful mind-states. This is the quality of a well-concentrated mind during meditation and otherwise.

All mind-states are impermanent. Be at peace with less than peaceful mind-states.

The conclusion of the Satipatthana Sutta expands the Four Foundations of mindfulness from formal Jhana meditation to apply these 'Four Frames of Reference' first to the Five Hindrances which often arise during meditation.

If one or all of the hindrances arise, simply remain mindful of the particular disturbance and return mindfulness to the breath. When the Hindrances arise outside of meditation a well-concentrated mind will not be further distracted by the particular hindrance but will dispassionately notice the arising and passing away of the hindrance.

Applying the Four Foundations of Mindfulness in reference to the Hindrances, or the Aggregates, or the Six-Sense Base, or the Seven Factors of Awakening, or The Four Noble Truths, should not be taken as direction on what to contemplate during meditation. Rather, it is important to remain mindful of the purpose of meditation is to deepen samadhi – non-distraction.

Notice that the last four themes – the Aggregates, the Six-Sense Base, the Seven Factors of Awakening, and The Four Noble Truths – are preceded by the word 'furthermore' to show that these are themes to be considered outside of formal meditation but supported by the concentration supporting the refined mindfulness developed during meditation.

During meditation, remain mindful when thoughts are directed towards these themes and return mindfulness to the breath.

In this way, these important themes become integrated into the overall process of Becoming Buddha without becoming a distraction during formal Jhana meditation. This avoids the possibility of getting caught in a feedback loop during meditation and directly contributes to the useful and skillful insight that will arise outside of meditation within the framework and guidance of the Eightfold Path.

MINDFULNESS OF THE FIVE HINDRANCES

Notice the guarantors offered by the Buddha. When one completely abandons a hindrance it will not arise again. Completely abandoning the hindrances is a reasonable goal and skillful reference to progress.

“Remain mindful of the quality of mind in reference to the five hindrances. When sensual desire is present be mindful that sensual desire is present. When sensual desire is not present be mindful that sensual desire is not present. Be mindful of abandoning sensual

desire when it arises. Be mindful that when sensual desire has been (completely) abandoned, sensual desire will not arise in the future.

“When ill-will is present be mindful that ill-will is present. When ill-will is not present be mindful that ill-will is not present. Be mindful of abandoning ill-will when it arises. Be mindful that when ill-will has been (completely) abandoned, ill-will will not arise in the future.

“When laziness and drowsiness is present be mindful that laziness and drowsiness is present. When laziness and drowsiness is not present be mindful that laziness and drowsiness is not present. Be mindful of abandoning laziness and drowsiness when it arises. Be mindful that when laziness and drowsiness has been (completely) abandoned, laziness and drowsiness will not arise in the future.

“When restlessness and anxiety is present be mindful that restlessness and anxiety is present. When restlessness and anxiety is not present be mindful that restlessness and anxiety is not present. Be mindful of abandoning restlessness and anxiety when it arises. Be mindful that when restlessness and anxiety has been (completely) abandoned, restlessness and anxiety will not arise in the future.

“When doubt and uncertainty is present be mindful that doubt and uncertainty is present. When doubt and uncertainty is not present be mindful that doubt and uncertainty is not present. Be mindful of abandoning doubt and uncertainty when it arises. Be mindful that when doubt and uncertainty has been (completely) abandoned, doubt and uncertainty will not arise in the future.

“In this way, one remains mindful of the quality of mind and the arising and the passing away of the qualities of mind – independent of and not clinging to anything in the world. This is how one remains mindful of the quality of mind in and of itself.

This is a broader type of mindfulness that notices the quality of your mind that has developed from defining yourself through self-referential experiences driven by feelings and conditioned thinking. Notice when your mind seeks further sensual stimulation. Notice when your mind is distracted by ill-will. Notice when your mind is dull or restless or anxious or distracted by uncertainty. Return mindfulness to the breath. This is developing mindfulness of The Five Hindrances. Mindfulness of Hindrances directed by the Right Intention to abandon Hindrances brings release.

MINDFULNESS OF THE FIVE CLINGING-AGGREGATES

“Furthermore, one remains mindful of the quality of the mind in reference to The Five Clinging-Aggregates.

- Remain mindful of form and the arising and passing away of form.
- Remain mindful of feelings and the arising and passing away of feelings.
- Remain mindful of perceptions and the arising and the passing away of perceptions.
 - Remain mindful of fabrications and the arising and passing away of fabrications.
- Remain mindful of consciousness and the arising and passing away of consciousness.

“In this way, one remains mindful of The Five Clinging-Aggregates and the arising and the passing away of The Five Clinging-Aggregates – independent of and not clinging to anything in the world. This is how one remains mindful of The Five Clinging-Aggregates in and of themselves.

The Buddha is teaching here to be mindful of self-identification to the Five Clinging-Aggregates. He is teaching to be mindful of the impermanence of each of these aggregates – the arising and passing away of each aggregate.

This relates to Dependent Origination and supports insight into the process rooted in ignorance that confusion, deluded thinking, and ongoing disappointment is dependent on. Outside of formal meditation, a well-concentrated mind will become increasingly less self-identified to these impermanent aggregates and become increasingly awakened.

MINDFULNESS OF THE SIX-SENSE BASE

“Furthermore, one remains mindful of the quality of the mind in reference to the six-sense base.

“Remain mindful of the eye-form and the clinging that arises from the eye-form. Be mindful of the arising of clinging to the eye-form. Be mindful that when clinging to the eye-form is (completely) abandoned, clinging to the eye-form will not arise in the future.

“Remain mindful of the ear-form and the clinging that arises from the ear-form. Be mindful of the arising of clinging to the ear-form. Be mindful that when clinging to the ear-form is (completely) abandoned, clinging to the ear-form will not arise in the future.

“Remain mindful of the nose-form and the clinging that arises from the nose-form. Be mindful of the arising of clinging to the nose-form. Be mindful that when clinging to the nose-form is (completely) abandoned, clinging to the nose-form will not arise in the future.

“Remain mindful of the tongue-form and the clinging that arises from the tongue-form. Be mindful of the arising of clinging to the tongue-form. Be mindful that when clinging to the tongue-form is (completely) abandoned, clinging to the tongue-form will not arise in the future.

“Remain mindful of the body-form (touch sense) and the clinging that arises from the body-form. Be mindful of the arising of clinging to the body-form. Be mindful that when clinging to the body-form is (completely) abandoned, clinging to the body-form will not arise in the future.

“In this way, one remains mindful of six-sense base and the arising and the passing away of six-sense base – independent of and not clinging to anything in the world. This is how one remains mindful of six-sense base in and of themselves.

Mindfulness of the various sense-based-consciousness brings a profound understanding of creating self-referential views through sense contact and also directly relates to Dependent origination.

Avoid being distracted by the six-sense base and ‘remain mindful of six-sense base and the arising and the passing away of six-sense base – independent of and not clinging to anything in the world.’ This includes becoming analytical of what should be dispassionate mindfulness of the six-sense base.

MINDFULNESS OF THE SEVEN FACTORS OF AWAKENING

“Furthermore, one remains mindful of the quality of the mind in reference to the Seven Factors of Awakening.

“Remain mindful that ‘mindfulness is a factor of awakening within me.’ If mindfulness as a factor of awakening is not present, be mindful that ‘mindfulness as a factor of awakening is not present within me’ and be mindful of how mindfulness as a factor of awakening will arise. (through appropriate mindfulness)

“Remain mindful of the culmination of the development of mindfulness as a factor of awakening.

“Remain mindful that investigation of the Dhamma is a factor of awakening. If investigation of the Dhamma as a factor of awakening is not present, be mindful that investigation of the Dhamma is not present and be mindful of how investigation of the Dhamma as a factor of awakening will arise. (through appropriate mindfulness)

“Remain mindful of the culmination of the development of investigation of the Dhamma as a factor of awakening.

“Remain mindful that persistence is a factor of awakening. If persistence as a factor of awakening is not present, be mindful that persistence is not present and be mindful of how persistence as a factor of awakening will arise. (through appropriate mindfulness)

“Remain mindful of the culmination of the development of persistence as a factor of awakening.

“Remain mindful that joyful engagement with the Dhamma is a factor of awakening. If joyful engagement with the Dhamma as a factor of awakening is not present, be mindful that joyful engagement with the Dhamma is not present and be mindful of how joyful engagement with the Dhamma as a factor of awakening will arise. (through appropriate mindfulness)

“Remain mindful of the culmination of the development of joyful engagement with the Dhamma as a factor of awakening.

“Remain mindful that serenity is a factor of awakening. If serenity as a factor of awakening is not present, be mindful that serenity is not present and be mindful of how serenity as a factor of awakening will arise. (through appropriate mindfulness)

“Remain mindful of the culmination of the development of serenity as a factor of awakening.

“Remain mindful that concentration is a factor of awakening. If concentration as a factor of awakening is not present, be mindful that concentration is not present and be mindful of how concentration as a factor of awakening will arise. (through appropriate mindfulness)

“Remain mindful of the culmination of the development of concentration as a factor of awakening.

“Remain mindful that equanimity is a factor of awakening. If equanimity as a factor of awakening is not present, be mindful that equanimity is not present and be mindful of how equanimity as a factor of awakening will arise. (through appropriate mindfulness)

“Remain mindful of the culmination of the development of equanimity as a factor of awakening.

“In this way one remains mindful of the Seven Factors of Awakening and the arising and the passing away of the Seven Factors of Awakening – independent of and not clinging to anything in the world. This is how one remains mindful of the Seven Factors of Awakening in and of themselves.

Remaining mindful of The Seven Factors of Awakening is mindful acknowledgment of developing the Eightfold Path correctly. Mindfulness of The Seven Factors of Awakening may occur during meditation but should not necessarily be cultivated during meditation. The concentration developed during meditation will provide the spaciousness and focus to notice these seven factors and serve as continued direction.

MINDFULNESS OF THE FOUR NOBLE TRUTHS

“Furthermore, one remains mindful of the quality of the mind in reference to The Four Noble Truths.

“Remain mindful of knowing that ‘This is stress, this is the origination of stress, this is the cessation of stress, and this is the Eightfold Path leading to the cessation of stress.’

“In this way one remains mindful of the quality of mind in and of itself internally and externally. One remains mindful of the phenomenon of the origination of qualities of mind and their arising and passing away. There is the knowledge of the maintenance of qualities of mind and their recollection – independent of and not clinging to anything in the world. This is how one remains mindful of the Four Noble Truths in and of themselves.

Here the Buddha is bringing together the Four Foundations of Mindfulness applied during meditation and remaining mindful of each factor of the Eightfold Path in Becoming Buddha. Emphasis is on the importance of remaining mindful of the impermanent nature of all phenomena clinging to qualities of mind – the arising and passing away of all self-referential thoughts and attached fabrications.

Notice how this last also relates directly to the Buddha’s description of his awakening in the Nagara Sutta: ‘I came to direct knowledge of fabrications, direct knowledge of the origination of fabrications, direct knowledge of the cessation of fabrications, direct knowledge of the

Eightfold Path leading to the cessation of fabrications.'

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE FOUR FOUNDATIONS OF MINDFULNESS

“Now, if anyone develops these Four Foundations of Mindfulness in this manner for seven years one could expect either complete understanding here and now or, if there is any clinging and maintaining remaining, in this present life.

“Let alone seven years, if anyone (perfectly) develops these Four Foundations of Mindfulness in this manner for six, or five, or four, or three, or two, or one year, for six months, or three months, for one month, for two weeks, for seven days, one could expect either complete understanding here and now or, if there is any clinging and maintaining remaining, in this present life.

“Friends, this is the direct path for the purification of all beings, for the cessation of sorrow and regret, for the disappearance of pain and distress, for establishing the right method of practice, and for complete unbinding – in other words, these Four Foundations of Mindfulness.

Perhaps the most important reference in all the Buddha's Dhamma is contained here. The opportunity to Become Buddha in this present life is often misunderstood in even the more traditional Buddhist schools, and directly contradicted in the modern Buddhist lineages. Most modern Buddhist schools claim it will take “endless lifetimes” to develop awakening.

Here the Buddha is stating clearly that through wholehearted engagement with the Eightfold Path anyone can Become Buddha in this present life. Whether seven days or seven years, through a well-concentrated mind and wholehearted mindful engagement with the Eightfold Path, Becoming Buddha is assured.

This is what was said by the Buddha. Hearing these words those assembled were gratified and delighted.

End of Sutta

SESSION 7

JHANA SUTTA

MEDITATIVE ABSORPTION

MIND AND BODY UNITED

INTRODUCTION

As with all of the Buddha's teachings, Jhana Meditation must be seen within the over-arching context of Dependent Origination and Four Noble Truths to be useful and practically applicable.

The Buddha "awakened" to the profound understanding that it is ignorance of Four Noble Truths that is the requisite condition for fabrications. Fabrications are the glue that binds confused thinking to ignorance, obscures reality, and establishes stress, disappointment, and suffering – Dukkha – as the common human experience.

Jhana means meditative absorption. The Buddha teaches, in a general way, four levels of meditative absorption, or deepening concentration. As can be seen here, these four levels are not in a practical sense strictly defined. A mediator gently flows from the first to the fourth Jhana as a direct development of Jhana meditation as the Buddha teaches meditation. The four levels of meditative absorption can and should be mindfully observed as concentration increases.

The four levels of Jhana are impermanent and are taught by the Buddha to provide a skillful means to notice ever-increasing levels of meditative absorption.

Jhana practice is not to be seen as anything extraordinary or the levels of Jhana unattainable. Jhana meditation is extraordinary in developing concentration and entirely ordinary to those actually developing the Buddha's Dhamma.

Jhana meditation is not another opportunity for fabricating experience through continued confusion or continued desire encouraged by misguided instruction.

Free of grasping after, these four levels of meditative absorption are clear direction to recognize that Jhana meditation is actually developing concentration while avoiding creating further distraction due to fabricated methods. This aspect of Right View then remains free of conceit – I-making – that would otherwise create confusion, contradiction, frustration, and distraction within Jhana meditation practice.

The sequencing of the additional descriptions of non-physical meditative experience that follows the descriptions of four levels of Jhana should not be seen as “advanced” levels of meditation as is commonly presented, and certainly not as levels of meditative achievement. These fabricated non-physical meditation experiences often mischaracterized as advanced levels of meditation were part of the doctrines of Siddhartha Gotama's early teachers Alara Kalama and Uddaka Ramaputta.

Having mastered these fabricated common meditation techniques, he immediately dismissed them as they “do not lead to disenchantment, to dispassion, to cessation, to stilling, to direct knowledge, to self-awakening, or to unbinding. This (method) only seeks to establish a (fabricated) reappearance in the dimension of nothingness” (or in the dimensions of neither perception nor non-perception, or infinite space, or infinite consciousness, or any other fabricated non-physical self-reference.)

When seen in the proper context, any attempt to establish a “self” in speculative non-physical realms including imaginary realms of “emptiness” or “nothingness” or a “non-dual existence,” is abandoned as these methods are seen as misguided strategies to continue to ignore ignorance of Four Noble Truths.

Confusing a concentration practice with a practice that teaches meditative achievement as self-establishment in non-physical imaginary realms can only continue ignorance of Four Noble Truths and continued I-making. These modern “meditation” practices completely contradict the Buddha's Dhamma and the stated purpose of his Dhamma.

The realization that it is a lack of concentration that results in grasping and clinging mind is insight Siddhartha developed prior to his awakening. As such, he could have taught to simply avoid any fabricated non-physical self-reference. One of the break-throughs of understanding

Siddhartha had a skillful insight into the powerful but very subtle strategies that a mind rooted in ignorance will develop and cling to in order to continue ignorance. As common during the Buddha's time as ours, "dharmas" that encourage meditation practices that teach subtle but convenient methods for ignoring ignorance are common, unskillful, and cruel.

With profound wisdom, the Buddha realized the attraction of continuing self-establishment in fabricated non-physical realms. He understood that the most effective method of understanding the foolishness of these doctrines that encouraged continued I-making would be to explain these common experiences in the context of Jhana meditation. In this way, Jhana meditation de-mystifies these non-physical fabrications. When seen in the proper context as ordinary fabrications these wrong views are simply recognized and abandoned.

The Buddha typically told his followers to "Go find the root of a tree or an empty hut and do Jhana." This is instruction on establishing seclusion as the proper environment for a meditation practice with the purpose of developing ever-deepening levels of meditative absorption.

Jhana meditation is the only meditation method the Buddha taught. Jhana meditation is established in the Satipatthana Sutta, the primary sutta on Four Foundations Of Mindfulness, and the suttas here on Jhana (and many others).

It is the initial section of the Satipatthana Sutta that is instruction for increasing concentration and calming the mind by becoming mindful of the breath in the body. This is the First Foundation of Mindfulness that begins the process of Jhana – of developing concentration. The second and third foundations of mindfulness continue the establishment of concentration by ending distractions arising from reacting to, or clinging to feelings and thoughts as they arise and pass away, always returning mindfulness to the breath.

The instruction found in the Satipatthana Sutta relates directly to the four levels of Jhana. In this way, using meditation for continuing to grasp after any fabricated self-establishment is clearly recognized and gently abandoned. By avoiding the distraction that would arise by reacting to feelings and thoughts, or seeking imaginary self-establishment in non-physical realms, the joy of seclusion and deepening concentration is established and recognized.

As concentration increases, directed thought and evaluation is abandoned and a pleasant abiding is established. This relates to the fourth foundation of mindfulness – being at peace with the present quality of mind. This quality of mind is known as equanimity and gradually increases as Jhana meditation continues within the framework and guidance of the Eightfold Path. (See below for an explanation of Directed Thought and Evaluation)

The remaining sections of the Satipatthana Sutta then show how to apply ever-deepening levels of meditative absorption to other significant themes of the Dhamma. The entire Satipatthana Sutta is not meant as meditation instruction which becomes obvious when seen in the proper context of the Buddha's Dhamma as detailed here.

The Buddha's Dhamma reunites the mind and body and overcomes the self-identification seeking to establish a "self" in fabricated magical, mystical, and imaginary planes of physical non-existence.

(I use the term physical non-existence as it accurately depicts the grasping present in ascetic practices that hope to free the mind from the body using extreme self-denial. These were practices Siddhartha Gotama mastered and abandoned as 'painful distracting, ignoble, and not leading to knowledge, wisdom, or release.')

Often modern meditation practices such as generalized "insight" or "mindfulness" meditation are taught as merely noticing thoughts and feelings calling "noticing" in this manner "mindfulness." Intentionally "noticing" is holding in mind internal phenomena during meditation. This is a subtle but powerful reinforcement of distracting phenomena and the most common strategy used in modern meditation practices. These forms of "meditation" will distract a confused mind further and continue to ignore ignorance of Four Noble Truths. Impermanent and ever-changing phenomena now becomes the sole focus of "Insight" or "Mindfulness" while avoiding the singular purpose of meditation – to increase concentration.

When seen in the over-arching context of the Buddha's Dhamma and in the context of engaging in Jhana meditation solely for deepening concentration, grasping after self-establishment in imaginary and fabricated mind-states is seen clearly as intentional distraction used to continue to ignore ignorance of Four Noble Truths.

As concentration increases refined mindfulness is established supporting the integration of the Eightfold Path developing a profound understanding of Three Marks Of existence.

Rapture is a word often used in the Dhamma to describe a profoundly joyful engagement with the Dhamma.

Directed Thought is mindfully directing thoughts away from internal idle chatter and to the breath-in-the-body. This relates directly to the Buddha's instruction for Right Meditation found in the beginning section of the Satipatthana Sutta

Evaluation follows directed thought and provides the skillful method of noticing when distracted by thoughts and feelings and then intentionally directing mindfulness back to the

breath-in-the-body. Evaluation is dispassionate and avoids criticism of self or method during Jhana practice.

Samsara is the continued state of ignorance prone to confused, deluded thinking, and ongoing disappointment.

My comments within the sutta below are in italics.

JHĀNA SUTTA – MEDITATIVE ABSORPTION – MIND AND BODY UNITED

ANGUTTARA NIKAYA 9:36

On one occasion the Buddha addressed those gathered:

“I tell you, friends that the ending of the defilements of greed, aversion, and deluded thinking (*rooted in ignorance of Four Noble Truths*) depends on fully developing the four levels of Jhana and overcoming the desire for establishment in the dimension of the infinitude of space, the dimension of infinitude of consciousness, the dimension of nothingness, or the dimension of perception nor non-perception.

“Friends, the ending of the defilements depends on the First Jhana: Secluded from sensuality and other unskillful mental qualities one enters and remains in the First Jhana. This First Jhana is experienced as rapture born of that very seclusion. It is accompanied by directed thought and evaluation.

This first Jhana is simply the initial pleasant calming that occurs from taking refuge in seclusion and becoming mindful of the breath in the body.

“Furthermore, the ending of the defilements depends on the Second Jhana which is the stilling of directed thought and evaluation. This Second Jhana is experienced as rapture and pleasure born of concentration. Free of directed thought and evaluation, the joy of concentration permeates their entire mind and body.

This second Jhana is a deepening awareness of the mind calming in the body as a point of concentration. For some just beginning Jhana meditation, this can be difficult. Many popular “meditation” methods have developed from the desire to avoid uniting one’s mind in their body. Common “meditation” practices such as analytical contemplation, deity or other intricate

visualizations, over-emphasis on and manipulation of the breath, incorporating physical movements such as repetitive bowing or exaggerated postures, chanting, or substituting sensory stimuli such as using incense or music, and seeking to establish the self in imaginary non-physical realms are all common “meditation” strategies that can only continue distraction and continue ignorance of Four Noble Truths.

“Furthermore, the ending of the defilements depends on the Third Jhana which is the fading of rapture. They remain equanimous, mindful, alert, sensitive to pleasure. With the fading of rapture, this pleasant abiding permeates their entire mind and body.

This third Jhana is characterized by the stilling of directed thought and evaluation and now able to experience the subtle pleasure of a mind calmly united with the body. This is a pleasant abiding free of comparison to what is no longer present.

“Furthermore, the ending of the defilements depends on the Fourth Jhana which is the abandoning of evaluation. They enter and remain in the Fourth Jhana which is pure equanimity and mindful. Being pure, neither pleasure nor pain is seen. They sit permeated in mind and body with pure, bright awareness. The Fourth Jhana which is a pleasant abiding.

This fourth Jhana is simply a deepening level of concentration and resulting pleasant abiding that remains at peace no matter what arises. This pleasant abiding is the defining characteristic of a well-concentrated mind having integrated the Eightfold Path.

“This follower of the Noble Eightfold Path understands that any phenomena connected to Five Clinging-Aggregates – form, feelings, perceptions, fabrications, consciousness – is impermanent, stressful, a disease, painful, an affliction, and, as such, anatta – not-self.

“This follower of the Noble Eightfold Path disregards those phenomena and inclines their mind to the cessation of ignorance – nothing remains to provoke the birth of suffering.

A well-concentrated mind no longer has (self-referential) thoughts and views objectified and focused on outside the body on people, events, or fabricated ideas.

“This follower of the Noble Eightfold Path, from fully developing the four levels of Jhana, knows an exquisite peace. Fabrications ended, grasping too. Dispassion and unbinding established.

“It is as if an archer or their apprentice were to practice on a particular target. With continued practice they would be able to shoot quickly for long distances, piercing many targets.

“In the same manner, they reach the cessation of the defilements. If not then, through continued joyful Right Effort and cessation of the five lower fetters of:

- Self-identification
- Grasping at rituals and practices
- Doubt and uncertainty
- Sensual craving
- Deluded thinking

“They are released, unbound. (*Unbound from wrong views ignorant of Four Noble Truths*)

“I tell you, friends that the ending of the defilements of greed, aversion, and deluded thinking depends on fully developing the four levels of Jhana and overcoming the desire for establishment in the dimension of the infinitude of space, the dimension of infinitude of consciousness, the dimension of nothingness, or the dimension of perception nor non-perception.

“This follower of the Noble Eightfold Path having abandoned self-identification with form, having abandoned aversion, having abandoned self-reference now here and now there, they enter and remain in the perception of the infinitude of space. Even here they understand that any phenomena connected to Five Clinging-Aggregates – form, feelings, perceptions, fabrications, consciousness – is impermanent, stressful, a disease, painful, an affliction, and, as such, anatta – not-self. They disregard these phenomena and incline their mind to the cessation of ignorance – nothing remains to provoke the birth of suffering.

The Buddha here is reminding those in the original sangha, and now modern Dhamma practitioners, to avoid the pain of continued ignorance and cease attempting to establish a self in imaginary non-physical realms and return mindfulness to the breath united with the body. If looked at closely and with Right View, aspiring to non-physical realms is clearly an attempt at compulsively maintaining that which the Buddha teaches is prone to greed, aversion, and ongoing delusion: the Five Clinging-Aggregates.

The magical, mystical, and imaginary non-physical realms mentioned here refer to the unskillful attempt to establish a permanent “self” in any realm whether past, present or future. These were common themes during the Buddha’s time and continue today in much of modern Buddhism. This also includes the common focus of modern meditation to uncover or realize a hidden or suppressed “inner Buddha-nature.”

The purpose of concentration is to unite the mind and the body moment-by-moment free of any self-referential views.

“This follower of the Noble Eightfold Path, from fully developing the four levels of Jhana, knows an exquisite peace. Fabrications ended, grasping too. Dispassion and unbinding established.

“Friends, the cessation of the defilements depends on recognizing and abandoning the Five Clinging-Aggregates, the Five Fetters, overcoming the desire for establishment in the dimension of the infinitude of space, the dimension of the infinitude of consciousness, the dimension of nothingness, or the dimension of perception nor non-perception.

“Thus, this is a profound understanding – unsurpassed and overcoming the Five Clinging-Aggregates.

“Those followers of the Noble Eightfold Path who have attained this understanding and emerged from dependence on ignorance, skillful meditators all, will rightly explain this to others.”

End of Sutta

SESSION 8

ABAYA SUTTA

RIGHT SPEECH AND SKILLFUL COMPASSION

INTRODUCTION

Much of the confusion and contradictions prevalent in modern Buddhism is rooted in ignorance of what the Buddha actually taught. For a complete understanding of what the Buddha actually taught, please read "Foundations Of The Buddha's Dhamma" on my [Home Page](#). This will provide the over-arching context necessary for understanding this sutta as intended and taught by the Buddha.

The Abhaya Raja-Kumara Sutta teaches the importance of responding to questions from a well-concentrated mind supporting the refined mindfulness that frames experience through the Eightfold Path, including Right Speech. Framed by the Eightfold Path, Right Speech will always support speech that ultimately leads to an understanding of Four Noble Truths and liberation from the greed, aversion, and deluded thinking that follows ignorance of these Four Truths.

Right Speech is:

- Abstaining from lying
- Abstaining from divisive speech
- Abstaining from abusive speech
- Abstaining from gossip

- Abstaining from idle chatter

Right Speech is always compassionate speech as it is speech informed by the wisdom of Four Noble Truths developed through the Eightfold Path.

Noble Silence is not forced silence. Noble Silence follows wise restraint and is then active engagement with the Dhamma at the point of contact.

My comments below are in italics.

ABHAYA SUTTA

RIGHT SPEECH AND SKILLFUL COMPASSION

MAJJHIMA NIKAYA 58

On one occasion the Buddha was staying at the Squirrel's Sanctuary in the Bamboo Forest near Rajagaha.

A local prince, Prince Abhaya, went to the Jain, Nigantha Nataputa.

The Jain religion was a popular religious sect during the Buddha's lifetime and is still practiced today.

The Prince approached Nigantha Nataputa, bowed, and sat to one side.

Nigantha Nataputa said to Prince Abhaya "If you would refute the teachings of the 'mighty and powerful' Gotama the contemplative, an admirable reputation of you will spread far."

"Venerable sir, how will I refute the teachings of the 'mighty and powerful' Gotama?"

"Come now, prince! Gotama the contemplative is at the Squirrel's Sanctuary in the Bamboo Forest near Rajagaha. When you see him ask him this: 'Would you say words that are not endearing or are disagreeable to others.' If he answers that he would say words that are not endearing or are disagreeable to others than you say to him 'then how is there any difference between you and ordinary, run-of-the-mill people?'

"However, prince, if Gotama the contemplative answers that he would not say words that are not endearing or disagreeable to others than you say to him 'then why did you say that

Devadatta is headed for deprivation, a living hell, beyond redemption. Devadatta was upset at these words.

“When you ask Gotama the contemplative this two-pronged question he won’t be able to swallow it or spit it out. It will be as if he swallowed a two-horned chestnut that became stuck in his throat.”

Prince Abhaya responds “As you say, lord.” He left Nigantha Nataputa with respect and went to the Buddha. On arrival, he bowed and sat to one side.

As the prince was sitting with the Buddha he thought ‘This is not the time or place to confront Gotama the contemplative. I will invite him to my house and refute his words there.’

“Great teacher, would you join me with three of your sangha members for tomorrow’s meal?”

The Buddha accepted the offer by his silence. The prince left with a show of respect.

The next day the Buddha adjusted his inner robe and took his alms bowl and outer robe and left for Prince Abhaya’s home. Upon arrival, he sat on a seat prepared for him.

Prince Abhaya served the Buddha and his friends a lavish meal. The Buddha finished his meal and removed his hand from his bowl.

The prince then sat on a lower seat to one side of the Buddha and addressed the Buddha “Would you say words that are not endearing or are disagreeable?”

The Buddha responds “There is no categorical yes or no answer to your questions.”

Categorical refers to an absolute definitive answer. As the Buddha teaches here, whether words can be taken as endearing or agreeable does not define a skillful answer framed by the understanding developed through the Eightfold Path.

“Well, Gotama, you have just refuted the Niganthas.

“Just yesterday Nigantha Nataputa told me to find you and ask if you would use words that are not endearing or are disagreeable. He said you would choke on the answer as if you had swallowed a two-horned chestnut.”

At that time a baby was lying on the prince’s lap. The Buddha asked prince Abhaya “If this baby was neglected and swallowed a piece of gravel what would you do?”

“I would remove it. If I could not remove it easily I would hold his head with one hand and reach into the baby’s throat to remove the stone. This may hurt the baby but would save its life. I would do this out of sympathy for the baby.”

“In the same way, out of sympathy for others, words that I know to be false, unendearing, disagreeable, or not helpful in developing the Dhamma, I do not say them. *(Noble Silence)*

An uncontrolled mind lacking the framework of the Eightfold Path will constantly be craving for self-establishment. Wrong or hurtful speech will often follow. Remaining mindful of Right Speech provides the framework for wise restraint.

“In the same way, out of sympathy for others, words that I know to be true but likewise unendearing, disagreeable, or not helpful in developing the Dhamma, I do not say them. *(Right Speech informing Noble Silence)*

“In the same way, out of sympathy for others, words that I know to be true, unendearing, disagreeable, but helpful to developing the Dhamma, with a sense of the proper time, I do say them. *(Right Speech)*

Developing the wisdom and understanding to know that words that may be uncomfortable to hear but are true and supportive of the Dhamma also brings the clarity of mind and gentle courage to maintain Right Speech and teach a simple and direct Dhamma.

“In the same way, out of sympathy for others, words that I know to be false, not helpful in developing the Dhamma, but are endearing and agreeable, I do not say them. *(Right Speech informing Noble Silence)*

The Buddha’s entire teaching career is an example of the cruelty of teaching false and misleading “Dharmas” simply to “be positive” or to not upset those whose minds insist on continuing ignorance of Four Noble Truths.

“In the same way, out of sympathy for others, words that I know to be true, endearing and agreeable, but are not helpful to developing the Dhamma, I do not say them. *(Right Speech informing Noble Silence)*

“In the same way, out of sympathy for others, words that I know to be true, endearing and agreeable, and are helpful to developing the Dhamma, with a sense of the proper time, I do say them. *(Right Speech)*

“Lord, when others have questions for you and approach you do you know how you will answer or do you formulate a response in the moment?”

“I will counter-question you, prince. Answer how you see fit. Are you skilled in the parts of a chariot?”

“Yes, I am skilled in the parts of a chariot” answered the prince.

“Well, prince, when people ask you about the parts of a chariot do you know how you will answer or do you formulate a response in the moment?”

“Great teacher, I am known as an expert on the parts of a chariot. As such, I formulate a response in the moment.”

“Prince Abhaya, in the same manner when others question me I formulate a response in the moment. I formulate a response in the moment because I thoroughly understand the Dhamma.”

When this was said Prince Abhaya replied “Magnificent, Lord, magnificent! It is as if you have set upright what was overturned, revealed what was hidden, shown a clear path to one lost and carried a lamp in the darkness for those with eyes to see.

“Through many lines of reasoning, you have made the Dhamma clear. I take refuge in the Buddha, the Dhamma, and the Sangha. Remember me as a follower from this day forward.

This last is a reference to taking True Refuge.

End Of Sutta

SESSION 9

CULA-DUKKHAKKHANDA SUTTA

RIGHT VIEW, DUKKHA, & EMPTINESS OF

IGNORANCE

CULA-DUKKHAKKHANDA SUTTA
THE LESSER DISCOURSE ON DUKKHA
MAJJHIMA NIKAYA 14

On one occasion the Buddha was staying with the Sakyans in the Banyan Grove at Kapilavatthu. Mahanama, Siddhartha Gotama's cousin, approached the Buddha, bowed, and sat to one side.

Mahanama had a question for his cousin and teacher: "I understand your Dhamma teaches three defilements of the mind:

1. Greed is a defilement of the mind.
2. Aversion is a defilement of the mind.
3. Deluded thinking is a defilement of the mind.

This description of the Three Defilements as "defilements of the mind" immediately and clearly directs Dhamma practice to resolve inner conflict and delusion. Rather than remaining distracted by fabricated beliefs that can only result in continued craving through continued clinging ignorant views to impermanent phenomena – impermanent objects, events, views, and ideas – including "self" and others. The Buddha is teaching his cousin to abandon seeking satisfaction where none can be found – in the impermanent phenomenal world and

the fabricated views and fake dharmas supported by continued ignorance of Four Noble Truths.

The Buddha's Dhamma resolves deluded thinking and inner conflict by developing the profound understanding that what one is mindful of – what one holds in mind – determines their life experience, not impermanent external conditions or externally-focused fabricated beliefs and fabricated "dharmas." The Buddha's Dhamma resolves within each individual practitioner integrating the Eightfold Path as the framework and guidance for Dhamma practice.

"Even though I understand your Dhamma in this manner, greed, aversion, and deluded thinking invade my mind and remain. When I realize this, the thought follows 'What quality do I continue to cling to when greed, aversion, and deluded thinking invade my mind and remain?'"

This is a subtle but completely common occurrence to a mind continually grasping-after continued ignorance. The compulsive need to find a hidden or mystical cause for current stress through analysis, fabricated blame, or an intentional misunderstanding of Karma is the essence of greed.

A common and subtly encouraged form of greed is always needing more "investigation" and endless analysis of "what's wrong with or lacking in me" and grasping-after magical and mystical fixes for a flawed or lacking self. This should be seen as it truly is: a common form of distracted mindlessness compulsive encouraged in modern Buddhism-By-Common-Agreement.

Aversion is another form of grasping-after external and impermanent phenomena that is a fabricated quality of mind that insists on the people and events of life, including fabricated dharma practices, to magically be different than what is simply and commonly occurring in human life.

Delusion is the condition that arises from ignorance of Four Noble Truths. Clinging to ignorance of Four Noble Truths is motivated by continuing greed and aversion and can only continue deluded thinking. This is an aspect of the feedback loop the Buddha described in the Nagara Sutta.

The purpose of the Buddha's Dhamma is to recognize and abandon individual ignorance of Four Noble Truths and the individual condition of deluded thinking that follows the initiating condition of individual ignorance of Four Noble Truths.

The Buddha responds: “Mahanama, it is the very qualities of greed, aversion, and deluded thinking that you continue to cling to. When any of these qualities arise in you it is due to continued clinging to these qualities.

Another word for greed is craving. In the Patirca-Samupaddha Sutta, the primary sutta on Dependent Origination, the Buddha shows that from “From craving as a requisite condition comes clinging and maintaining”.

The very qualities of greed, aversion, and deluded thinking are maintained by continual clinging to greed, aversion, and deluded thinking. It is the purpose of the Eightfold Path to develop the concentration necessary to support the refined mindfulness that can hold in mind the Eightfold Path. It is only from a mind resting in Jhana that has the ability to recognize and abandon all manifestations of the three defilements.

“It is only when these qualities are not abandoned within you that you continue to be entangled in worldly affairs and you continue to cling to sensuality.

“It is only when these qualities are abandoned within you that you remain disentangled in worldly affairs and you no longer cling to sensuality.

“Even though a skillful disciple understands the stress, the despair, the drawback of sensual indulgence, if they have not developed concentration and pleasure apart from sensual indulgence and unskillful mindfulness, or an even deeper level of Jhana and peacefulness, they can still be distracted by sensuality.

The skillful disciple who develops the framework and guidance of the Eightfold Path will develop Wise Restraint and will continually lessen their craving for and clinging to sensual indulgence and sensual distraction.

“But, when a skillful disciple understands the stress, the despair, the drawback of sensual indulgence if they have developed concentration and pleasure apart from sensual indulgence and unskillful mindfulness, or an even deeper level of Jhana and peacefulness, they cannot be distracted by sensuality.

“Friend, before my own self-awakening, when I was still an un-awakened bodhisattva, I came to understand with Right View that sensual indulgence is stressful, brings despair, and has drawbacks, but as long as I had not developed concentration and pleasure apart from sensual indulgence and unskillful mindfulness, or an even deeper level of Jhana and peacefulness, I did not claim that I was not distracted by sensuality.

The Buddha's Dhamma does not culminate in an ongoing trance-like distraction grasping-after and clinging to fabricated beliefs. The Buddha's Dhamma culminates in the profound Right View that that resolves with all self-referential views completely abandoned and a well-concentrated mind united with its body while remaining peacefully engaged with life-as-life-unfolds.

“But, when I came to understand the stress, the despair, the drawback of sensual indulgence, and I had developed concentration and pleasure apart from sensual indulgence and unskillful mindfulness, or an even deeper level of Jhana and peacefulness, then I did claim to not be distracted by sensuality.

There is, perhaps, no stronger reference in the suttas for developing Jhana than these last two paragraphs. The Buddha taught that the sole purpose of meditation within the Eightfold Path is to deepen concentration, to deepen Jhana. Without Right Meditation – Jhana Meditation, there can be no understanding of Dukkha and no release from craving for and clinging to ignorance of Four Noble Truths.

UNDERSTANDING THE ALLURE, THE DRAWBACK, AND THE RELEASE OF CLINGING TO SENSUALITY

“Now, what is the allure of sensuality? There are five clinging-fabrications of sensuality:

- Forms interpreted by the eyes as agreeable, pleasing, endearing, and enticing.
- Sounds interpreted by the ears as agreeable, pleasing, endearing, and enticing.
- Aromas interpreted by the nose as agreeable, pleasing, endearing, and enticing.
- Flavors interpreted by the tongue as agreeable, pleasing, endearing, and enticing.
- Tactile sensations interpreted by the body as agreeable, pleasing, endearing, and enticing.

Here the Buddha is describing the immediate application of the understanding developed through the Eightfold Path at the point of contact with impermanent phenomena arising and passing away.

“Friend, whatever pleasure or happiness that one establishes in dependence on any of these five senses is the (*distracting*) allure of sensuality.

As is seen here it is the preoccupation with pleasure and disappointment that distracts one from understanding life as it truly is as described in Dependent Origination and Four Noble Truths.

“Now, what is the drawback of sensuality? Here is an example: When one’s occupation, whether accounting or plowing, whether trading goods or attending to cattle, whether archer or attending a King, whatever one’s occupation, they are subject to changing weather, to harassment by insects, to dying from thirst and hunger, and the whole mass of stress and suffering.

Reacting to ordinary phenomena arising and passing away results from personalizing ordinary experience that is entirely impersonal. Understanding Dukkha brings cessation to clinging and maintaining self-referential views ignorant of Four Noble Truths.

“This drawback of sensuality, this mass of stress and suffering that is visible here and now has sensuality as its source and its establishment. Simply put, the drawback is sensuality.

“Now, if a person gains little while striving and making effort they will be sorrowful and regretful. They will grieve and become distraught: *(All emotions rooted in self-referential ignorant views:)* ‘All of my efforts have been useless and fruitless!’

“This *(reaction)* is also a drawback of sensuality, this mass of stress and suffering that is visible here and now has sensuality as its source and its establishment. Simply put, the drawback is sensuality.

A mind lacking Jhana – concentration – cannot support the refined mindfulness developed through the Eightfold Path. The skillful disciple develops Jhana that supports the refined mindfulness necessary for a profound understanding of stress and suffering and the cessation of all ignorant views.

“If a person gains wealth while striving and making effort they will experience distress protecting their wealth: ‘How can I keep my wealth from kings and thieves? How will I protect my wealth from fire or floods? How will I protect my wealth from greedy heirs?’

Even the immediate gratification of achievement is disappointing due to clinging to impermanent phenomena. It is this precise true and useful vipassana – true and useful introspective insight – into wrong views of self clinging to impermanent phenomena resulting in stress and suffering that is the sole purpose of the Buddha’s Dhamma

“Even as they protect their wealth, kings and thieves make off with it, fire and floods destroy it, and greedy heirs make off with it. They then will be sorrowful and regretful. They will grieve and become distraught: ‘What was once mine is gone!’

These various descriptions of Dukkha are describing the entirely impersonal experience of Dukkha. The allure and drawback of sensuality is established in ignorant views of self craving for and clinging to ordinary impersonal phenomena that is experienced as having personal “ownership” of fleeting objects, events, views, or ideas through self-identification with impermanent phenomena.

“This drawback of sensuality, this mass of stress and suffering that is visible here and now has sensuality as its source and its establishment. Simply put, the drawback is sensuality.

“It is (*preoccupation*) with sensuality as the reason, the source, the cause, that king’s quarrel with kings, nobles quarrel with nobles, brahmins with brahmins, householders with householders, parents with children, children with parents, children with siblings, and friends with friends. When conflicted they will attack each other with fists, or sticks, or clubs, or knives, and they incur extreme pain or death.

It is due to the compulsive preoccupation with pleasure and disappointment that uninformed people become distracted towards constant satisfaction where constant satisfaction cannot be found – through ignorant views of self clinging to impermanent worldly phenomena.

“Here again is the drawback of sensuality, this mass of stress and suffering that is visible here and now has sensuality as its source and its establishment. Simply put, the drawback is sensuality.

“It is (*preoccupation*) with sensuality as the reason, the source, the cause, that human beings wear armor and use swords, spears, and arrows while charging in formation into battle with other human beings. With spears and arrows flying, with swords flashing, they are wounded, their heads cut off, incurring extreme pain and death.

Here the profound nature of this teaching becomes apparent. Due to self-establishment in the world through individually craving for and clinging to ignorant views legitimized by sensual indulgence in this very craving, all manner of human conflict and stress and suffering, internally and externally, arise.

“Here again is the drawback of sensuality, this mass of stress and suffering that is visible here and now has sensuality as its source and its establishment. Simply put, the drawback is sensuality.

“Friend, it is (*preoccupation*) with sensuality as the reason, the source, the cause, that human beings take what is not theirs, ambush others, commit adultery, and when caught, kings have them tortured for their misdeeds. They are flogged and beaten with clubs, their hands and feet cut off, their ears and noses, too. They are subjected to many indignities and deprivations.

“Here again, this is the drawback of sensuality, this mass of stress and suffering that is visible here and now has sensuality as its source and its establishment. Simply put, the drawback is sensuality.

“Friend, it is (*preoccupation*) with sensuality as the reason, the source, the cause, that human beings engage in bodily, verbal, and mental misconduct. Having lived their lives as such, upon death and the break-up of the body there is only continued deprivation.

This last is a significant reference to the Buddha’s teaching on Karma and Rebirth. Unless one resolves ignorance of Four Noble Truths, death can offer no release, only deprivation. This is not a reference to a continued personal experience of disincarnate individual life after physical death – a common misunderstanding that contradicts the intent and purpose of the Buddha’s Dhamma.

An accurate understanding of Karma and Rebirth shows that the Buddha’s Dhamma resolves Karma and the skillful disciple ceases giving “birth” to another moment rooted in ignorance.

“Here again, this is the drawback of sensuality, this mass of stress and suffering that is now only continued deprivation has sensuality as its source and its establishment. Simply put, the drawback is sensuality.

THE CONDITIONING AND INHERENT DISTRACTIONS OF FALSE DHARMAS

“Friend Mahanama, once I was near Rajagaha on Vulture Peak Mountain. There was a group of Niganthas at Black Rock on the slopes of Isigili.

Niganthas were followers of Nigantha Natiputta, a leader of a local Jain sect.

“The Niganthas were practicing continuous standing in order to experience severe sharp and racking pain. As I emerged from my seclusion I went to the Niganthas and asked them ‘Why are you practicing continuous standing that develops severe sharp and racking pain?’

“One of the Niganthas responded ‘Nigantha Natiputta knows and sees all. He claims to have knowledge and wisdom continually established within him. Nigantha has taught us that our past evil actions will be exhausted with these painful ascetic practices. He further taught us that if we are restrained in body, speech, and thoughts in the present there will be no evil actions in the future.

“So, with the destruction of past evil deeds through these painful ascetic practices and with no evil actions in the present there will be no flow (*of the results of evil*) into the future. With no flow of evil actions into the future, there is the ending of evil actions. With the ending of evil actions there is the ending of stress. With the ending of stress there is the ending of feelings and with the ending of feelings, stress and suffering will be exhausted. We, the Niganthas, approve of this teaching, we prefer this teaching and are gratified by this teaching.

The psychological model in effect during the Buddha’s time continues today. By conditioning people through fabricated speculation and suggestion to believe that they are inherently bad, or wrong, or inadequate in some way, and that an individual ‘dharma’ can bestow the means for salvation from their ‘evil deeds’, a ‘dharma’ teacher can now have people follow and worship them even though all they are offering is continued distraction from the true cause of their distress and inner and outer conflict.

The Buddha’s Dhamma shows that the root cause of all ‘evil deeds’ is rooted in ignorance of Four Noble Truths and by becoming ‘Rightly Self-Awakened’ precisely as Siddhartha Gotama did is the Dhamma. Even if one has actually performed hurtful deeds in the past, and has an uncommonly accurate memory of these deeds, using certain actions such as asceticism (including institutionalized silence), hybrid meditation practices, chanting, bowing, deity visualizations, and many other adapted and embellished ‘dharmas’ in modern Buddhism-By-Common-Agreement can never provide the release from views ignorant of Four Noble Truths unless one develops the Eightfold Path intended by an awakened human being.

The Buddha responds “Do you know that you existed in the past or that you did not exist in the past?”

“No, friend.”

“Well, do you know that you did evil deeds in the past?”

“No, friend.”

“And do you know that the stress resulting from these evil deeds has been exhausted or that the stress resulting from these evil deeds remains to be exhausted or even that the exhaustion of the stress resulting from these evil deeds can be exhausted?”

“No, friend.”

“Well then, do you know the abandoning of these evil and unskillful qualities and the development of skillful qualities right here and now?”

“No, friend.”

“Friend, it seems as if you do not know if you did or did not exist in the past. It seems as if you do not know if you did or did not do evil acts in the past. You do not know that you did any evil acts in the past or if you even experienced any stress arising from evil actions or that there is stress remaining to be exhausted. You do not know that with the exhaustion of current stress that all stress will be exhausted.

“Furthermore, you do not know the abandonment of evil and unskillful qualities and you do not know the development of evil and unskillful qualities right here and now.

“This being the case, there are those who are cruel and murderous evildoers. Seeking change (*salvation*) they join with the Niganthas.

As today, the manner in which false and misleading “dharmas” are presented as salvation in some manner, and have distracted others to seek their particular form of salvation, more conflicted and troubled human beings will believe they can find salvation in fabricated dharma as well. This is also an important understanding of the importance of developing and maintaining a true and effective Dhamma practice if one is truly concerned with the well-being of others.

“But friend, Gotama, it is not true that pleasure is attained through pleasure. Pleasure is to be attained through pain. If pleasure is attained through pleasure, then King Bimbisara would attain great pleasure as he lives in greater pleasure than even you.”

This is a common pernicious though subtle fabrication that in order to experience sensual satisfaction there must be an equal experience of suffering. This fabrication arises from a confused mind in order to rationalize stress and suffering as having some value thereby continuing to ignore the root cause of ignorance through a lack of personal responsibility. This is similar to common and popular fabricated beliefs such as “there is no light without darkness. An awakened, fully mature human being understands in a completely dispassionate and impersonal manner that light and dark, day and night, hot and cold, peace

and distress, likes and dislikes, are simply part of impermanent phenomena arising and passing away. The Buddha recognizes this ignorant thinking and responds with clear Dhamma:

“Surely you have said this rashly and without reflecting on your words. The skillful question (*in the context of my Dhamma*) is ‘Who lives in greater pleasure, King Bimbisara or master Gotama?’”

“Yes, friend Gotama, we did speak rashly and without reflection. Who does live in greater pleasure, King Bimbisara or master Gotama?”

“I will counter-question you. Answer as you see fit. Can King Bimbisara, without moving his body or uttering a word dwell sensitive to pure pleasure for seven days and nights, or even six, or five, or four, or three, or two, or even for one day and night?”

Here ‘sensitive’ means true refined mindfulness – dispassionately and mindfully aware of what is occurring.

“No, friend.”

“Now, without moving my body or uttering a word I do dwell sensitive to pure pleasure for a day and a night, for two days and nights, for three, for four, for five, for six, for even seven nights and days.

The Buddha here is describing simply and directly the quality of mind of an awakened human being. In the context of the Satipatthana Sutta, the sutta on Four Foundations of Mindfulness, the Buddha is also describing the establishment and continuation of the Fourth Foundation of Mindfulness, a mind resting in pure equanimity.

“What do you think? Who dwells in the greater pleasure, King Bimbisara or myself?”

“It is clear that master Gotama dwells in the greater pleasure than King Bimbisara!”

This is what was said by the Great Teacher. Mahanama was delighted in the Buddha’s words.

End Of Sutta

SESSION 10

DHATU-VIBHANGA SUTTA

NOTHING PERSONAL, A BUDDHA'S

ANALYSIS OF "SELF"

INTRODUCTION

The significance and proper application of the Dhatu-Vibhanga Sutta will be lost if the context provided by a clear understanding of Dependent Origination and Four Noble Truths is ignored.

Overall, this sutta shows the Buddha's view on the complete and impersonal ordinariness of human life. The objects of life that are constantly personalized through self-identification are shown to be common, fleeting, and having no substance worth self-identification.

This sutta should be seen as a broad and far-reaching analysis of Five Clinging-Aggregates and how ignorance of Four Noble Truths creates fabricated views and an ongoing personalized experience of stress and sufferings. In this sutta, the Buddha describes the six properties that constitute a person. Notice that there is no reference to a soul, or ground of being, or inner Buddha-Nature or Buddha -Hood, all themes common to modern Buddhism. As shown in this sutta, and many others, these are all aspects of fabricated self-identification craving for self-establishment in imaginary and speculative non-physical realms. As taught by the Buddha, the craving for self-establishment in these imaginary and speculative non-physical realms are to be seen clearly as fabrications arising from ignorance of Four Noble Truths.

Understanding this most profound sutta relieves the fear and aversion that arises from the desire for continued self-establishment in impermanent objects, events, views, and ideas fabricated from ignorance of Four Noble Truths. This fear born of desire often gives rise to clinging tenaciously to fabricated views of what Buddhism should be and results in the many

adaptations, accommodations, and embellishments to the Buddha's Dhamma common to modern Buddhism.

In the Nagara Sutta, the Buddha describes the singular importance of recognizing that it is self-referential views stuck in ongoing thinking rooted in ignorance of Four Noble Truths that results in common and pervasive human suffering. After six years wandering Northern India seeking understanding, Siddhartha Gotama finally realized that it was self-referential views craving for and clinging to impermanent objects, events, views, and ideas that originate and continue confused and deluded thinking and ongoing stress and suffering.

The Buddha taught one path, an Eightfold Path, that provides the framework and ongoing guidance to recognize and abandon all self-referential views rooted in ignorance of Four Noble Truths. The Buddha shows in this sutta the great freedom and calm that is developed through becoming "Rightly Self-Awakened."

My comments below are in italics.

DHATU-VIBHANGA SUTTA – AN ANALYSIS OF THE SIX HUMAN PROPERTIES

MAJJHIMA NIKAYA 140

On one occasion the Buddha was wandering among the Magadhans. He entered Rajagaha and went to the potter Bhaggava. He asked Bhaggava "If it is no inconvenience for you, friend, I will stay for one night in your shed."

"It is no inconvenience for me but the wanderer Pukkusati has already taken up residence there. If he gives his permission, you may stay there as you like."

Pukkusati, a fellow Sakyan, had gone forth into homelessness and was developing the Buddha's Dhamma. The Buddha approached Pukkusati and asked him if he could stay one night in his shed.

Pukkusati replied, "This shed is roomy my friend, stay as you like."

The Buddha entered the shed and sat on a pile of leaves and grass. Folding his legs crosswise and holding his body erect he set mindfulness to the fore and began Jhana. Pukkusati joined him in meditation for most of the evening.

As morning approached, the Buddha had the thought “How inspiring Pukkusati behaves! Let me question him on his understanding.

“Venerable Pukkusati, out of dedication to whom have you gone forth? Who is your teacher and whose dhamma are you practicing?”

“My teacher is Gotama the contemplative, a Sakyan son. He is known far and wide as a Buddha, a rightly self-awakened one who is consummate and clear knowing and of pure conduct. He is an expert of worldly affairs, and the unsurpassed teacher of those fit to be taught. I have gone forth with dedication to him as my teacher and it is his Dhamma that I am practicing.”

“Friend Pukkusati, where is the Buddha staying now?”

“Wanderer, I have heard that the Buddha is in Savatthi.”

“Have you met the Buddha, would you recognize him.”

“No, I have never met the Buddha and I would not recognize him.”

The Buddha understood Pukkusati’s devotion. Without identifying himself he said to Pukkusati “I will teach you the Dhamma, friend. Listen and pay close attention as I speak.

“A person has six properties, six media of sensory contact leading to eighteen distinct considerations. Furthermore, a well-focused Dhamma practitioner establishes four wise determinations. Having established these four wise determinations this one has stilled the distraction of fabricated speculation and supposition. When the distraction of fabricated speculation and supposition has stilled, this one is said to be a sage at peace. A well-focused Dhamma practitioner should not neglect wise discernment, should always guard the truth, should always be devoted to unbinding, and train their minds only for calm.

“This is my summary and analysis of these six properties:

1. The earth property.
2. The liquid property.
3. The fire property.
4. The wind property.

5. The space property.
6. The consciousness property.

“A person has these six properties.

“Furthermore, a person has six media of sensory contact:

1. The eye.
2. The ear.
3. The nose.
4. The tongue.
5. The body.
6. The intellect.

“A person has these six media of sensory contact. (*The Six Sense-Base*)

“Furthermore, a person has eighteen considerations:

- On seeing form with the eye, one considers form as a basis for pleasure, or form as a basis for disappointment, or form as a basis for equanimity.
- On hearing sound with the ear, one considers sound as a basis for pleasure, or sound as a basis for disappointment, or sound as a basis for equanimity.
- On smelling an aroma with the nose, one considers aroma as a basis for pleasure, or aroma as a basis for disappointment, or aroma as a basis for equanimity.
- On tasting flavor with the tongue, one considers taste as a basis for pleasure, or taste as a basis for disappointment, or taste as a basis for equanimity.
- On feeling a tactile sensation with the body, one considers feeling as a basis for pleasure, or feeling as a basis for disappointment, or feeling as a basis for equanimity.
- On cognizing an idea with the intellect, one considers the idea as a basis for pleasure, or the idea as a basis for disappointment, or the idea as a basis for equanimity.

“These are the six considerations that are conducive to pleasure, six considerations that are conducive to disappointment, and six considerations that are conducive to equanimity. A person has these eighteen considerations.

“Furthermore, a wise Dhamma practitioner has four determinations:

1. The determination for discernment.
2. The determination for truth.
3. The determination for relinquishment.
4. The determination for calm.

“A wise Dhamma practitioner has these four determinations.

The first determination is in reference to awakened Right View: A profound and penetrating understanding of stress and suffering. The second determination refers to developing understanding of Four Noble Truths that supports Right View. The third determination is the relinquishment of craving for and clinging to all self-referential and fabricated views ignorant of Four Noble Truths. The fourth determination refers to the culmination of the Buddha’s Eightfold Path and the establishment of a calm mind free of the agitation and distraction of ignorance.

“A Dhamma practitioner should not neglect discernment, should guard the truth, be devoted to relinquishment, and train only for calm.

“And how does one not neglect discernment? Through mindfulness of the six properties:

“And what is the earth property? The earth property can be internal or external. The internal earth property is anything within oneself that is hard, solid, and sustained by craving – head, hair, body, nails, teeth, skin, flesh, tendons, bones, marrow, kidneys, heart, liver, membranes, spleen, lungs, intestines, contents of the stomach, feces, and anything else internal within oneself that’s hard solid and sustained by craving. This is called the internal earth property. Both internal earth property and external earth property are simply earth property.

“Internal and external properties are simply one property” refers to the confused and magical thinking that would establish a self both internally as physical form and externally in non-physical imaginary realms. The common compulsion of establishing a self in external, non-physical form is explained further on as simply continued fabrication. Any ideological and

imaginary self-referential establishment is fabricated self-establishment, occurring only in the mind. This type of fabricated compulsive thinking continues distraction and can only support becoming further ignorant of Four Noble Truths.

The reference here and below to “sustained by craving refers to self-identification with the impermanent, common, and ordinary physical phenomena mentioned. Seeing this clearly, one can understand that there is nothing unique or personal about any of these impermanent phenomena. This understanding supports the cessation of establishing and defining a “self” through self-reference and clinging to ordinary, common, and impermanent objects, events, views, and ideas. This teaching and sutta show the only useful and non-distracting insight the Buddha teaches – insight into Three Marks Of Existence.

“This is how the earth property should be seen by one with right discernment: ‘this is not me, this is not mine, this is not what I am, this is not my self.’ When one sees this as it has come to be with right discernment, one becomes disenchanted with the earth property and, through lack of sustenance, the earth property fades from the mind.

It is craving for and clinging to self-referential views ignorant of Four Noble Truths that sustain self-identification with any and all of these properties.

“And what is the liquid property? The liquid property can be internal or external. The internal liquid property is anything belonging to oneself that is liquid, watery, and sustained by craving – bile, pus, blood, sweat, fat, tears, oil, saliva, mucus, urine, and anything else internal, within oneself that is liquid, watery, and sustained by craving. This is called the internal liquid property. Both internal and external liquid property are simply liquid property.

“This is how the liquid property should be seen by one with right discernment: ‘this is not me, this is not mine, this is not what I am, this is not my self.’ When one sees this as it has come to be with right discernment, one becomes disenchanted with the liquid property and, through lack of sustenance, the liquid property fades from the mind.

“And what is the fire property? The fire property can be internal or external. The internal fire property is anything belonging to oneself that is fire, fiery, and sustained by craving. The internal fire property is that by which the body is warmed, ages, consumed by fever, that which is eaten, drunk, chewed, and savored that is digested, or anything else internal, within oneself, that is fire, fiery and sustained, is called the internal fire property. Both internal and external fire property are simply fire property.

“This is how the fire property should be seen by one with right discernment: ‘this is not me, this is not mine, this is not what I am, this is not my self.’ When one sees this as it has come to be with right discernment, one becomes disenchanted with the fire property and, through lack of sustenance, the fire property fades from the mind.

“And what is the wind property? The wind property can be internal or external. The internal wind property is anything belonging to oneself that is wind, windy, and sustained by craving. The internal wind property is rising or falling wind, wind in the stomach, wind in the intestines, wind that courses through the body, in-and-out breathing, or anything else internal, within oneself, that is wind, windy and sustained, is called the internal wind property. Both internal and external wind property are simply wind property.

“This is how the wind property should be seen by one with right discernment: ‘this is not me, this is not mine, this is not what I am, this is not my self.’ When one sees this as it has come to be with right discernment, one becomes disenchanted with the wind property and, through lack of sustenance, the wind property fades from the mind.

“And what is the space property? The space property can be internal or external. The internal space property is anything belonging to oneself that is space, spatial, and sustained by craving. The internal space property is the holes of the ears, the nostrils, the mouth, the throat passage whereby what is eaten, drunk, consumed, and tasted gets swallowed, and where it collects, and whereby it is excreted from the body, or anything else internal, within oneself, that is space, spatial, and sustained. This is called the internal space property. Both the internal and external space property are simply space property.

“This is how the space property should be seen by one with right discernment: ‘this is not me, this is not mine, this is not what I am, this is not my self.’ When one sees this as it has come to be with right discernment, one becomes disenchanted with the space property and, through lack of sustenance, the space property fades from the mind.

“And what is the consciousness property? Consciousness free of fabrication remains pure and bright. What is perceived by consciousness? One perceives pleasure. One perceives pain. One perceives neither pleasure nor pain.

In dependence on sensory contact that is to be felt as pleasure, there arises a feeling of pleasure. (*Due to self-identification*) One perceives ‘I am sensing a feeling of pleasure.’

“That is to be felt” refers to holding the intention for self-identification with whatever is the focus of desire.

In dependence on sensory contact that is to be felt as pain, there arises a feeling of pain. *(Due to self-identification)* One perceives ‘I am sensing a feeling of pain.’

In dependence on sensory contact that is to be felt as neither pleasure nor pain, there arises a feeling of neither pleasure nor pain. *(Due to self-identification)* One perceives ‘I am sensing neither pleasure nor pain.’

“neither pleasure nor pain” is a feeling of disinterest, ambiguity, boredom – characteristic of a mind disjoined from its body.

“Through refined mindfulness, one understands that with the cessation *(of self-identification)* of that very sensory contact the feeling of pleasure has arisen independently of that contact. What is to be felt as pleasure ceases– is stilled *(Through restraint and lack of self-reference)*).

By developing restraint at the six sense-base one is able to remain well-concentrated and mindful of what is occurring and simply observe the arising and passing away of ordinary and impersonal phenomena. The result of the development of restraint at the six sense-base is a mind established in Right View.

“Through refined mindfulness, one understands that with the cessation *(of self-identification)* of that very sensory contact the feeling of pain has arisen independently of that contact. What is to be felt as pain ceases– is stilled.

“Through refined mindfulness, one understands that with the cessation *(of self-identification)* of that very sensory contact the feeling of neither pleasure nor pain has arisen independently of that contact. What is to be felt as neither pleasure nor pain ceases– is stilled.

Understanding the process of how a mind ignorant of Four Noble Truths fabricates wrong views of “self” brings an understanding of the Buddha’s meaning of “Anatta” – the Not-Self Characteristic.

“Just as when two sticks are brought together and agitated, heat and fire are born dependent on contact and agitation. When the sticks are separated and the agitation ceases, heat subsides and fire is extinguished.

“In this same manner, an agitated mind, lacking concentration, in dependence on contact will feel feelings of pleasure, or feelings of pain, or feelings of neither pleasure nor pain.

“A wise Dhamma Practitioner understands that with the cessation of (*self-referential*) sensory contact, feelings of pleasure, or pain, or neither pleasure nor pain are stilled.

“Now there remains only a mind established in equanimity, luminous, pure, supple, and spacious. Just as if a skillful goldsmith were to take raw gold, and through skillful effort transform this raw gold into a refined and flawless ornament, malleable and luminous. The gold would now suit the Goldsmith’s purpose.

“In this same manner, one whose mind is established in equanimity, luminous, pure, supple, and spacious, knows that ‘If I were to direct my thinking toward non-physical dimensions of infinite consciousness, or infinite space, or infinite emptiness or nothingness, or the dimension of neither perception nor non-perception, I would know these (*distracted mind-states*) as fabricated.

Any self-referential, ideological, imaginary non-physical establishment should be seen as fabricated and arising from ignorance of Four Noble Truths and immediately abandoned.

“A wise Dhamma practitioner does not fabricate, or mentally construct, for the sake of self-establishment in this physical realm or any (*fabricated or imaginary*) non-physical realm. Fabrications abandoned, this one is not sustained through craving. This one is released from clinging to anything in the world.

“(*Released from wrong views ignorant of Four Noble Truths*) This one is no longer agitated, their mind is calm and well-concentrated. This one knows their mind is calm and well-concentrated. This one knows ‘Birth is now ended, a life well-integrated (*with the Eightfold Path*) has been lived, my task is complete, there is nothing further in this world.’

“*Nothing further in this world*” refers to having developed the profound understanding that there is now, and never was, anything of the world that could be seen as me, mine, myself, or any variation of self-identification. “*Nothing further in this world*” also refers to the profound understanding that there is nothing further beyond this world in a non-physical, ideological, and imaginary sense to crave for or cling to.

“Friend, Pukkusati, when sensing a feeling of pleasure, understand it as impersonal and as such impermanent. Understanding thus, craving and clinging vanish. Likewise, when sensing a feeling of pain, or sensing a feeling of neither pleasure nor pain, understand these feelings as impersonal and as such impermanent. Understanding thus, craving and clinging vanish. Understanding brings the awareness that pleasure, pain, and neither pleasure nor pain are impersonal and as such impermanent and are not craved after or self-identified with.

“Self-identified with” is clinging to what is craved after. As shown in Dependent Origination, it is craving originating in ignorance of Four Noble Truths that leads to clinging to and maintaining ignorance.

“When feeling pleasure, pain, or neither pleasure nor pain, a wise Dhamma practitioner remains disjoined (*through lack of self-identification*) from these feelings. This one understands feelings in the body are limited to the body. This one understands feelings limited to human life are limited to human life. This one understands that with the ending of life and the break-up of the body that all that is experienced and not joined to will grow cold and end right then.

“Just as an oil lamp burns in dependence on wick and oil, from the termination of wick and oil it would be un nourished and cease. In this same manner when a wise Dhamma practitioner is feeling a feeling limited to the body they understand ‘I am sensing a feeling that is limited to this body.’ When wise Dhamma practitioner is feeling a feeling limited to human life they understand ‘I am sensing a feeling limited to human life.’ This wise Dhamma practitioner understands that with the ending of life and the break-up of the body that all that is experienced and not joined to will grow cold and end right then.

These last two paragraphs refer to the freedom and peace developed through the recognition and relinquishment of all self-referential views. The Buddha is describing a mind established in Right View and free of any ignorance of Four Noble Truths, a mind free of fear fueled by desire, a mind resting in equanimity.

“In this manner, when one has the highest determination for understanding, for the knowledge of the arising and passing away of suffering and stress, this one has achieved the greatest noble understanding.

“This Dhamma practitioner has gained release from all views ignorant of Four Noble Truths. Their mind has established Right View now resting in pure truth. This view will no longer fluctuate due to distraction. This one knows whatever is deceptive and remains free from associating with deception. This Dhamma practitioner is established with the highest determination for truth. This is the foremost unbinding from wrong views and is the highest Noble Truth.

“Formerly, when still ignorant of Four Noble Truths, this Dhamma practitioner foolishly craved after mental acquisitions and created self-identities clinging to these mental acquisitions. This Dhamma practitioner has completely abandoned them. Through the Eightfold Path, this one

has cut fabrications off at the root of ignorance. Like the stump of a palmyra tree, now deprived of the conditions of sustenance, fabrications will no longer arise.

“Likewise, when still ignorant of Four Noble Truths, this Dhamma practitioner foolishly was driven by desire and self-infatuation, by ill-will and hatred, by delusion and ignorance, and created self-identities clinging to these unskillful qualities. Now, this Dhamma practitioner has completely abandoned them. Through the Eightfold Path, this one has cut fabrications off at the root of ignorance. Like the stump of a palmyra tree, now deprived of the conditions of sustenance, fabrications will no longer arise.

“This Dhamma practitioner has established the highest determination for calm – for the calming of greed, aversion, and deluded thinking. This one has established the Highest Noble Calm. This Dhamma practitioner knows to never neglect Right View, to always guard the Truth and to always train for establishing a calm and well-concentered mind.

“This Dhamma practitioner understands where, through wise restraint, the currents of speculation and supposition do not flow, this one is known as ‘a sage at peace.’

“With reference to what I am saying to you, all of the following is speculation and supposition:

- I am.
- I am this.
- I will be.
- I will not be.
- I will have this form.
- I will not have this form.
- I will have psychic powers.
- I will not have psychic powers.

Common in many modern Buddhist doctrines, the acquisition of supernatural powers is often presented as a sign of “awakening” or higher knowledge. Here, and many other suttas, the Buddha is showing that grasping after or clinging to anything in this manner is simply continued self-reference rooted in ignorance.

“Speculation and supposition are diseases, a cancer, an arrow. By abandoning all speculation and supposition this Dhamma Practitioner is known as a ‘sage at peace.’

“A sage at peace is no longer distracted or agitated by birth, aging, sickness, death, sorrow, regret, greed, aversion, or deluded thinking. With no distraction or agitation, what would this Dhamma practitioner crave for or cling to?

“This Dhamma practitioner understands where the currents of speculation and supposition do not flow. When, through wise restraint, the currents of speculation and supposition do not flow, this one is known as ‘a sage at peace.’

“Now, friend Pukkusati, you should remember my brief analysis of the six properties.”

Then the thought occurred to Venerable Pukkusati: ‘Surely the Great Teacher has come to me! Surely the Rightly Self-Awakened one has come to me! Pukkusati rose and bowed to the Buddha and said: ‘I was foolish, confused, and unskilled to address you merely as friend. Please accept my apology so that I may restrain myself in the future.’

The Buddha replied ‘Yes, confusion overcame you. But, most importantly, you have recognized your confusion and, in accordance with my Dhamma, have made the strong determination to end your confusion. It is just this determination and discipline that one grows in the Dhamma and practices restraint in the future.

“Great Teacher, please accept me into the order to follow your Dhamma.

“Do you have an alms bowl and robes?”

“No” Replied Pukkusati.

“Then gather a bowl and robes and I will give you the going forth.”

Pukkusati was delighted. He bowed to the Buddha and left in search of an alms bowl and robes for his ordination. While searching, a runaway cow trampled and killed Pukkusati.

A large group from the Sangha found the Buddha and told him of Pukkusati demise. They asked the Buddha what Pukkusati’s future state would be.

“Friends, Pukkusati was wise. He practiced the Dhamma in accordance with my instruction. He never pestered me with un-related issues. He has abandoned the five fetters of:

1. Self-identification.
2. Grasping at rituals and practices.
3. Doubt and uncertainty.
4. Sensual craving.
5. Deluded thinking.

“He is now free of fabricated views will never again be subject to the suffering born of ignorance. “

Those that heard these words of the Buddha were delighted.

End Of Sutta

SESSION 11

ANATTA LAKKHANA SUTTA

THE NOT-SELF CHARACTERISTIC

The Anatta-Lakkhana Sutta explains how a wrong view of self arises and how the interrelationship between this wrong view of self within an ever-changing environment results in ongoing suffering.

THE ANATTA LAKKHANA SUTTA

SAMYUTTA NIKAYA 22.59

On one occasion the Buddha was staying at Benares, in the Deer Park at Isipatana. There he addressed the group of five (now) Bhikkhus:

“Bhikkhus, form is not-self. Were form self, then this form would not lead to suffering, and one could have it be any form desired, and stress free. Since form is not-self it leads to suffering and none can have it be any form desired and stress free.

“Bhikkhus, feeling is not-self, as perceptions are not-self. Fabrications are not-self. Consciousness is not-self. If these aggregates were self they would not lead to suffering and one could direct these aggregates as one wished. Since these are not-self they can only lead to suffering and no one can have these (aggregates) be as they wish.

“Bhikkhus, how do you perceive this: is form permanent or impermanent?” The five replied “Impermanent, venerable Sir.”

“Now is what is impermanent painful or pleasant?”

“Painful, venerable Sir.”

“Now is what is impermanent, what is painful since subject to change, is this fit to be regarded as: ‘This is mine, this is I, this is my self?’

“No, venerable sir.”

“Is feeling permanent or impermanent? Is perception permanent or impermanent? Are fabrications permanent or impermanent? Is consciousness permanent or impermanent?”

“All are impermanent, venerable sir.”

“Now is what is impermanent, what is painful since subject to change, is this fit to be regarded as: ‘This is mine, this is I, this is my self’?”

“No, venerable sir.”

“So, bhikkhus any kind of form whatever,

whether past, future or presently arisen,

whether gross or subtle,

whether in oneself or external,

whether inferior or superior,

whether far or near,

must, with right understanding how it actually is, be regarded as: ‘This is not mine, this is not I, this is not myself.’

“And so it follows that any kind of feeling whatever,

any kind of perception, any kind of determination,

any kind of consciousness whatever,

whether past, future or presently arisen,

whether gross or subtle,

whether in oneself or external,

whether inferior or superior,

whether far or near

must, with right understanding how it actually is, be regarded as: 'This is not mine, this is not I, this is not myself.'

"Bhikkhus, when a noble follower who has heard the truth sees in this way,

they find estrangement in form,

they find estrangement in feeling,

they find estrangement in perception,

they find estrangement in determinations,

they find estrangement in consciousness.

"When they find estrangement, passion fades out. With the fading of passion, they are liberated. When liberated, there is knowledge that they are liberated. They understand: 'Birth is exhausted, the integrated life has been lived out, what can be done is done, of this there is no more beyond.'"

Now during this discourse the hearts and minds of the bhikkhus were liberated from craving, aversion, and deluded thinking.

In most translations the phrase 'integrated life' is referred to as 'holy life.' The Buddha did not intend to start a new religion. He taught an Eightfold Path to be integrated in one's life in order to Become Buddha.

End of Sutta

SESSION 12

CHAVALATA SUTTA

RIGHT VIEW AND SKILLFUL DHAMMA

PRACTICE

&

SALLATHA SUTTA

TWO ARROWS

THE CHAVALATA SUTTA

ANGUTTARA NIKAYA 4.95

The Buddha addresses those gathered:

"Friends, there are four types of individuals in the world:

- Those that do not seek to develop understanding of the Dhamma.
- Those that develop understanding of the Dhamma for others but not for their own benefit.
- Those that develop understanding of the Dhamma for their own benefit but not for others.
- Those that practice for their own benefit and for the benefit of others.

The Buddha teaches: "The individual who practices neither for their own benefit nor for that of others is unrefined. The individual who practices for the benefit of others but not for their own

benefit is the higher & more refined of these two. The individual who practices for their own benefit but not for the benefit of others is the highest & most refined of these first three. The individual who practices for their own benefit and for the benefit of others is, of these four, the foremost, the most outstanding, the highest, & supreme.”

End of Sutta

INTRODUCTION TO THE SALLATHA SUTTA

In the Sallatha Sutta, the Buddha uses the metaphor of being struck twice by arrows – once by common circumstance and again by grasping-after desire. It is by personalizing the common worldly circumstance of stress and disappointment by reaction rooted in ignorance of Four Noble Truths that the second arrow of desire brings additional pain and obsession.

This sutta clearly explains what, for many, is a confusing aspect of the Dhamma – the nature and cause of Dukkha. This common confusion arises from ignorance of Four Noble Truths and has resulted in many adaptations, accommodations, and embellishments to the Buddha’s Dhamma. The Buddha’s profound understanding of the origination of all manner of confusion, deluded thinking, and ongoing disappointing and unsatisfactory life experiences is taught in the Paticcasamupada Sutta – the primary sutta on Dependent Origination.

In this commonly misunderstood and misapplied sutta, the Buddha clearly teaches that it is ignorance of Four Noble Truths that is the requisite condition that results in all manner suffering.

The Buddha teaches the meaning of understanding Dukkha and awakening to Four Noble Truths:

- Understanding stress and unhappiness
- Abandoning the cause of stress and unhappiness
- Experiencing the cessation of stress and unhappiness
- Developing the Eightfold Path leading to the cessation of stress and unhappiness.

Understanding the First Noble Truth means understanding that as a consequence of living in the phenomenal world, there will be stress and unhappiness, there will be suffering.

Understanding Dukkha ends any fabricated view that would cling to suffering through personalizing Dukkha.

As a human society, we will continue with issues of violence and hatred that can only be managed and occasionally contained by legislation. As a society, we will only end violence and hatred through understanding Four Noble Truths. As Wise Dhamma Practitioners, we can contribute to true human maturity by developing and exemplifying an awakened human being. If we as Dhamma Practitioners truly care for other human beings, we will “take to the Dhamma like our hair is in fire” and complete the task. In this way, we can truly “protest” worldly conditions in the most effective way: by changing our own minds and understanding the reality of a world rooted in basic ignorance.

This is the Radical Acceptance example by the Buddha as a mature and realistic response to all worldly conditions. Undesirable things bring peaceful acceptance resulting in a conflict-free mind that is incapable of introducing conflict of any kind into an already troubled world. This is true compassion informed by profound wisdom.

Attempting to negate stress is aversion to what is simply present is a common result of clinging to, and personalizing stress. Creating beliefs of a better life after physical death as compensation for the suffering present in life creates more confusion and delusion and personalization of stress and continued self-identification to stress and fabricated views. Engaging in ritualistic practices or appealing to deities is another manifestation of aversion.

As is clearly shown here, insight into Three Marks Of Existence is the specific insight that the Buddha taught developing awakening as the Buddha describes awakening and profound Right View.

This Sutta is also another clear teaching of the Buddha on what constitutes an authentic Dhamma practice and how to recognize a practice that will only continue distraction and ignorance.

My comments below are in italics.

SALLATHA SUTTA

THE TWO ARROWS

SAMYUTTA NIKAYA 36.6

In the Sallatha Sutta, a question is put to the Buddha as to what is the distinguishing factor between a well-instructed and well-informed dhamma practitioner and those that have no understanding of the Four Noble Truths.

The Buddha responds: “Friends, listen and pay close attention. An ordinary uninformed person feels feelings of pleasure, feelings of pain, and neutral (*ambiguous*) feelings. One well-informed of the Four Noble Truths also feels feelings of pleasure, feelings of pain, and neutral feelings.

“When, through the six-sense base, an uninformed person experiences a feeling of pain they are sorrowful, they grieve, they become distraught and irate. The uninformed feels two pains: the physical pain of the experience and the mental pain caused by the reaction arising from clinging (*to views ignorant of Four Noble Truths*). This would be like being hit with an arrow and then, by request, being hit again by another arrow.

The six-sense base is the five physical senses perceived through consciousness. Consciousness here refers to ordinary, ongoing thinking rooted in ignorance of Four Noble Truths resulting in perceptions that can only continue ignorance. It is at the six-sense-base that a Dhamma practitioner develops restraint and avoids the second arrow.

This lack of restraint should also be seen as mindlessness rooted in distraction as the reaction has caused the mind to become objectified – focused now on the reaction – and disjoined from the physical feeling through self-referential desire – wanting the experience to be different than what is occurring described below as differing but similar types of obsession.

“As the person is experiencing pain, pain-resistance occurs, leading to resistance-obsession.

“As the person experiences pain, delight (*obsession*) in sensual pleasure occurs. Reaction brings obsession as the uninformed does not understand what is actually present: the origination, the allure, the drawback, and the passing away of the “feeling.” As the uninformed does not understand the origination, the allure, the drawback, and the passing away of the

feeling, any ignorance-obsession about this feeling of pain, pleasure, or neither-pleasure-nor-pain (*ambiguity*) overcomes and obsesses them.

Here, the Buddha teaches how the self-referential reaction to impersonal and ordinary events reinforces views ignorant of Four Noble Truths that support continued ignorance. This is described in the Nagara Sutta as being mentally stuck in a feedback loop of self-referential views continually reinforced by thinking rooted in ignorance of Four Noble Truths.

Feeling in this sense is any disturbance in the mind arising from lack of restraint. Any desire that an experience must be different than as occurred and wanting more, or less, or no experience, is a “feeling.” This feeling arises from ignorance of Four Noble Truths and is rooted in a personalized and fabricated view of self.

The first arrow is simply the stress and unhappiness that occurs in the phenomenal world. The second arrow is the stress and unhappiness caused by ignorance giving rise to clinging, craving, desire, and aversion. In other words, wanting the people and experiences of life to be different than what occurs compounds the initial pain of an experience.

The Buddha continues: “Sensing pleasure or pain, or neither-pleasure-nor-pain the uninformed (*through self-reference or personalizing the experience*) joins with it. The uninformed is joined to birth, aging, sickness, death, and joined with sorrows, grief, pain, and despair. Through reaction to the experience, the uninformed joins with and furthers their confusion and suffering.

Now the Buddha teaches how a person well-informed of Four Noble Truths and understanding the true nature of stress and unhappiness responds to the arising of Dukkha:

“The well-informed person, when stress arises, has no resistance. With no resistance, no resistance-obsession is formed. They feel one pain – physical – but not mental. Just as if they were shot with an arrow but not another, they would feel only one pain – the physical pain.

“With no delight (*reaction*) in sensual pleasure, no pleasure obsession occurs. The well-informed person understands what is actually present and understands its origination, its allure, its drawbacks, and its passing away. They do not become sorrowful, regretful, or distraught. They remain disjoined from pleasure and pain.

“The well-instructed person, understanding stress (*Dukkha*), does not generate a mental reaction to pain, pleasure, or neither-pleasure-nor-pain.

“This is the distinction between those uninformed and those well-informed of the Four Noble Truths.

“A well-instructed person who has developed the Heartwood Of The Dhamma (*The Eightfold Path*) understands the arising and passing away of all phenomena (*Three Marks Of existence*

This also relates to Right Meditation and remaining mindful of the arising and passing away of the breath-in-the-body. Obsession with what is stressful causes one to become stuck in a feedback loop only focused on the arising of the stressful experience. Jhana meditation is the unique meditation method taught for the sole purpose of developing the concentration necessary to remain mindful of the arising and passing away of the breath-in-the-body. From this well-concentrated foundation, one can then clearly notice the arising, the allure, the drawbacks, and the passing away of ordinary phenomena. They avoid becoming obsessed with and stuck to only the arising of ordinary phenomena.

Noticing the arising, the allure, the drawbacks, and the passing away of ordinary phenomena is also taught as the Four Foundations of Mindfulness.

“Craving and aversion no longer distract the mind or continue ignorance. Approval and rejection are dismissed, no longer in existence.

“Now, no dust remains, or sorrow or regret either. For those that understand the Dhamma, they have left behind becoming further ignorant and have arrived at the Far Shore (*of awakening,*)”

“No dust remains” refers directly to the Ariyapariyesana Sutta, and many others, and who the Buddha is directing his Dhamma to – “those with little dust in their eyes.”

End Of Sutta