

Insight Journal Spring 2005

Interconnected...Or Not?
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Dharma Poems
From the Community

Understanding the
Meditative Process
Jason Siff

Buddha in the Forest
Pali Poetry

Program Information



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Insight involves an intuition of mind and heart that takes us beyond knowledge toward wisdom. It has to do with deeply understanding the nature of things, rather than knowing a lot about them.

In the Buddhist tradition wisdom is nurtured by the deep investigation of experience. This involves the careful integration of both study and practice—the study of Buddha's teachings (Dhamma), coupled with the practice of meditation.

This journal is dedicated to exploring some of the insights that such a balanced inquiry uncovers about our ourselves, our world, and our fellow beings. Please join us.



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On the Cover: A photo of the Buddha statue that resides in the meditation hall at BCBS.

Interconnected...Or Not?

When I look up the word “connected” in my dictionary, I find synonyms such as “bound,” “fastened,” and “attached.” Last I heard, these were not considered a good thing in Buddhism. So why do we hear so much about “interconnectedness” these days? Was the Buddha really teaching us that “all things are interconnected?”

The explanation usually given is that this is what is meant by dependent origination. But is it? As sometimes happens, I think in using this term we are seizing upon a notion from the western tradition that comes easily to hand, but which misses the nuance of the Buddha’s teaching. The traditional term in the exegesis of the commentaries for such an idea is “near enemy.” A definition that is obviously off the mark can be recognized as a “far enemy,” called an enemy because it hinders us from properly understanding the concept at hand. A near enemy is more insidious, because it seems like a plausible—even desirable—definition, but it nevertheless leads us astray.

My concern about the word “interconnected” is that it rests upon a spatial image suggesting a relationship between two or more things. It tends to be used as an adjective, describing the quality of nouns. Some person, place or thing is connected or joined to someone, some place or something else. As such, it forms a cornerstone of western thought, from the logos of the classical philosopher, to the great chain of being of the Christian theologian, to the unified field of the contemporary materialist. On these grounds alone it is worthy of some suspicion as a viable means of conveying unique Buddhist ideas.

Buddhist thought is deeply rooted in process thinking, in which becoming is too relentlessly changing to ever coalesce into being. Dependent origination is more of an adverb, describing the process of events co-occurring in time, than it is a description of things or their properties. Events are shaped by multiple causal factors as they arise in each moment of constructed experience, and the patterns informing this building of the world can be discerned by careful introspection. This is a very different idea than the interconnectedness of all things.

At the cutting edge of human awareness, when the mind is focused skillfully on the birthing of phenomena, there is nothing formed enough to connect with anything. Meditation accesses the flow of experience, upon whose leading edge our world and our self get formed. The Buddha is inviting us to notice how that process is shaped and influenced by a host of conditions unique to that moment. The language itself is describing a fluid event: *When this occurs, that comes to be; from the arising of this, that also arises. And when this no longer occurs, that comes to an end; from the cessation of this, that also ceases.* In the teaching of dependent origination, the Buddha is showing us something very profound about the process of becoming.

By contrast, the teaching that “all things are interconnected” is a derivative conceptual construction—beautiful, to be sure—but after all, just an idea. I can picture Hui Neng scrawling across the monastery wall something like “There are no things, anyway! Let alone any connection between them.” I’m no scholar of Chinese, but I suspect that even the lovely Buddhist simile, Indra’s net, would more usefully be translated as Indra’s network. The essence of the imagery is the mutual reflection of every jewel in the infinite facets of every other jewel, not in some knotted-together causal scaffolding binding the gems together. Now that we have a wireless network available to us as a paradigm, perhaps its time to retire the fisherman’s snare.

I understand the intention behind using the word “interconnected.” If every act tainted by greed or hatred creates and reinforces an illusory sense of self by its “holding on” or “pushing away,” and if this falsely constructed self becomes a source of alienation and suffering, then surely the elimination of the “separate self” will result in awakening to a much wider picture of reality. All this is true, but when the little word “separate” is added, it suggests that what one opens to is a non-separate self. But I think the early Buddha would consider this to be just trading a problem for a much bigger problem.

The quandary of the human condition is not that we are connected to too limited an object and need to connect instead to a larger object. Rather it is that the very mechanism of connectivity, attachment, is inherently a cause of suffering. All connections are limiting because by nature, and often unwittingly, they follow the channels of our desires. We want to connect with what is beautiful and gratifying in ourselves, in others and in the world, but are less enthusiastic about connecting with evil, with cruelty, and with disease. The webs we spin are by and large the projection of our desires into the space we inhabit, and more often than not are meant to snare the objects of our heart’s content or shield us against pain.

The Buddha is not telling us to be disconnected in the sense of uncaring or selfish—quite the contrary. But he is pointing out something very subtle about human nature. Perhaps what we need is to coin a new word, something like *internonattachedness*. By all means let’s share this universe with everyone and everything else inhabiting it, but let’s maybe learn to do it in a way that allows things to be more naturally as they are. We’ll probably find here a more authentic intimacy.

There is nothing inherently connected about dependently co-arising phenomena. They are merely arising together in experience. The question is, How will we hold ourselves in the midst of this process? The more *interconnected* we become, the more bound in the net of conditioned phenomena we may find ourselves. I think the Buddha was pointing a way out of all this, but it is not through getting further connected. It has more to do with getting *less connected*, less entangled, and less attached.

—Andrew Olendzki



A Tiny Dot in a Vast Universe

An interview with
Issho Fujita

For the last eighteen years, Reverend Issho Fujita has been the resident teacher at Pioneer Valley Zendo, a Soto Zen practice center in Charlemont, western Massachusetts. He has taught a weekend retreat on Dogen Studies at BCBS each year for the last ten years. He has recently decided to move his family back to Japan. The Insight Journal talked with him about his hopes and aspirations in such a move.

"I am inspired to translate the physicality of Zen into new language."

Would you talk a little bit about what it was like growing up in Japan and how it connects to your interest in Buddhism?

I was born in 1954 and my parents did not belong to a Buddhist priestly family, as is usually the case with Japanese people who become Buddhist priests. My father was a salary man, my mother was a nurse, and we all lived with my grandparents. I thus grew up in a very typical Japanese household.

Like most Japanese families, we followed Shinto and a form of Buddhism which, in our case, was the Shingon sect. For Shinto ceremonies, my grandparents would come out each morning, face the rising sun, clap their hands and bow their heads. Then they would come inside and do the Buddhist ceremony, which consisted of changing the water, tea, and rice on the small family altar and cleaning it. They would chant a short *dharani* [protection formula] from the Shingon tradition. Of course, they didn't know what the *dharani* meant or even why it was done. My grandparents knew few historical facts about Kukai [the ninth century founder of Shingon Buddhism], but they believed him to be someone like a god. They did not even

know that Shingon was an esoteric school of Buddhism. For them Shingon was a religion all by itself.

Growing up in this environment, I had no serious connection with Buddhism or Buddhist teachings. Then at the age of ten I had an experience which seemed to change my life. I was riding my bike when I looked up and saw the sky filled with stars. I was struck by the realization that I was just a tiny, tiny dot in a vast universe. The realization that "I'm here as a speck of dust" seemed overwhelming at the time. It triggered in me some serious existential questioning about the meaning of life.

I started reading books about philosophy and science; I wanted to know what the "original universe" was. By the time I graduated from high school at the age of seventeen, I was going through an existential crisis. In my high school year book, I wrote that I would rather be a skinny Socrates than a fat pig. This was my attempt to say that I was not interested in getting an education for the sake of getting a job, but that I wanted my life to be changed.

My interests throughout my high school years had been in hard sciences, but when I was studying to enter Tokyo

University I changed my interest from science to philosophy. Tokyo University is the Harvard of Japan. When I chose the philosophy track, over law and economics, my parents were really disappointed, because they thought I was throwing away an opportunity for getting prestigious jobs and positions. But still their disappointment did not produce a big family conflict.

What was your experience at Tokyo University like?

There was mainly an atmosphere of apathy all around. Japan was going through its own particular process in the post-war years, when prosperity was on the rise but Japanese people were not sure of their own identity in those rapidly changing times. Over a period of time, I changed my focus from philosophy to psychology. I took courses in Freudian psychology, because I was very interested in what Freud had to say about the unconscious and what it might mean for inner transformation. My interests at that time were in clinical and developmental psychology. I also became very interested in Aikido and body movement.

After completing my undergraduate degree, I entered the graduate school at Tokyo University and stayed there for five years, completing a Master's degree and enrolling in a doctoral program. But that seemed to be a dead end. None of it seemed to provide any answers to the deeper problems of human existence, and I felt quite frustrated.

It was at that time that I met a teacher of Chinese medicine. This particular discipline was originally from China but had been modified according to Japanese patterns. This teacher was also a student of Rinzai Zen, and he told me that in order to be a healer or a doctor you have to know yourself very clearly. At his suggestion, I did a seven-day winter *sesshin* [meditation retreat] at Enkakujii temple in Kamakura. I had no background or preparation for such an intense *sesshin*, and it was really hard both physically and psychologically. But I was very impressed with the practice, so I continued to attend the *sesshins* at Enkakujii. And also I attended weekend *zazen* [sitting] gatherings at a temple in Tokyo for about a year. I became interested in the idea of becoming a monk at this time, and through karmic connection, I finally visited Antaiji Temple to check it out. I decided to stay there to practice full time.

Tell us something about the history of Antaiji Temple.

Antaiji was actually founded and funded in the 1920s, outside of Tokyo, by a lay person who wanted it to be a place for scholar-monks, primarily graduates of Komazawa University in Kyoto, which was then a Soto Zen school. During World War II the temple was largely abandoned. Sawaki Roshi used it as a resting place during his travels. When my teacher, Koho Watanabe, inherited Antaiji from Koho Uchiyama Roshi, the dharma heir of Sawaki Roshi, he decided to sell the temple and buy a whole village in the north, in the snowy country of Hyogo prefecture. This village had also been abandoned, so they were able to purchase a huge area of land with the money they got from selling the urban temple. The new Antaiji was established in the early seventies under the leadership of

Watanabe Roshi. It followed the lifestyle of Ch'an schools from old China, with the monks growing their own food.

Antaiji is not a certified monastery of the Soto Zen establishment, which means it has nothing to do with priestly qualifications. It had to survive on its own. There were an average of seventeen to eighteen monks during the six years I stayed at Antaiji. It was a practicing community, and there were quite a few Westerners too. Then my teacher asked me to go to a monastery in Kyushu for one year and be the training monk there. But soon after my arrival in Kyushu I got a call from my teacher asking me if I wanted to go to America and take care of a temple there. It took me about ten seconds to think about it and say yes. I arrived at Charlemont in July, 1987.

Most people try to fit Buddhist teachings into their existing ideas.

What was the idea behind sending you to America?

The Pioneer Valley Zendo had been established about seventeen years earlier by the collaboration of Antaiji and American Zen practitioners, and there had been three monks from Japan who had been resident teachers here. So there was a tradition of a Japanese monk as a practice leader at Valley Zendo. When the monk before me decided to leave Valley Zendo, my teacher asked me to take over the responsibilities here. There was no specific plan, except to just live here and be a practice leader.

What did you find when you arrived?

There was already a small sangha here, so it was a smooth transition. We would have at least seven or eight people for day-long sittings each Sunday. Taitetsu Unno, who was then a professor at Smith College, also came to greet me, and he asked me to lead weekly sittings at Smith College.

It was all very new to me. I had never been in the position of a teacher before. But the transition was made easier by the fact that Valley Zendo was a place of practice. So I could lead practice sessions through my own example. Giving talks was hard, because I had not done this before. Also, I had to give the talks in English, which meant having to learn how to translate Japanese words into English in a way that conveyed the spirit of practice. It helped that I was giving talks to seasoned practitioners, which made it easier to convey the spirit to them. It was perhaps somewhat more difficult in weekly sitting at Smith College, and later at Mount Holyoke and Amherst colleges.

You have personally been greatly inspired by Dogen's teachings. How were you able to include those teachings in your talks or teachings?

This happened primarily at the Barre Center for Buddhist Studies. The format of the weekend workshops here was quite different from the practice sessions at Valley Zendo, and it was designed to add a scholarship element to practice. So it has been enjoyable and valuable for me to come here each year and share my understanding of Dogen with other people.

In your teachings you have laid great emphasis on the posture in *zazen* practice as well as body movement. Can you talk about it some more?

As I have said earlier, I was interested in Aikido and other martial arts when I was a student at Tokyo University. In the practice of *shikan-taza* [just sitting], there is so much emphasis on posture that it excludes everything else. One way to express this is to say that *shikan-taza* practice is physical rather than mental. In other words, breakthroughs comes in the body rather than through words. I have always been interested in the physicality of Zen practice. This aspect has been neglected in Japan, and I have been interested in digging out this neglected aspect and re-incorporating it in my teaching *shikan-taza*.

The Buddha's teachings are revolutionary—they challenge both the social and scholarly Buddhisms of Japan.

After some years at Valley Zendo, I took courses in various body-based therapies such as the Alexander and Feldenkrais methods. It has helped me to understand more deeply the musculature of the body, and how a correct understanding of zazen posture must involve this kind of knowledge. I am inspired to translate the physicality of Zen into new language. As I said earlier, for me the spirituality of Zen is its physicality. That's why sitting upright is so important. It allows for the breath to circulate freely in the body. This free circulation of the breath is the basis of all healing. This is perhaps an old idea from yoga, and I am trying to find "spiritual" breakthroughs in and through the body. For example, "letting go" should be understood not only as a psychological quality but also as a physical one. I believe it cannot be truly realized without attaining "somatic letting go," which is a kind of relaxation at the deep core of the body.

Talking of spiritual things, what has been your experience in working with practitioners in America?

One of the things I found over and over again is that most people want to know how to handle their emotions, especially anger. This concern is not predominant for Japanese practitioners, and it was a challenge for me how to respond to these concerns. I think dealing with emotions was also the largest issue for undergraduate students when I taught weekly sittings at the local colleges. There seemed to be a strong tendency among them to take everything too personally. In other words, they tend to believe that they can and should control everything. This makes their life harder, sometimes

unnecessarily. Zazen can be a counter balance against this tendency.

In moving back to Japan after eighteen years in America, what do you expect to find there, both easy and difficult?

I like to think that I am returning with a broader perspective than I left with eighteen years ago. In Japan, there is a stereotypical image of the priest which will be very hard for me to deal with. A priest is a person who owns a temple, has a congregation, and has a social role to play in his community. I have no interest in being a temple priest. I never had that interest. Yet when I go back there I will still have a shaved head and priest's clothes, even though they are working clothes and not fancy robes. It will be hard to explain to people where I fit in. The entire Japanese society is built around people fitting in a particular slot. It is not comfortable for people who don't fit in.

The temple priests use an old-fashioned language when speaking of Buddhism, which appeals to their own congregations but turns off younger people who have gone through a secular education. I hope that somehow I can speak to these younger people in a language that is meaningful to them and that addresses the real problems of their life.

What are your thoughts of the New Buddhism or Critical Buddhism in today's Japan?

The problem of Japanese Buddhism seems to be that there are only two kinds of participation: social or scholarly. By social I mean the function of the temple priest in his congregation, mainly

performing the funeral rites. The other side is the scholarly person who just writes about Buddhism in a university setting without any real engagement with the problems of life.

The movements calling themselves the New Buddhism are not really changing anything. They are creating new congregations, mainly in large cities, but are providing the same kind of structure that a temple priest does in his village temple.

But the Buddha's teachings are revolutionary—they challenge both the social and scholarly Buddhisms of Japan. There is a need in laypeople for what the Buddha is teaching, and I believe they are open to these teachings if someone can talk to them about how they can address the problems of their life. The big challenge of Japanese Buddhism today is how to organize a response to the real needs of the people.

Can you give us some idea of how you want to present your own response?

I believe there are two gates to Buddhist practice: deconstruction and reconstruction. Most people try to fit Buddhist teachings into their existing ideas. They are using Buddhism to express what they want to believe. This is equally true in both Japan and America. In America, people are trying to reconstruct Buddhism according to their own ideas, but they are not really interested in first deconstructing their own assumptions. People are looking for a quick fix, when the change required is at a fundamental level.

The Buddhist term *soto* in Soto Zen means "sweeping out" or cleaning up the

I hope people interested in Buddhism get excited by the deeply creative possibilities in these teachings.

old. Before you build a house, the work of cleaning up or clearing the ground needs to be done. We need to change the basic assumptions about life itself. But neither temple priests nor Buddhist scholars in Japan are doing this. The social movements of Japanese Buddhism don't see the necessity of drastically changing ordinary thinking. They do not address the basic anxieties people feel about life, and are thus losing their appeal.

I think the material success in Japan in the postwar years has been quite confusing. People's lives have lost their focus and meaning. Many people feel an emptiness in their life, but they don't know how to fix it. Buddhist teachings have a lot to say about the meaning and purpose of life, but the solution is not in just creating another organization. Even when people speak about Buddhist ideas and the vocabulary is there, it's mostly an empty sound because people don't have an idea of what's behind the vocabulary.

I have found that even the community of priests in Japan is unable to talk about these basic problems. So it has been impossible for me to join them in any organizational sense. My teacher said often that being a Buddhist means to be critical of the mainstream culture. This was the Buddha's own situation, as an outsider to mainstream culture. When Buddhism becomes mainstream, something goes wrong. I am not afraid of being an outsider, and I want to take my chances in what kind of difference I can make back in Japan. It may be that I will sound like a stranger, because so much has happened and changed in my own thinking during eighteen years in America. I am ready for this difficulty. At the same time, I am excited about my new life and its possibilities.

How do you plan to incorporate your interest in Dogen scholarship into whatever you do in coming years?

I am not very ambitious, and I don't want to create a personal agenda. My interest in Dogen has always been personal, in the sense that this scholarship is not central to how I teach zazen and shikan-taza. But it has always been greatly stimulating for me. My association with BCBS has deepened my interest in *vipassana* [insight meditation] and Pali traditions, and I see Dogen reflecting these earlier teachings in so many different ways.

Even though Dogen has such a great mind, his interest is first and foremost in the authentic practice. So when I read the Pali *suttas* [discourses], especially the Sutta Nipata, I hear echoes of Dogen in it; and when I read Dogen, I hear echoes of the Sutta Nipata. For me they become mirrors of one another. Reading the *suttas* helps me understand Dogen a little better. Even though Dogen did not have access to Pali texts, my sense is that he fully understood the message of those early texts and was inspired by them.

Do you have final thoughts for the readers of the *Insight Journal*?

I find it inspiring that today we have access to all Buddhist texts, and there is a possibility of an integrated



"In order to be healed, you have to know yourself very clearly."

learning of Buddhist teachings for anyone who is interested. We don't have to be entrapped by sectarian or cultural views of Buddhism. We can rise above them. It's possible to get access to DNA, so to speak. Dogen distilled the entire Buddhadharma into one single theme of "just sitting." That was his way of changing the DNA. Today there are even more possibilities of doctrinal refinements. I hope people interested in Buddhist teachings have a deep curiosity. I hope they get excited by the deeply creative possibilities in these teachings, rather than exploring them as a mere hobby or idea.

The Buddha's Last Word:

Care

Stephen Batchelor

At BCBS, September 2004

I would like to spend some time this morning exploring a very important idea the Buddha developed—the idea of care. Now many of you may not be familiar with this particular term, at least not put this way: care. It's usually translated... well, actually it's not usually translated as anything, and that's part of the problem.

APPAMĀDA

The word in Pali is *appamāda*, which is actually a negative term. The *a-*, as in Greek, means “not,” and *pamāda* translates as something like “heedlessness.” It's difficult to find an English term that gives the same positive sense. One of the examples: a person who is suffering from *pamāda* is a person who has somehow lost control. A drunk, somebody who's completely out of it on alcohol, is said to be in a state of *pamāda*, and we probably all have some sense of what that means—perhaps even in some cases from first-hand experience. It is a state in which one is really no longer very coherent; a state in which one is perhaps rather careless in what one says and what one does; a state in which one may in fact be quite unaware of what's going on, such that the next morning, when you meet the friends you were with the night before, you can't actually recall what it is they say that you did or said. In this sense *pamāda* is a loss of consciousness, or at least a rather chaotic, unfocused, unstructured kind of consciousness that very often leads to regret, and perhaps even to despair.

Appamāda is an absence of *pamāda*. But in Buddhist thought, when we say something is “not-*x*,” in this case “not-*pamāda*,” that doesn't simply mean an absence of it. For example, a cup of water is not heedless; that clearly isn't what's meant here. The negative *a-*, not, actually implies the opposite of. So *appamāda*, if we follow the example I've just given, is the opposite of being drunk; the opposite of being completely spaced out; the opposite of being inebriated or out of control.

The difficulty with this term is expressed by the fact that different translators in different Buddhist traditions can't actually agree on what is the best word in English. Some of the terms which we may have come across include vigilance, diligence, heedfulness and conscientiousness. One German translator, Ernst Steinkellner, translated it as *wachsame Sorge*. *Wachsame* means wakeful or watchful, and *Sorge* means something like care or concern. So watchful concern. Or watchful care.

FAMOUS LAST WORDS

Now, this might of course make us think that care is not much different from mindfulness or awareness. And that's true. In fact, in some of the Buddhist commentarial literature, *appamāda* is often included as the seventh step of the eightfold path, which is Right Attention or Right Mindfulness. There is clearly a sense that care is a carefulness in how we attend to things. It has to do with being present rather than being absent; with being here and fully aware (which we seek in meditation); with finding ourselves and cultivating awareness, as opposed to being forgetful, absent or drifting off. It comes back to a quality of presence of mind.

But I think it's also more than that. Notice that it is the very last word the Buddha uttered, at least according to the Maha-Parinibbana Sutta. Whether the Buddha actually said them or not (after all, we can't really know) those around him at the time, and subsequent tradition, came to consider—or perhaps did in fact correctly remember—that this was the point the Buddha made just as he was on the verge of his own death. So clearly *appamāda*, both for the Buddha and for the tradition that immediately followed him, is regarded as a key. That is to say it is something to be cultivated, something to be developed, and somehow synthesizes everything he taught.

“Conditions are subject to decay,” he famously said. “Work out your salvation with care.” This has become a rather famous citation, particularly in the version of Rhys Davids, the early English Pali translator, who translated it as, “Work out your salvation with diligence.” This is a beautiful English phrase; it's very euphonious. It was borrowed by T.S. Eliot and appears as a line in his play, “The Cocktail Party.” I can't quite remember the context... But again, it's interesting how that struck Eliot in some way, and I find that it's very striking for me too.

Now, we have to be a little bit careful—and here we get into a bit of textual analysis. Work out your salvation with care. Work out your salvation with diligence. In the original Pali, there is no suggestion whatsoever of the idea of salvation. If anything, the text, which is slightly unclear, says proceed onwards, or strive onwards with *appamāda*. Just as Eliot borrowed it for his literary purposes, Rhys Davids is here paraphrasing and subtly transforming a passage from one of the letters to the Corinthians of St. Paul. Some of you are perhaps familiar with where Paul, at least in the standard English translation, says “Work out your salvation with fear and trembling.” I think it's rather a clever shift: work out your salvation with care, with diligence. However we read that exact phrase, the point of *appamāda* is plainly this idea of care.

The reason I've chosen to translate it as *care* is because I'm looking for a term that is more embracing than diligence or mindfulness, each of which we can think of quite easily as particular states of mind or particular frames of consciousness. Care seems to encompass a wider complex of mental states, and this becomes evident in another passage which I haven't cited in full; it's in the Samyutta Nikaya [3:17], which are the Connected Discourses of the Buddha, where the Buddha compares care, or *appamāda*, to an elephant's footprint. The elephant's footprint is considered to be the largest footprint of every animal in the jungle, and a footprint in which all other footprints of all other animals are able to fit. So he uses the image of the elephant's footprint as a kind of embracing—one might say totalizing—concept which includes whatever other virtues, whatever other qualities of mind, are to be practiced. It's something that holds the whole thing together.

There are those who might even talk of it as a holistic concept. One can imagine that a man who has been teaching and exploring ideas and practices in many different contexts for over forty-five years of teaching, might seek some kind of overarching idea that somehow held the rest in place. I wonder in this respect whether care or *appamāda* is a shorthand for describing the character—in the widest sense—of a kind of person who is committed to this sort of path. If his teaching were to be put into one word, perhaps, it would seem that the Buddha might have chosen the word *appamāda*. He does say in the Anguttara Nikaya [1:6], *Monks, I know of no other single thing of such power to cause the arising of wholesome states, if not yet arisen, or to cause the waning of unwholesome states, if already arisen, as appamāda.*



The word “care” somehow synthesizes everything the Buddha taught.

COMMITTED TO GOOD

A sanga, a Mahayana thinker with a brilliant mind who thought through a lot of these ideas with considerable clarity, defines *appamāda* as that which energetically cherishes the good and guards the mind against what gives rise to affliction. Here we have a sense of *appamāda* which has a primarily moral or ethical orientation. *Appamāda* is not, therefore,

There is something protective about a commitment to what is good.

just about being watchful or awake or alert. And certainly it's not, I think, intelligible entirely as diligence. Diligence to me is too neutral a term; we can be diligent in doing all sorts of terrible things. Stalin was diligent in repressing the Kulaks, but I don't think he had *appamāda*. *Appamāda* clearly has a moral quality to it. It has to do with, as Asanga says, energetically cherishing the good.

How might he mean this word, "energetically?" It's something we apply ourselves to with some conscious effort. *Appamāda* is not just the occasional mindful thought or attentive state of mind, it's actually a commitment to being attentive. It's more than just a meditative state of mind, it's more than just being mindful. It has to do with that primary ethical or moral orientation we have in life, with which we bring into being whatever activity we're engaged in. Whether in formal meditation, in our interactions with other people, in our social concerns, or in our political choices, it's the energetic cherishing of what we regard as good.

Now don't ask me what *good* means—this is a rather large question; but since we're in a context here of Buddhist ideas, we will take the notion of good as understood in Buddhism. And of course the great symbol of the good, the summum bonum, the highest good, in Buddhism is awakening or enlightenment, which is embedded—and I think it only really becomes real and alive when embedded—in the figure of the Buddha. We can't reduce the optimal good to wisdom, any more than we can reduce it to compassion. The two are somehow fused; they're embodied in a being. Symbolically we think of the historical Buddha and how he's come to be represented. What I feel we are concerned with, as a practice, is what a human being can optimally become. The highest good, if we're Buddhist, is an image, a sense, or an intuition of what it is that we as confused people, and suffering people, can in the course of our lives aspire to and become.

So *appamāda* is a word for care. (But it's more than that somehow... It's very difficult to find the right word in English.) *Appamāda* is that intention which guides us and directs us and inspires us, that energizes us, that commits us to what it is we consider to be good. We can summarize that as wisdom, compassion, tolerance—all the virtues Buddhism encourages. But remember that *appamāda* is the frame that encloses them all. In other words, *appamāda* is perhaps best thought of not as a state of mind, but more of a perspective, an orientation, or a sensibility. It is a commitment to what we honor as good, and at the same time, it guards the mind against what gives rise to affliction. There is something protective about this commitment to what is good, guarding us against those impulses and drives and habits of mind that seek to subvert and overwhelm and distract us from the goal. All in all, I think it is a most suitable last word of the Buddha.

MEDITATING WITH CARE

Let's look at the idea of care in a more practical sense, for a moment. Just reflect back on the last period of meditation we did here, or any period of meditation, unless we have an exceptionally perfect one. The instructions for what we did were very simple: just sit still, be attentive to the breath, notice what is occurring within and around you. Don't get carried away by errant thoughts and feelings, or memories and plans, just stay present. This seems to be a very simple thing that we're being asked to do. But although it is simple, as we've no doubt discovered, it is not easy. In fact, what often rather upsets us or bewilders us is how extraordinarily difficult this very simple thing can be!

We've just plumped ourselves down on the cushion, and the bell has gone, and we're a little bit charged up and conscious: "OK, I'm going to spend the next thirty minutes sitting." Usually for the first few minutes everything goes very well. But as soon as it becomes routine, or as soon as we let our attention to the task fade away, what happens? We find ourselves suddenly invaded by thoughts and feelings and images and memories and fantasies that we have not intended in any sense to give rise to; they're suddenly there. And what's curious also is that we don't actually (or at least very rarely) notice when they arise.

We're sitting here on our cushion, focused on what we consider our sense of what is good, namely being mindful, being present, being conscious, being aware. And suddenly we're no longer mindful and present and conscious and aware. We're not actually here at all. We're off somewhere else. We are thrown into a kind of forgetting, a kind of forgetfulness. Sometimes, if a very powerful fantasy takes hold, it's very vivid, and clear, and we keep replaying it and indulging in it. But very often what carries us off is something that, when we come out of it, we can barely recall.



We've probably had that experience of sitting in meditation, everything going fine—and then the bell goes. You kind of come to; you actually might be a little bit woken up by this bell. Not that you've been asleep, but you've simply not being present. You've been elsewhere, and aware dimly that many minutes have elapsed since the last time you noticed your breath. And although it must have been something engaging to have taken you away, you can no longer even remember it. You might dimly recall some fantasy that's now receding rapidly; a bit like when you wake up in the morning sometimes and you've had a very vivid dream, but as you open your eyes, all that remains is a kind of dim, dull recollection that you seek to claw back to—but it's gone.

What this shows us is the extent to which we live much of our lives in a kind of forgetfulness. In any kind of activity that becomes routine—like driving a car, for example—it's very easy for the motor functions of the organism to take over and for the mind just to drift, and we're simply not aware.

Now this I think is a way of talking about *pamāda*, the opposite of *appamāda*. I gave the example at the beginning: the state of being drunk, of forgetfulness, of unconsciousness. In this sense *appamāda*, or care, is really about being fully conscious, being fully present. And being fully present is what guards the mind against what gives rise to affliction. As long as we're present, it's actually very difficult for those impulsive, errant, distracted, thoughts to take hold. As soon as that presence of mind slips, the next thing you know...we're off.

In the writings of the 8th century Indian Buddhist poet, philosopher, and moralist writer Shantideva, the afflictions—which is how I'm translating the *kilesas*, the defilements, the negative states of mind—are compared to bands of thieves who roam around us, waiting for an opportunity, he says, to invade the house of our mind and steal its treasures. He compares mindfulness to a guardian at the gateway of the senses that is continually alert to the potential incursions of attachment, aversion, greed, jealousy, whatever, that are—and feel like—things that are waiting to kind of invade us. This image helps point out that *appamāda*, this kind of careful, conscious awareness, is the very opposite of that loss of attention that allows us to be forgetful, carried away, or lost.

Now of course the problem is that when we are distracted in that way, we are not conscious of being unconscious—by definition. If we were conscious of what was going on at that time, we would not be distracted. Distraction is something that we are necessarily not aware of. We might be aware of the first moment; let's say, a seductive image coming into the mind. But when it takes hold, we lapse into a kind of semi-conscious—if not completely unconscious—state. That is *pamāda*, the loss of consciousness. It doesn't mean that you then cease to function; we don't suddenly collapse into a blubbing heap on the floor. We still appear to be functioning perfectly adequately and perfectly well. I think the alarming truth is that we spend a lot of our lives like that; probably a lot more than we would rather admit.

The practice of *appamāda*, of taking care, is to be continually on our guard about the loss of consciousness. Then instead of consciousness being just a series of moments separated by gulfs of unconsciousness that constitute our day, our lives become more and more present, alert, attentive, here, mindful, rather than the opposite.

This shows us the extent to which we live much of our lives in a kind of forgetfulness.

Lights Upon the Path:

Great Faith

Great Courage

Great Questioning

Martine Batchelor

At BCBS, September 2004

This evening I would like to follow up on what Stephen was saying in the morning about being careful, about energy, and about protecting, but I would like to look at the subject more from the perspective of the Zen tradition. Zen talks about cultivating three great attitudes—great faith, great courage and great questioning—and I think it is here that we find a continuation of the Buddha’s teaching about care, energy and protection.

Faith, I think, corresponds to the cherishing of the good mentioned earlier today, because faith is really about our potential and what it is we value in life. Sitting on a retreat is itself an act of faith; it is a way of saying “Yes!” to your own potential. Courage is a form of energy and enthusiasm, but also speaks to letting go and going beyond. Again, on a retreat we are asked to let go of what we think our limits to be and go beyond that. And questioning has to do with coming to understand our key concerns, and can itself be a form of vigilance requiring clarity and alertness. Our master, Kusan Sunim, used to say “Be calm and still while being fresh and vivid,” and I think he was saying to bring a certain liveliness to wherever you are in your life. So I would like to take each of these great qualities and see how we can look at them, both in our lives and in our practice.

Great Faith

Great faith is faith in our own potential. We tend to have some faith when we begin to practice, but we are not totally sure about it. Great faith really starts when we have a glimpse of how we can be in a non-tied, non-tense, non-grasping state. Meditation can give us a glimpse of that. But we can also experience it in ourselves in our daily life. I find it interesting that people will come on a retreat and tell you “Oh, meditation, nothing is happening.” (We generally think something should happen.) “I’ve been meditating for ten years. Nothing is happening.” And when I say, “But has it made a change in your life?” they will always respond, “Oh yes, definitely.” So something is happening! But maybe not what we think should happen.

Great faith begins with our having a glimpse of that potential of how we can be. It doesn’t come from thinking about it or dreaming it, but from really experiencing it ourselves. When we sit in meditation, that’s just what we can do. And when we experience a little bit our potential of being, then also afterwards, in our life, we can begin to see moments where we are not so stuck, we’re not so tight anymore.

I presume that you came on this retreat because, when

you thought of doing golf instead, this seemed a little better. You came here because you had faith, in yourself and in your potential. I think this is a very important element of any retreat. But we have to be careful, since we often want something to happen when we sit in meditation. To me this is like not really trusting, not really having faith in ourselves. We might read in books that people are supposed to experience this, or experience that, and we think we should experience whatever we've read in books. But it is more important to see what is happening here in a singular human being with individual experience. That is when great faith is cultivated. Let's try looking at practice, not as achieving certain states of mind, but as a natural thing to do.

Meditation is like food—spiritual food. We need food every day, but we don't think "Oh, yes, something special must happen when we eat." You just eat, you just feed yourself. When in the morning you brush your teeth, you don't say, "Wow, that was such a great brushing of teeth. I am going to do this again." We just do it, because it is what we want to do, what feels good, what feels clean. Great faith is like that. It inspires us to really do the practice and experience for ourselves what is happening naturally.

We have faith when we come on retreat and let go of the outer circumstances of our lives. We come here, we're far away from our families, from our jobs, from our conditions... but what about letting go inside? This is what great faith is about. It helps us overcome some of the ambushes of the mind Stephen spoke of this morning, giving us the power to let go and to be more at ease in this very moment.

But an interesting thing happens when we actually try to do this. Here we are in this wonderful environment [BCBS]. It's so quiet and green and beautiful here. (We were just in New York a few days ago—what a difference!) And you feel, "Wow; it should be so easy to meditate." But we still find it difficult. In this case perhaps faith can help us appreciate for these few days the good fortune of these very good conditions and use them to practice even better.

But of course we can not stay at BCBS all the time. This is not real life. Your family is not here. You have to go and live with other people. You have to have your life outside of here. You also have to practice in your own environment. So it is important to also let go of better conditions. How can we use these beautiful conditions with care and diligence, so that when we go back to our complex, noisy, modern circumstances the practice doesn't remain here, but is taken with us? It is in the midst of confusion that we most need great faith.

People often say to me, "It's not the same for me at home. I really don't have the time to meditate." But I ask, "Do you watch TV? And for how long?" To me this is an interesting question: Why is it so much easier to sit in front of the TV than to cultivate concentration and inquiry in meditation? I think great faith—and perhaps some diligence—would make a big difference to what we choose to do.

When we practice we have faith at the beginning, which is the faith that yes, this sitting is good for us, and so we do it. Then there is faith in the middle [stage], when it truly becomes

our own because we experience its benefit for ourselves. If you've meditated for ten years and it truly hasn't made any difference, then I would say do something else. Take up Tai Chi, or even golf. Meditation is supposed to make a difference to the way we feel about ourselves, the way we feel about others, and the way we relate to ourselves and others. It is not just about creating inner peace, which I do think is important. It's also creating a much more creative and responsive engagement with others and with the world.

When we have that experience of the practice ourselves, it gives us the energy to really walk on the path Stephen was talking about. Faith is like the sun behind the clouds; no matter what happens, the sun is shining. The sun is there, still bright, even if here it is stormy and dark and we're totally wet and covered over. Great faith is that sun, shining by itself, holding for us the potential that we can access and cultivate in our lives.

So faith is the very ground of practice. But faith alone is not enough. We also have to do something, and for that we need to be inspired. Once faith has brought us to a retreat, to the meditation cushion, what is it that inspires us to sit for an hour, or a whole day, or, in so many cases I saw in Korea, for years at a time? What is it that brings movement, energy, and enthusiasm for the practice? What arises naturally from great faith? Great courage.

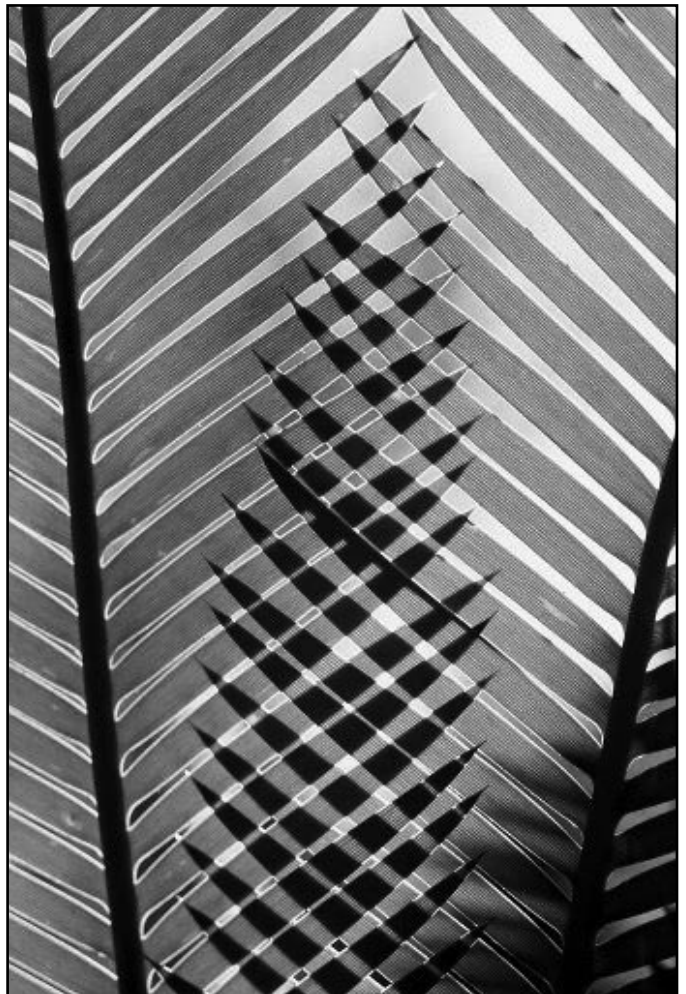


Photo by Al Billings



Great Courage

There are different kinds of courage, of course. It is important to find just the right courage, with which we can try to do the best we can in our circumstances

I met a nun once in Korea who seemed to me to have a very strong presence. She was just peeling potatoes, but there was something special in her energy. When I asked about her I was told that she'd been in silence for ten years, and had just come out of silence a few months before. You might think, as I did, , "Wow, she must have amazing courage!" And it's true! She had courage because she was inspired to do it, not because somebody told her to. The courage we have comes out of our aspiration, comes out of the kind of faith that says: "Yes I can do that. Yes, I am inspired to do that!" It is the same for my friend, immersed in household duties, who sits every morning at 3:00 am. Or the people who sit all night in very noisy, chaotic places. All practice takes courage.

What is the courage we require on this retreat? What is the courage we require in our daily life? It seems to me it is the courage to go beyond our habits. When you look closely during a retreat, and ask, What is the greatest obstacle? What is it that limits you, that stops you from really being fully present and awake? If you look, generally it is our habits, our patterns.

A meditation retreat is a very good opportunity to notice these. You can notice mental habits, emotional habits, and physical habits. And it is interesting to notice from time to time, What is it that distracts me? Where do I go? What do I do? You sit in meditation, watching the breath...and then you go off. Many people say, "Oh this is terrible! I can't count the breath for more than a few seconds. Obviously I can't be a good meditator." But I would say you have a great opportunity here to look: What goes on? What is it that takes me away, again and again?

Perhaps you find that you have a tendency to daydream. You might be sitting here...the breath...the breath...what if I were a willow tree? Or what if I became the greatest enlightened person? Or whatever! You go off into this wonderful daydream. You are the actor, the director, and the screenwriter—you even serve the peanuts! And it's wonderful! And the time passes very fast. You hear the bell, and oh, such a pity, it was getting very interesting!

But even more interesting is the fact that we have this tendency to daydream, to ruminate, to plot vengeance or revenge, to make a fanciful story, to plan the retirement, the holiday, the shopping, or whatever. Some people count. They count how many shoes they have in their cupboards. People do all kind of things. It is worthwhile to look: What is it that I do when I stop being really present?

The mental habit of planning can be useful, but when it becomes a repetitive habit it locks us up. It is not a path which goes somewhere. We just go round and round and round. To go beyond this requires a lot of courage, not to fight these habits but to go beyond them. It takes some courage to be able to say, "Not now. Now I will come back to the breath."

Or we might see our emotional habits. Perhaps we have been lost in the feeling of joy or the feeling of sadness. Meditation does not mean to somehow not have the feeling, but to be with it in a different, more spacious, way. This too takes courage. It is an opportunity to see How does it feel, to be sad? Instead of being caught up in the feeling, we can try to know—to really know—how it feels to have the feeling.

Another habit we have is a physical habit. One of the greatest obstacles we have, both on retreat and at home, is comfort. We really are creatures of comfort. We love our comforts. This is one of the main themes of modern life! And of course it's good to be comfortable. But at the same time, if we get stuck with that, we can never go beyond a very narrow set of physical limitations.

I remember my first retreat in Korea, when we would sit for 50 minutes, walk for 10 minutes, and then repeat the cycle 10 times a day from 3:00 am until 9:00 at night. (It seems tough, but it's an easy schedule compared with what some of the monks and nuns do.) When I started to do this, it was excruciating. I had pain in the back, I had pain in the knee, and it hurt. So I would sit for a while and then go off to help in the kitchen or do something else. I convinced myself this would be more useful than to just sit there and have a terrible time.

After some time, Master Kusan, our teacher, came and sat with us. I tried really hard to just sit there and meditate, and did not move, but after an hour or so I went off. When I returned the Master said something in Korean which I had to look up in the dictionary (since my Korean was very poor then). I was led to a word that means "to bear beyond strength." He was pointing me toward the great courage that we all need to go beyond what we are used to, beyond what we find comfortable. And that was actually a great gift. It helped realize that they had been doing this practice over the last 1500 years, and that if they did not die of it, maybe I can do it too!

And so I did it. And then after that I was often the first one to arrive at the beginning of any sit, and now sometimes the great courage seems truly immense. It gives us the energy to move beyond, to explore, and to experiment with the edges of our comfort. That is what we need, because we have a tendency to become stuck in our habits and unable to move.

When I was Korea, I spent half of my time daydreaming. And what was I daydreaming about? That I was going to go to a hermitage, and I was going to practice so hard I was going to be awakened, and then I would save everybody. Then, of course,

I realized I was not meditating at all. I was daydreaming about meditating. It's only when I realized this that I was able to stop doing that and began to really do the job.

I once went to speak with a nun I really respect, to ask her about meditation. "What about practice?" I asked her. "Practice? Oh, just do it. There is nothing to say about practice. You just have to do it. You do it in the meditation hall, you do it in your daily life. There is nothing to say." It was very beautiful to me. She was showing great faith, and also great courage, the courage to just do it.

Great Questioning

Then there is questioning, which I think is essential. Stephen and I are both very much into questioning. We think it's important to inquire, to reflect, to use your own wisdom again and again. But questioning, too, can be done in many different ways. You have to be careful that the questioning does not become a negative, existential questioning. When questioning is balanced by the anchor of faith, it is not an endless, pointless questioning of everything that leaves you feeling in a terrible, dark place.

One of our good friends in Korea is questioning the whole organizational structure of Buddhism in that country. Dismayed by the extent of wealth and other influences on the tradition, he has embarked on a three year begging and walking trip all over Korea to demonstrate a more renunciate way. It's really quite amazing. Here is one person, questioning the way it is, by living a different life. Whether people agree or not, one has to admire the way in which his whole life is lived as a form of questioning the system.

At a conference with hundreds of women talking about Buddhism and practice and things like that, I heard a nun presenting a paper about vipassana practice. In a country so dominated by Zen, I asked her why she did vipassana practice and she simply said "It's more efficient. Much faster!" I was impressed by the way she tried things out, and was not blocked by habit or opinion. By questioning the mainstream position, she was walking the path with different steps.

These are examples of one sort of questioning, but deep questioning can also go on in our practice. The key element of great questioning is the power to see clearly and to transform. In meditation there is concentration, surely, but there is also inquiry. We are not just watching the breath, but are also on a sort of guided meditation inside the breath.

We look inside the experience of breathing, and see that it is changing. How do you feel about your breath? How do you think about it, when

you think of the breath? We generally imagine that we have a cocoon of air around us, but actually, when we sit, all of us together are breathing each other's air all the time. How more intimate can we be? That my air goes into your lungs, your air goes into mine. We are breathing each other. We are breathing the trees, the birds, everything! But we generally don't see this.

With great questioning we look through the misperception of me and mine, which keeps us limited, keeps us blocked, and stops us from seeing the collective nature of life and of all experience. To bring such great questioning is an important element in meditation, and in life too, because the questioning is what gives us choices. It is painful, but people so often feel stuck. People feel they don't have choices. They can either do this, which is rather terrible, or they can do that, which is not much better. Stuck.

But meditation practice can help us develop creative questioning. We can start to know what is going on. Meditation is not meant to take us somewhere else, to some kind of pure, rarified state. It engages us totally into our existence. What is going on this moment? What is happening? What is conditioning whatever am I experiencing? How am I experiencing what I am experiencing? And what is the result of that? To me this what the meditation in daily life is about.

We sit in meditation on retreat to learn concentration and inquiry, so that we can look steadily into experience in our daily life. It is not an endless questioning of everything, but rather a creative questioning. Great questioning is not an intellectual questioning, but is very much an experiential questioning.

These three—great faith, great courage and great questioning—are like lights on the path. When we need help in finding our way, we can use them. Sometimes, with sufficient faith, we can look at suffering itself. Sometimes we have the courage to look at the person who is suffering. And sometimes we can reflect on it. Sometimes we can only sit in the midst of it all, just trying to be with the turbulence, and then we cry and are very sad. But when it's dark, and you want a little light to help you go to your home, these three lights can help guide us, and we can see we have choices.

I encourage you to cultivate these three great qualities during our time here together. Also, reflect on how you may be able to cultivate them in your daily life.





On these pages are organized some of the more important things said in the Pali texts about the hindrances. Some are global statements made about the hindrances generally (*left column*), some give specific information about each of the hindrances (*lower box*), while some are said about each hindrance in turn, (*each is to be placed, one after the other, in the position of the variable ...x...*). Taken as a whole, these teachings paint a pretty comprehensive picture of how to understand the hindrances, identify them in one's experience, and work with them both in meditation and in daily life.

There are these five hindrances. This noble eight-fold path is to be developed for direct knowledge of these five hindrances, for the full understanding of them, for their utter destruction, for their abandoning. (S45)

There are these five hindrances. [A certain person] is obstructed, hindered, blocked, and enveloped by these five hindrances. That he could know of see or realize a superhuman state, a distinction in knowledge and vision worthy of the noble ones—this is impossible. (M99)

There are these five obstacles, hindrances, which overspread the heart, which weaken insight...That a person, without being rid of these five obstacles, hindrances, which overspread the heart, which weaken insight, without strength and weak in insight, shall know his own good, shall know another's good, shall know the good of both, or shall realize the excellence of knowledge and insight proper to the noble ones, which goes beyond the human condition—that cannot be.

Suppose in the case of a mountain stream, winding here and there, swiftly flowing, taking all along with it, a man were to open watercourses into it from both sides; then indeed, the flow in mid-stream would be disturbed, swirled about and diverted, nor would the stream wind here and there, nor flow swiftly, nor take all along with it. (A5:51)

A person should consider thus: "Are the five hindrances abandoned in me?" If by reviewing, he knows thus: "The five hindrances are not abandoned in me," then he should make an effort to abandon those five hindrances. But if, by reviewing, he knows thus: "The five hindrances are abandoned in me," then he can abide happy and glad, training day and night in wholesome states. (M151)

References are to sections in the *Nikayas*: *Digha* (D), *Majjhima* (M), *Samyutta* (S), and *Anguttara* (A). The translation mostly follows Bhikkhu Bodhi (Wisdom). --A. Olendzki

There are these five debasements of gold by reason of which debased gold is neither pliable nor workable nor bright, but is brittle and of no use for the best work: iron, copper, tin, lead and silver.

In just the same way, there are these five debasements of the mind by reason of which a debased mind is neither pliable nor workable nor bright, but is brittle and not rightly composed for the destruction of the taints. (A5:23)

If [...x...] is present in himself, a monk knows that it is present.
If [...x...] is absent in himself, a monk knows that it is absent.
And he knows how unarisen [...x...] comes to arise, and he knows how the abandonment of arisen [...x...] comes about, and he knows how the non-arising of the abandoned [...x...] in the future will come about. (D22/M10)

SENSE DESIRE kāma-cchanda

Suppose there is a bowl of water, mixed with lac, turmeric, blue or crimson dye. If a man with good sight were to examine his own facial reflection in it, he would neither know nor see it as it really is. (A5:193)

ILL WILL vyāpāda

Suppose there is a bowl of water being heated over a fire, bubbling and boiling. If a man with good sight were to examine his own facial reflection in it, he would neither know nor see it as it really is. (A5:193)

SLOTH & TORPOR thīna-middha

Suppose there is a bowl water covered over with water plants and algae. If a man with good sight were to examine his own facial reflection in it, he would neither know nor see it as it really is. (A5:193)

RESTLESSNESS & REMORSE uddhacca-kukkucca

Suppose there is a bowl of water stirred by the wind, rippling, swirling, churned into wavelets. If a man with good sight were to examine his own facial reflection in it, he would neither know nor see it as it really is. (A5:193)

DOUBT vicikicchā

Suppose there is a bowl of water that is turbid, unsettled, muddy, placed in the dark. If a man with good sight were to examine his own facial reflection in it, he would neither know nor see it as it really is. (A5:193)

UNDERSTANDING THE HINDRANCES

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|---|---|---|
| <p>Equipped with this noble morality, with this noble restraint of the senses, with this noble contentment, he finds a solitary lodging, at the root of a forest tree, in a mountain cave or gorge, a charnel-ground, a jungle-thicket, or in the open air on a heap of straw. Then, having eaten after his return from the alms-round, he sits down cross-legged, holding his body erect, and establishes mindfulness before him.</p> <p>Abandoning [...x...], he abides with a mind freed from [...x...]; he purifies his mind of [...x...]. (D2)</p> | <p>When one dwells with a mind obsessed and oppressed by [...x...], and does not understand as it really is the escape from arisen [...x...].</p> <p>On that occasion one neither knows nor sees as it really is one's own good, the good of others, or the good of both. (A5:193)</p> | <p>By frequently giving attention to things that are a basis for [...x...], or when one attends carelessly, un arisen [...x...] arises and arisen [...x...] increases and expands.</p> <p>When one attends carefully, un arisen [...x...] does not arise and arisen [...x...] is abandoned. (S46)</p> |
| <p>Just as a man who had taken a loan to develop his business, and whose business had prospered, might pay off his old debts, and with what was left over could support a wife, might think: "Before this I developed my business by borrowing, but now it has prospered...", and he would rejoice and be glad about that. (D2)</p> | <p>I know of no other single thing of such power to cause the arising of sense desire, if not already arisen, or, if arisen, to cause its development and increase, as the thought of beauty. In one who gives careless attention to the thought of beauty, sense desire, if not already arisen, arises; or, if already arisen, is liable to increase and expand. (A1)</p> | <p>I know of no other single thing of such power to prevent the arising of sense desire, if not already arisen, or, if arisen, to cause its abandonment, as the thought of non-beauty. In one who gives careful attention to the thought of non-beauty, sense desire, if not already arisen, does not arise; or, if arisen, it is abandoned. (A1)</p> |
| <p>Just as a man who was ill, suffering, terribly sick, with no appetite and weak in body, might after a time recover, and regain his appetite and bodily strength, and he might think: "Before this I was ill, but now I have recovered...", and he would rejoice and be glad about that. (D2)</p> | <p>I know of no other single thing of such power to cause the arising of ill-will, if not already arisen, or, if arisen, to cause its development and increase, as the thought of dislike. In one who gives careless attention to the thought of dislike, ill-will, if not already arisen, arises; or, if already arisen, is liable to increase and expand. (A1)</p> | <p>I know of no other single thing of such power to prevent the arising of ill-will, if not already arisen, or, if arisen, to cause its abandonment, as the thought of loving-kindness. In one who gives careful attention to the thought of loving-kindness, ill-will, if not already arisen, does not arise; or, if arisen, it is abandoned. (A1)</p> |
| <p>Just as a man might be bound in prison, and after a time he might be freed from his bonds without any loss, with no deduction from his possessions. He might think: "Before this I was in prison, but now I am freed from my bonds...", and he would rejoice and be glad about that. (D2)</p> | <p>I know of no other single thing of such power to cause the arising of sloth and torpor, if not already arisen, or, if arisen, to cause its development and increase, as regret, drowsiness, languor, surfeit after meals and torpidity of mind. In one who is of torpid mind, sloth and torpor, if not already arisen, arises; or, if already arisen, is liable to increase and expand. (A1)</p> | <p>I know of no other single thing of such power to prevent the arising of sloth and torpor, if not already arisen, or, if arisen, to cause its abandonment, as the element of putting forth effort, of exertion, of striving. In one who energetically strives, sloth and torpor arises not, or, if arisen, it is abandoned. (A1)</p> |
| <p>Just as a man might be a slave, not his own master, dependent on another, unable to go where he liked, and after some time he might be freed from slavery, able to go where he liked, might think: "Before this I was a slave, but now I can go where I like...", and he would rejoice and be glad about that. (D2)</p> | <p>I know of no other single thing of such power to cause the arising of restlessness and remorse, if not already arisen, or, if arisen, to cause its development and increase, as non-tranquility of mind. In one who is of troubled mind, restlessness and remorse, if not already arisen, arises; or, if already arisen, is liable to increase and expand. (A1)</p> | <p>I know of no other single thing of such power to prevent the arising of restlessness and remorse, if not already arisen, or, if arisen, to cause its abandonment, as tranquility of mind. In the tranquil-minded, restlessness and remorse, if not already arisen, does not arise, or, if arisen, it is abandoned. (A1)</p> |
| <p>Just as a man, laden with goods and wealth, might go on a long journey through the desert where food was scarce and danger abounded, and after a time he would get through the desert and arrive safe and sound at the edge of a village, might think: "Before this I was in danger, now I am safe at the edge of a village", and he would rejoice and be glad about that. (D2)</p> | <p>I know of no other single thing of such power to cause the arising of doubt, if not already arisen, or, if arisen, to cause its development and increase, as careless attention. In one who gives careless attention, doubt, if not already arisen, arises; or, if already arisen, is liable to increase and expand. (A1)</p> | <p>I know of no other single thing of such power to prevent the arising of doubt, if not already arisen, or, if arisen, to cause its abandonment, as careful attention. In one who gives careful attention, doubt, if not already arisen, does not arise, or, if arisen, it is abandoned. (A1)</p> |

NIRVANA

Ajaan Thanissaro

Back in the days of the Buddha, *nirvana* (*nibbana* in Pali) had a verb of its own: *nibbuti*. It meant to “go out,” like a flame. Because fire was thought to be in a state of entrapment as it burned—both clinging to and trapped by the fuel on which it fed—its going out was seen as an unbinding. To go out was to be unbound. Sometimes another verb was used—*parinibbuti*—with the “*pari-*” meaning total or all-around, to indicate that the person unbound, unlike the fire unbound, would never again be trapped.

Now that nirvana has become an English word, it should have its own English verb to convey the sense of “being unbound” as well. At present, we say that a person “reaches” nirvana or “enters” nirvana, implying that *nibbana* is a place where you can go. But nirvana is most emphatically not a place. It’s realized only when the mind stops defining itself in terms of place: of here, or there, or between the two.

This may seem like a word-chopper’s problem—what can a verb or two do to your practice?—but the idea of nirvana as a place has created severe misunderstandings in the past, and it could easily create misunderstandings now. There was a time when some philosophers in India reasoned that if nirvana is one place and *samsara* another, then entering into nirvana leaves you stuck: you’ve limited your range

Selected Readings

“There are these four nutriments for the maintenance of beings who have come into being or for the support of those in search of a place to be born. Which four? Physical food, gross or refined; contact as the second, intellectual intention the third, and consciousness the fourth. These are the four nutriments for the maintenance of beings who have come into being or for the support of those in search of a place to be born....

“Where there is passion, delight, & craving for the nutriment of physical food, consciousness lands there and grows. Where consciousness lands and grows, name-&-form alights. Where name-&-form alights, there is the growth of fabrications. Where there is the growth of fabrications, there is the production of renewed becoming in the future. Where there is the production of renewed becoming in the future, there is future birth, aging, & death, together, I tell you, with sorrow, affliction, & despair. [Similarly with the nutriment of contact, intellectual intention, and consciousness.]

“Just as—when there is dye, lac, yellow orpiment, indigo, or crimson—a dyer or painter would paint the picture of a woman or a man, complete in all its parts, on a well-polished panel

or wall, or on a piece of cloth; in the same way, where there is passion, delight, & craving for the nutriment of physical food ... contact ... intellectual intention ... consciousness, consciousness lands there and grows. Where consciousness lands and grows, name-&-form alights. Where name-&-form alights, there is the growth of fabrications. Where there is the growth of fabrications, there is the production of renewed becoming in the future. Where there is the production of renewed becoming in the future, there is future birth, aging, & death, together, I tell you, with sorrow, affliction, & despair.

“Where there is no passion for the nutriment of physical food, where there is no delight, no craving, then consciousness does not land there or grow. Where consciousness does not land or grow, name-&-form does not alight. Where name-&-form does not alight, there is no growth of fabrications. Where there is no growth of fabrications, there is no production of renewed becoming in the future. Where there is no production of renewed becoming in the future, there is no future birth, aging, & death. That, I tell you, has no sorrow, affliction, or despair. [Similarly with the nutriment of contact, intellectual intention,

of movement, for you can't get back to samsara. Thus to solve this problem they invented what they thought was a new kind of nirvana: an unestablished nirvana, in which one could be in both places—nirvana and samsara—at once.

However, these philosophers misunderstood two important points about the Buddha's teachings. The first was that neither samsara nor nirvana is a place. Samsara is a process of creating places, even whole worlds, (this is called becoming) and then wandering through them (this is called birth). Nirvana is the end of this process. You may be able to be in two places at once, but you can't feed a process and experience its end at the same time. You're either feeding samsara or you're not. If you feel the need to course freely through both samsara and nirvana, you're simply engaging in more samsara-ing and keeping yourself trapped.

The second point is that nirvana, from the very beginning, was realized through unestablished consciousness—one that doesn't come or go or stay in place. There's no way that anything unestablished can get stuck anywhere at all, for it's not only non-localized but also undefined.

The idea of a religious ideal as lying beyond space and definition is not exclusive to the Buddha's teachings, but issues of locality and definition, in the Buddha's eyes, had a specific psychological meaning. This is why the non-locality of nirvana is important to understand.

Just as all phenomena are rooted in desire, consciousness localizes itself through passion. Passion is what creates the "there" on which consciousness can land or get established, whether the "there" is a form, feeling, perception, thought-construct, or a type of consciousness itself. Once consciousness gets established on any of these aggregates, it becomes attached and then proliferates, feeding on everything around it and creating all sorts of havoc. Wherever there's attachment, that's where you get defined as a being. You create an identity there, and in so doing

and consciousness.]

"Just as if there were a roofed house or a roofed hall having windows on the north, the south, or the east. When the sun rises, and a ray has entered by way of the window, where does it land?"

"On the western wall, lord."

"And if there is no western wall, where does it land?"

"On the ground, lord."

"And if there is no ground, where does it land?"

"On the water, lord."

"And if there is no water, where does it land?"

"It does not land, lord."

"In the same way, where there is no passion for the nutriment of physical food ... contact ... intellectual intention ... consciousness, where there is no delight, no craving, then consciousness does not land there or grow. Where consciousness does not land or grow, name-&-form does not alight. Where name-&-form does not alight, there is no growth of fabrications. Where there is no growth of fabrications, there is no production of renewed becoming in the future. Where there is no production of renewed becoming in the future, there is no future birth, aging, & death. That, I tell you, has no sorrow, affliction, or despair."

—SN XII.64



"If one stays obsessed with form, that's what one is measured (limited) by. Whatever one is measured by, that's how one is classified.

"If one stays obsessed with feeling

"If one stays obsessed with perception

"If one stays obsessed with fabrications

"If one stays obsessed with consciousness, that's what one is measured by. Whatever one is measured by, that's how one is classified.

"But if one doesn't stay obsessed with form, that's not what one is measured by. Whatever one isn't measured by, that's not how one is classified.

"If one doesn't stay obsessed with feeling

"If one doesn't stay obsessed with perception

"If one doesn't stay obsessed with fabrications

"If one doesn't stay obsessed with consciousness, that's not what one is measured by. Whatever one isn't measured by, that's not how one is classified."

—SN XXII.36

you're limited there. Even if the "there" is an infinite sense of awareness grounding, surrounding, or permeating everything else, it's still limited, for "grounding" and so forth are aspects of place. Wherever there's place, no matter how subtle, passion lies latent, looking for more food to feed on.

If, however, the passion can be removed, there's no more "there" there. One sutta illustrates this with a simile: the sun shining through the eastern wall of a house and landing on the western wall. If the western wall, the ground beneath it, and the waters beneath the ground were all removed, the sunlight wouldn't land. In the same way, if passion for form, etc., could be removed, consciousness would have no "where" to land, and so would become unestablished. This doesn't mean that consciousness would be annihilated, simply that—like the sunlight—it would now have no locality. With no locality, it would no longer be defined.

This is why the consciousness of nirvana is said to be "without surface" (*anidassanam*), for it doesn't land. Because the consciousness-aggregate covers only consciousness that is near or far, past, present, or future—i.e., in connection with space and time—consciousness without surface is not included in the aggregates. It's not eternal because eternity is a function of time. And because non-local also means undefined, the Buddha insisted that an awakened person—unlike ordinary people—can't be located or defined in any relation to the aggregates in this life; after death, he/she can't be described as existing, not existing, neither, or both, because descriptions can apply only to definable things.

The essential step toward this non-local, undefined realization is to cut back on the proliferations of consciousness. This first involves contemplating the drawbacks of keeping consciousness trapped in the process of feeding. This contemplation gives urgency to the next steps: bringing the mind to oneness in concentration, gradually refining that



Then Ven. Radha went to the Blessed One and, on arrival, having bowed down to him sat to one side. As he was sitting there he said to the Blessed One: "A being,' lord. 'A being,' it's said. To what extent is one said to be 'a being'?"

"Any desire, passion, delight, or craving for form, Radha: when one is caught up (satta) there, tied up (visatta) there, one is said to be 'a being (satta).'"

"Any desire, passion, delight, or craving for feeling ... perception ... fabrications ... consciousness, Radha: when one is caught up there, tied up there, one is said to be 'a being.'"

—SN XXIII.2



Gone to the beyond of becoming,
you let go of in front,
let go of behind,
let go of between.

With a heart everywhere let-go,
you don't come again to birth
& aging.

—Dhp 348

Consciousness without surface,
without end,

luminous all around:

Here water, earth, fire, & wind
have no footing.

Here long & short
coarse & fine
fair & foul
name & form

are all brought to an end.

With the cessation of [the aggregate of] consciousness
each is here brought to an end.

—DN 11



Effluents ended,
independent of nutriment,
their pasture—emptiness
& freedom without sign:
their trail,
like that of birds through space,
can't be traced.

—Dhp 93

oneness, and then dropping it to zero. The drawbacks of feeding are most graphically described in SN XII.63, A Son's Flesh. The process of gradually refining oneness is probably best described in MN 121, The Lesser Discourse on Emptiness, while the drop to zero is best described in the Buddha's famous instructions to Bahiya: "In reference to the seen, there will be only the seen. In reference to the heard, only the heard. In reference to the sensed, only the sensed. In reference to the cognized, only the cognized.' That is how you should train yourself. When for you there will be only the seen in reference to the seen, only the heard in reference to the heard, only the sensed in reference to the sensed, only the cognized in reference to the cognized, then, Bahiya, there is no you in connection with that. When there is no you in connection with that, there is no you there. When there is no you there, you are neither here nor yonder nor between the two. This, just this, is the end of stress."

With no here or there or between the two, you obviously can't use the verb "enter" or "reach" to describe this realization, even metaphorically. Maybe we should make the word nirvana into a verb itself: "When there is no you in connection with that, you nirvana." That way we can indicate that unbinding is an action unlike any other, and we can head off any mistaken notion about getting "stuck" in total freedom.



"What do you think, Anuradha: Do you regard form as the Tathagata?"

"No, lord."

"Do you regard feeling as the Tathagata?"

"No, lord."

"Do you regard perception as the Tathagata?"

"No, lord."

"Do you regard fabrications as the Tathagata?"

"No, lord."

"Do you regard consciousness as the Tathagata?"

"No, lord."

"What do you think, Anuradha: Do you regard the Tathagata as being in form? Elsewhere than form? In feeling? Elsewhere than feeling? In perception? Elsewhere than perception? In fabrications? Elsewhere than fabrications? In consciousness?.... Elsewhere than consciousness?"

"No, lord."

"What do you think, Anuradha: Do you regard the Tathagata as form-feeling-perception-fabrications-consciousness?"

"No, lord."

"Do you regard the Tathagata as that which is without form, without feeling, without perception, without fabrications, without consciousness?"

"No, lord."

"And so, Anuradha—when you can't pin down the Tathagata as a truth or reality even in the present life—is it proper for you to declare, 'Friends, the Tathagata—the supreme man, the superlative man, attainer of the superlative attainment—being described, is described otherwise than with these four positions: The Tathagata exists after death, does not exist after death, both does & does not exist after death, neither exists nor does not exist after death?'"

"No, lord."

"Very good, Anuradha. Very good. Both formerly & now, it is only stress that I describe, and the cessation of stress."

—SN XXII.86



"All beings subsist on nutriment." —Khp 4

IN THE MANGO GROVE

I make my nest
I try to
be mindful of
old age, illness, and death

mango seed
root—thinner than a split hair—
starts to attach to the moist ground, later,
becomes a plant
and a tree
covered with healthy green leaves
on the strong branches
young and swinging in the
southeast wind

embraces
everyone who comes
under it:
covered under
its cool shade

let the birds nest
let the monkeys jump
let the snakes nap
on the branches

let children play
under the green leaves
let an old man rest
at the foot of the tree

bear fruit
before the monsoon
stand alone
under the sun
moon
days and nights

seems like permanent forever
to the blind eyes

leaves falling
dead branches
peeling bark
lying
on the hard ground

death near

make a nest
be mindful

—*Theikdi*

PROMISCUOUS BUMBLEBEE

A promiscuous bumblebee
Alights upon a fragile blue blossom
Atop tiers of delicate azure flowers.
The pale green stem
Bows graciously,
Honored that he choose her array
Over so many rivals,
Displaying their own tempting wares.

But the bee samples only
Two or three dainty blooms
Before he zooms across the path
To a neighbor's floral show.
The receptive hostess nods,
Pleased by the visitor's attention
To her blushing blossoms.

Now the bee is off again
To taste another delicacy.
He never looks back at the
Trail of abandoned flowers.
Their petals droop wanly.
Don Juan zigzags onward,
Blithely breaking hearts,
Flaunting his plump, pollen-coated body.
Eagerly awaiting their turn,
His new conquests enjoy the present moment,
Because that is all there is.

—*Ginger Clarkson*

This morning for a moment
it all seemed too much
the same, a stray wet leaf,
a spoon set out on a counter,
the sky inscrutably shifting
its sheets of translucent
grays, I thought

I've been here before.

Then I let the breath
empty me out, I
picked up the 5-stringed
instrument, I thought

I've never been here
before

=ct=



The lesser-known Snowball Mudra
—*Sumi Loundon*

This page contains material sent in by our readers. If you have a poem, drawing or photograph you would like to share with others, relating to your meditative insights or retreat experience, please send it to the editors at BCBS.

METAPHOR

Compare your brain to a computer
and you will output bits and files.
Take a railroad train for thought
and your tracts will measure miles.
Trace a liquid line in Jell-O
if you've a Bono appetite.
Brain is thinking, always thinking.
Thinking might makes write.

And so we do, and sow we do –
make metaphor that is,
A hold to carry “Who are you?”
And handle our existences.

—Steve Kohn

DISENCHANTMENT

Detectives, we investigate.
A dog finds a bone
exposed to sun and wind and rain
lacks meat or marrow. Still he scrapes
until he wakes to the truth.
Change is all there is.

Without fear or wanting
the lotus unfolds beneath us.

—Elizabeth Domike

BY BRIAN KELLEY

Mara
Awakens a peaceful sleep
with disturbances
that are nil at dawn.
Concentration
is the cure
for this delusion.

—Paul Troiani III

FLYING: LESSON

I am not a bird
that flies in a >>>
I am a bird
that flies alone

mind and body

I am a bird
that flies alone

body and mind

face to face with the wind
extending my wings to the end of the sky

—Theikdi



UNDERSTANDING THE MEDITATIVE PROCESS

A Weekend With Jason Siff

When preparing for my weekend of teaching at the Barre Center for Buddhist Studies, my initial schedule started with a forty-five meditation sitting followed by a talk on structured and unstructured meditation practice. Fortunately, the staff reminded me that this wasn't really a meditation retreat, and that starting off with a long sitting with no context might not be the most appropriate thing to do. As the participants began arriving, it became clear that many had never been on a meditation retreat before, though most of them had prior meditation experience and were interested in understanding the meditative process. Such is the unique beauty of BCBS. With a combination of sitting, reflection, and group study, depending on the inclination of the teacher, I was able to focus more clearly on how to adjust to meet the background and needs of those attending.

The retreat began with a practical talk on structured and unstructured meditation practice. In it I gave the option to do a structured meditation practice, and even presented one that I have found works well for people new to meditation. This is simply the instruction to be aware of one's body sitting, and to allow one's thoughts and feelings to be as they are. With this instruction, there is no need to continually bring one's attention back to the body, but rather to be gentle and accepting of one's thoughts while having a slight preference for the body, and only occasionally bringing one's attention back to the body if one is lost in thought for a long time. This is a minimal amount of structure. By not being too heavily structured, as are practices which require someone to constantly return to a primary subject of meditation, it allows for a natural transition to a less structured meditation practice.

For those who already have a defined meditation practice, I allow for them to do that practice or not do it. Everyone in the group has the freedom to do—or not do—any meditation practice, even the one I am teaching. This creates a sense of independence, opening up many more possibilities for new directions and perspectives to arise in meditation sittings, for the student feels empowered to do whatever practice he chooses at any time. He is even free to discover and try out new practices, and he may find himself at times not doing any definable meditation practice.

Now this may sound a bit confusing for the student, and complicated and bewildering for the teacher. For here you have people doing all sorts of practices and also meditating in less structured ways. What is the thread that ties it all together and makes teaching and learning (not to mention “meditating”) possible? *Recollection.*

“I have difficulty with getting sleepy. There are all kinds of big dust-storms floating around in my mind and I am not in a state of relaxation, and it's like insomnia. I can't yield to the tiredness and fall asleep, and I am not alert or relaxed either; it is kind of like a war-zone. So it was driving me crazy this morning to be in that state again and I thought it was all right to ask myself what was beneath the heaviness, and it became clear what the issue is for me personally and (then) it was all right for me to sit with that heaviness.”

Recollection

Bringing back to mind one's experiences in meditation is a way to become aware of what occurs during meditation. When the meditation sitting is over, a recollection of it is done from a vantage point that is outside of the sitting. One can get a broader picture of how the sitting began and progressed, how things shifted and changed, and how one related to one's experiences. So no matter what kind of meditation practice someone does, when it is recollected, it can be looked at and examined. In this way, awareness is not only brought into what one experiences in meditation, but also to the way one meditates, the habits of mind formed in any given meditation practice, and to the kinds of identification and ownership that naturally develop with any meditation technique or theory one applies.

Beginning on the first night and throughout the weekend, participants reported in depth about their meditation sittings. This was done in a group, using a format I have developed over the years, which provides an atmosphere of safety and trust. It is not just about sharing one's sittings with others in a group, but rather about a person going into great detail with me concerning what he experienced and did in his sittings. As people in the group listen to one of their own speak openly and honestly about meditation sittings, they learn about meditation from each other. They hear how someone else articulates experiences that they may have had, using descriptive language that is mostly free of jargon, technical terms, and concepts. They begin to shed that feeling of being the only one who experiences certain things in meditation when they hear that others also go through similar things. Meditation becomes less isolated, less idealized, and more down-to-earth.

Everyone entered the seminar on the meditative process the first morning having already heard people's meditation sittings during two previous reporting sessions. The meditative process was not an abstraction the participants were going to learn about, but a lived experience found in their meditation sittings and subsequent reporting on them in the group.

The Meditative Process(es)

What do I mean by the "meditative process" here? The dynamic and relational aspects of what occurs in meditation as opposed to the content of a person's



Photo by Al Billings

"At first I was aware of feeling comfortable (sitting on the meditation bench).

And then aware of the ambient air, of a breeze flowing through, and that felt very comfortable. I was aware of people coming in, but the sounds of people coming were like they were happening at a distance...

And then there was a feeling, a sensation, of sort of sinking, of settling. That is all I can say: it was like going down. Then it was quiet, and then I would go off on a train of thought. As soon as I became aware of thinking about this, it stopped, bam! It just stopped like that. And there was another period of quiet. Then I started off on another train of thought... Then a long period of quiet.

Then thoughts would come up, but it was very different. It wasn't a whole train of thought. Thoughts just popped up and disappeared.... And I became aware of a sort of heaviness and tingling in my hands, and in my feet, and again this feeling of ambient air as the breeze would flow through. My mind felt pretty quiet. And the last, I have no idea of the passage of time, but certainly the last segment of the sitting was pretty quiet and I was sort of aware of the air, of the sound if somebody coughed or moved around, and then the bell rang."

"I was just in a nice quiet place for just about the whole time. I decided I wasn't going to try any of the techniques I had tried before. I decided earlier in the day I would just go with the flow. All I did was remain aware of where I was and everything around me, and tried not to think about anything else, I guess. And it was easy this time.... There were thoughts coming in but it was almost as if the volume was turned down and I wasn't really connecting with them that much. They were there but I wasn't really invested in them. And then after about half an hour I had this song that was driving me crazy this morning, in my head; it was tormenting me this morning, and it was sneaking back in there. But the volume was down again and so it was nice and low, and it really wasn't bothering me this time. I just kind of let it be there in the background. But then I started to get kind of tired and I really didn't feel like being aware anymore, so I just... I don't know where I went. I was just listening to the music and I closed my eyes and I could see swirls behind my eyes and just kind of float around in that for a little bit. It felt kind of good. Then I got this kind of floaty feeling in my body that I used to get a lot when I used to meditate a lot more a long time ago. I've been trying to get that back. It wasn't really working, so it is funny that I decided earlier today that I wasn't going to do any of the stuff anymore to get that back and it just kind of came."

meditation sittings. The content is what is commonly identified as the experience, while the process often eludes awareness. For example, when a person is meditating with a mind filled with anger what is often noticed in the experience and reported afterwards is that the meditation sitting contained a long period of being angry (or being with anger). The anger, as the content of the meditation sitting, is then believed to be "all" that went on during that time. But that is not the case when one looks at how the meditator related to it. The anger could have been related to in a variety of ways. The person could have been wrapped up in it, regurgitating particular events connected with the anger and/or planning to take some kind of action based on it. Or the person could have experienced the anger as a particular physical sensation, without a scene or story attached to it, being with it in just that way. Or the person may have become settled and calm around the experience of anger, finding it dissipate and vanish, only to reappear on occasion throughout the sitting. These are just a few of the ways a person may find himself relating to his experience of anger in a meditation sitting. That is how we can see that even though the reported content may be the same thing, i.e. anger, the process one goes through with it is not always the same.

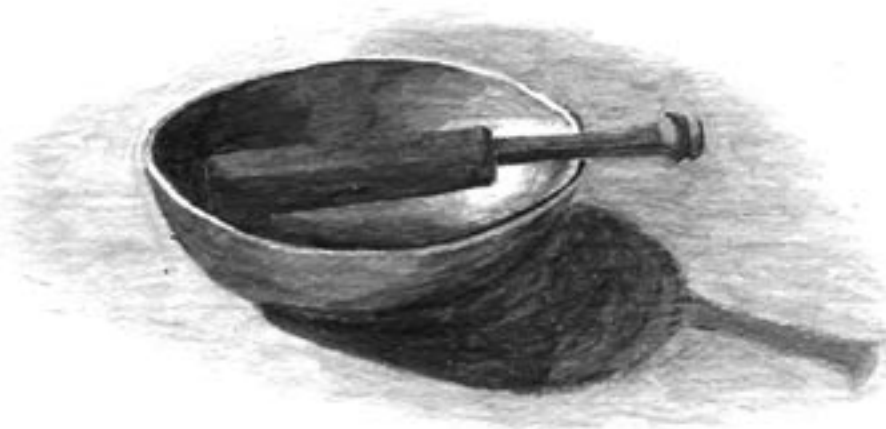
This is my thinking behind breaking down the meditative process into six distinct processes. I always begin by presenting four basic meditative processes, which all meditation practices and techniques are based on. Though that is not exactly true, for the first process I present is one which is found a high percentage of the time in people's meditation sittings, but is universally deemed non-meditative. I call it the "conflicted process".

Conflicted process

In the conflicted process the meditator is generally in conflict with what he is experiencing: he is trying to make it go away and have some other kind of experience. This is often the case when he is having a great deal of thinking go on in meditation. He does not want that thinking, it is getting in the way of his idea of what meditation should be, and so there is "conflict" with "thinking too much". But he may not be in conflict with what he thinks he should be doing in meditation, so he may, with confidence and certainty, continually stop his thoughts and bring his attention back to a primary subject of meditation, such as the breath or a mantra. Experientially, however, this way of working with the conflicted process will often create more conflict, even though in time one's mind may comply and stay with the meditation subject for longer periods.

Connected process

What most meditation teaching advocates are ways to surmount the conflicted process by either connecting with a subject of meditation or by generating another state of mind. These are the two main meditative processes practiced by meditators and found in the literature on meditation. I call them "connected" and "generative". A connected process is in operation when the primary subject of meditation, the breath, for example, is connected with for a period of time. This kind of connection is intentional, purposeful, and meaningful for the meditator. He has decided to focus on the breath. He believes that some kind of benefit or understanding will occur through prolonged connection with the breath. And being connected with the breath all the time is what he may define as the truest or purest form of meditation.



Generative process

The generative process is similar to the connected process, and there are several meditation practices that make use of both of these processes. The generative process in its most distinct form is when a meditator intentionally generates a particular state of mind, such as metta. By reciting phrases of loving-kindness or picturing people being happy, the person practicing metta attempts to generate that state of mind, usually as a replacement for an existing state of mind which is less desirable. This is different than connecting to a single subject of meditation, such as the breath, for it involves actively conjuring and creating another type of experience, one that is different from one's current state of mind and is generally not found in one's present awareness. This same kind of process is used in hypnosis, guided imagery, and directed contemplation (and inquiry), for the practitioner is either being led or leading oneself to create some kind of real experience around an idea one has.

Receptive process

While the connected and generative processes are intentional, in that they involve an effort to do something in particular, the fourth process is one of "non-doing", which I call "receptive". It is the process upon which I base my meditation teaching. Since it is a receptive process, you cannot "do it" in an ordinary sense, for if one were to meditate with the instruction "try not to do anything", one would find oneself "doing not-doing", which would be a type of generative practice. So meditation instructions have to be presented in an entirely different way, as "conditions" rather than as "instructions".

I speak of three conditions for an independent meditation practice: gentleness, permission, and interest. These conditions lead to being receptive to the wide range of one's inner experience in meditation by first permitting the conflicted process to be an integral part of one's meditation practice. Conflict is thus not to be eliminated, suppressed, or denied, but rather is treated with gentleness, allowed to be there, and is eventually something of interest, piquing one's curiosity. This receptivity is imperfect much of the time when a conflicted process is present, for one will most likely be drawn into the conflict. But instead of trying to stop the conflict by bringing one's attention always back to the breath (a connected practice), one may learn to tolerate the conflict by sitting still and being gentle and accepting of the thought process one is drawn into. I call this initial level of receptivity, "non-resistive receptivity", for the resistance to being with one's thoughts and feelings as they manifest and develop in any given meditation

"I started off today thinking about what we had talked about before lunch and realized that I say I focus on my breath, but I don't. I breath-count. There's a comfort to that because I know within a small range how many breaths it takes for twenty minutes. I didn't realize I had been doing that. So a few minutes into it I gave that up and then went through a period of disjointed thoughts that would come and be recognized and then rapidly let go. And then I began to think more about my breathing because I noticed at that point I was breathing a bit different, much slower than what I had done before. I thought that this is interesting. I will focus on my breathing. So most of my time was spent actually getting in touch with my breath, which I hadn't done before. That was interesting and fascinating because I felt some discomfort in one part of my body. I noticed that as I would breathe my ribcage didn't feel the way I wanted it to. It was kind of odd and I began to think about it more and where did that come from and was actually able to pinpoint a spot that causes discomfort when I breathe. Other thoughts would come in, more visual pictures: thinking about going back home, a building I am thinking about buying. A slide-show going across, just more visual images than anything else. Because they are mostly visuals I was to recognize that is what it was and then come back and return to the breath."

sitting is lessening with one's increasing tolerance and acceptance of them. Thereby there is no more fuel being added onto the fire of the conflicted process, and so what was once experienced as an intrusion, impediment, and enemy to meditation is now being known receptively as just what it happens to be. Anger, for instance, becomes less of an impediment and more an experience of sitting with anger in an atmosphere of gentleness, where the previous aversion to it may begin to give way to an actual interest in how it grips one at times and gets one to think and act in certain ways.

When one is in a receptive process, one may still get caught up in trains of thought, imaginary scenarios, and intense emotional episodes. That is because one is not doing anything to stop them. Being receptive is not just letting the clouds move across a clear sky, but rather is being in the storm clouds, in the marine layer, of the empty blue patches, of whatever is occurring naturally in one's mind at any particular time. In the receptive process a scenario around anger may go on longer and be more intense than it was before, and one may feel that what one is doing is not meditation. Meditation then needs to be redefined from the standpoint of "receptivity": one's experience of meditation defines what meditation is. So whatever one experiences in meditation belongs to the meditative process, even though it may not match an idea one has of what meditation is.

"I had, I think, the best sitting I had so far. And it was very much a sense of relaxation, a sense even of joy. I started looking at my belly, my breath a little, but I didn't have to do that very long. Nonverbally, I could just feel myself going into a cave that seemed to be getting bigger and bigger and bigger. And what I was especially aware of was my ability to observe it simultaneously. I was so clear that I was observing it and it was happening, and the two were both going on and one did not threaten the other. One didn't get in the way of the other. Even the thoughts that would occasionally come up did not feel like interfering thoughts or distracting. And I would stay with them a little bit, play with them a little bit. The idea of self came up a little bit. Being, the word 'being' I kind of started repeating in my head. Somehow that helped me to expand further. I was kind of aware of the bird sounds and had a kind of loving-kindness experience."

Explorative process

Two more advanced processes develop out of the receptive process and I often present them as sub-categories of receptivity. The first of these two processes (the fifth process), I call "explorative". This is when one is able to be with one's experiences receptively with the added ability to look at them, see into them, and begin to examine them. Someone in this explorative process may find himself thinking about something he is going through, wondering about how it came to be, what supports it, and whether he is being skillful with his experience or unskillful with it. He may find himself pursuing a philosophical train of thought, questioning his held assumptions and views, and exploring new ideas or teachings to aid in his understanding of his experience. Or, conversely, he may find himself more psychologically oriented in his investigation, looking at segments of his life, seeing actions and decisions performed with confidence and now seen with regret, for example. But instead of trying to solve problems or come up with a new way of being, in the explorative process one may find that simply knowing and looking at these things is enough to produce greater awareness and wisdom. The exploration is thus open-ended and eye-opening.

Non-taking-up process

The sixth process, by its position and attributes, might mistakenly be taken as the final goal. In developing this model of the meditative process I decided early on not to go into the area of "transcendent" or "fully realized" meditative states and experiences. My purpose is to provide a map for "ordinary" types of meditation experiences and practices, and to place those in a framework that is not about a linear progression from lowest to highest. These six processes are not stages of meditative development, and yet the two advanced processes will most likely only occur later on in one's meditation practice and are dependent upon the earlier processes being matured and developed.

This sixth process I call "non-taking up". It is when one's experiences in meditation are not taken up as "I, me, or mine". But it does not mean that there is no anger, for instance; only that the anger one experiences is tolerated, accepted, and is not taken up as something to act on, to own, or as a reflection upon one's character. When someone is in this process during a meditation sitting, there is a quality of looking on peacefully at

what one is experiencing. This is often arrived at through having been extremely tolerant of such experiences and having explored them over and over again. By having known something so thoroughly, the ability to become embedded and controlled by it has been temporarily abandoned. Non-taking up is thus a taste of being free from something, like one's anger, before it has vanished for good. Often, it is believed that it is the anger that must vanish for one to have a sense of what freedom from it is like. But that experience may be one of suppressing anger. What I am saying here is that the relationship to anger changes to one of being peaceful with it, and from that, the taking up and rejecting of anger begins to lessen and subside. The process of non-taking up is one of peacefully abiding with the full range of one's inner experience, to be peaceful in a storm just as much as being peaceful in a clear blue sky.

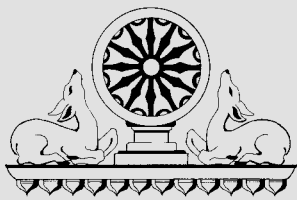
Flexible Skill

Whenever I present this seminar on the meditative process, I feel compelled to offer a few cautionary words about using this "interpretative model". First of all, it is not my purpose to have people prove the truth and validity of these processes in their meditation sittings, but rather to use this model to sharpen one's awareness on actual meditation experiences. So instead of looking at your sittings and breaking them into any of these six processes, what I suggest is that you just do what you do in meditation, recollect the sittings afterwards, describe your experiences in your own language, and then see if any of these processes may be going on in your sittings. Some sittings may have one process dominating much of the time, while other sittings may change from one process to another, and in no particular order.

I see that each of these meditative processes are of great value and need to be cultivated and matured in one's life-long practice of meditation. When one of these processes is considered to be the only legitimate form of meditation or meditative experience, then one's meditation practice is in danger of becoming one-sided, narrow, restrictive, and rigid. Through allowing movement from one process to another, one attends to the conditions that are present in one's meditation practice, and is able to be flexible enough to make skillful and knowledgeable choices on which directions to pursue at any given time in one's sittings. One is then also able to be with one particular process when it arises naturally, and do a meditation practice based on it, such as focusing on the breath when a connected process is present, or allow focused thinking and looking into one's experience, such as when an explorative process has arisen. In this way, this description of the six meditative processes can be used holding it lightly, referring to it only occasionally; and when it gets in the way, or is no longer of use, it can always be dropped.



Photo by Al Billings



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Anne Klein: *Knowing Body, Glowing Mind: Practicing Wholeness*

Lama Palmo: *Meditation Through the Vajra Songs of Female Masters*

Susan Stone: *Conscious Caring: Mindfulness and Caregiving*

New Series: The BCBS Forums

Buddhist Responses to Violence

Sept 11, 2005

Paul Fleischman, Sam Harris, Kenneth Kraft and Stephanie Kaza, with moderator Christopher Queen

How might a Buddhist respond to the events of 9/11, the two recent wars, and the war on terrorism? There is a diversity of views, ranging from thorough nonviolence to justifications of war. It has been a subject of considerable concern throughout the history of the Buddhist tradition, and one that deserves thoughtful reflection in the contemporary context. This forum does not intend to take any particular political stance, but to explore the issue from several perspectives and, by doing so, help us all to better understand how to hold ourselves in the world.

The BCBS Forum brings attention to core themes of Buddhist thought, practice and society. Three to five guest speakers of established experience reflect on the forum topic and engage in discussion with one another and with other participants.

Overview of 2005 Programs

May

| | | |
|-------|-------------------------|---|
| 7-14 | A. Olendzki & Taraniya | Dependent Origination (Bhavana Program) |
| 22-27 | Andrew Olendzki, et al. | Essentials of Buddhist Psychology |

June

| | | |
|-------|-----------------|--|
| 19-24 | Mu Soeng | Emptiness: The Still Point of the Turning World |
| 25 | Sharon Salzberg | Practicing Kindness (<i>New since last catalog.</i>) |

July

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|-------|----------------------|----------------------------------|
| 8-10 | Mu Soeng | Buddhist Models of Enlightenment |
| 15-17 | Taitetsu & Mark Unno | Shin Buddhism |

August

| | | |
|-------|---------------------|--|
| 4-7 | Bill & Susan Morgan | Meditation for Psychotherapists (<i>New since last catalog.</i>) |
| 13-20 | Charles Genoud | Vimalakirti Sutra (Bhavana Program) |

September

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|-------|------------------|--|
| 3 | Mu Soeng | Psychological Homelessness |
| 4 | Joseph Goldstein | Wisdom and Compassion |
| 10 | Lama Palmo | Meditation Through the Vajra Songs of Female Masters |
| 11 | BCBS Forum | Buddhist Responses to Violence |
| 17-22 | Andrew Olendzki | Abhidhamma: Classical Buddhist Psychology |
| 23-25 | Chip Hartranft | Awakening to the Yoga-Sutra: Yoga and Dhamma |

October

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|----------|-----------------------------------|--|
| 1 | Narayan & Michael Liebenson Grady | Inner Freedom & Non-reactivity in Relationship |
| 8-15 | Gregory Kramer | Insight Dialogue and Sankhara |
| 28-11/4A | Olendzki & Taraniya | Insight Into What? (Bhavana Program) |

November

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|---------|---------------------|---|
| 6-11 | A. Olendzki, et al. | Essentials of Buddhist Psychology |
| 12 | Harvey Aronson | Working with Anger |
| 13 | Anne Klein | Knowing Body, Glowing Mind: Practicing Wholeness |
| 18-20 | Mark Hart | The Paradox of Suffering |
| 27-12/4 | DaeJa Napier | Cultivating Lovingkindness, Compassion, Appreciative Joy and Equanimity |

December

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| 9-11 | Susan Stone | Conscious Caring: Mindfulness and Caregiving |
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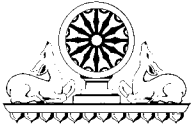
Like a college, but not a college. Much of our program involves reading, lecture and discussion, and credit is often available for undergraduates of other colleges or for professional continuing education (CE). However, we also place great value on the practice of meditation as an important tool for Buddhist Studies, for investigating experience, and for understanding the dhamma.



Like a retreat center, but not a retreat center. All our courses include some meditation, and some are based upon extensive periods of silent sitting and walking meditation. Yet even our silent retreats involve some degree of reading primary Buddhist texts and discussion of their meaning among students and teachers. Meditation supports the inquiry that leads to wisdom.



Like a monastery, but not a monastery. BCBS is rooted in a deep respect for the classical Buddhist tradition, including all three vehicles, while at the same time valuing the critical spirit and the give and take of rigorous investigation. Our programs are primarily directed towards laypeople, who may be studying the Buddhist tradition in a secular context and as householders committed to a full range of community responsibilities and duties.



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PALI POETRY

Buddha in the Forest *Samyutta Nikaya 7:18*

Brahmin:
gambhīrarūpe bahubherave vane
suññam araññaṃ vijanaṃ vigāhiya
aniñjamānena thitena vaggunā
[sundararūpaṃ] vata bhikkhu jhāyasi

na yattha gītaṃ na pi yattha vāditaṃ
eko araññe vanavasito muni
accherarūpaṃ paṭibhāti mam idaṃ
yad ekako piṭimano vane vase

maññe-haṃ lokādhipati-sahavyataṃ
ākaṅkhamāno tidivam anuttaraṃ
kasmā bhavaṃ vijanam araññaṃ assito
tapo idha kubbasi brahmapattiyā ti

Buddha:
yā kāci kaṅkhā abhinandanā vā
anekadhātūsu puthū sadā sitā
aññānamūlappabhavā pajappitā
sabbā mayā vyantikatā samūlikā

so ham akaṅkho apiho anupayo
sabbesu dhammesu visuddhadassano
pappuyya sambodhim anuttaraṃ sivaṃ
jhāyāma-haṃ brāhmaṇa raho visārado ti

Brahmin:
Deep in the bowels of the terror-filled forest,
Immersed in the empty and desolate woods,
Without flinching at all, steadfast, compelling
—You meditate, monk, in an exquisite way.

Where nothing is sung and nothing is sounded,
Alone in the forest, a wood-dwelling sage,
This appears to me something remarkable:
That you live in the woods—alone—glad-minded!

I'm guessing you're longing for the three highest
Heavens, there to befriend the Lord of the World.
Why else, Sir, dwell in this desolate jungle,
Except to do penance for reaching Brahmā?

Buddha:
Every kind of delighting or longing,
So often attaching to all kinds of stuff,
Yearned for because of deep-rooted confusion
—All these, with their roots, have been vanquished by me.

I'm devoid of attachment, longing, or thirst,
And see clearly amidst all phenomena.
Having gained the sublime, highest awakening,
I meditate, priest, in ripened seclusion.

—A. Olendzki