

## Lesson 6

by Bro James Ong (30 minutes)

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# CONTEMPLATION OF MIND

## Part 1

### 6.1 Introduction

Lesson 5 wraps up the discourse on Contemplation of Feelings. We will talk about Contemplation of the Mind in today's lesson. In Pali, meaning Cittanupassana.

Mind... What is mind? Where is the mind? I came across the following descriptions in the scripture:

*“Is it a mind of the past, the future, or present?” What is past has ceased, the future has not yet come and in the present mind is constantly changing. The mind Kassapa (Arahant) cannot be found within, nor outside, nor in between (no place of abiding).*

*Mind, O Kassapa is formless, invisible, intangible and needing support (it cannot stand on its own). Mind is without an abode (a permanent place to stay).*

*Mind O Kassapa is like a magician's illusion – that is it can conjure up things that is real to be unreal and what is unreal to be real – such as perceive things that are impermanent as permanent.”*

Mind is like a river current, never at a standstill, constantly moving. It is like a monkey jumping from tree to tree (like mind jumping from object to object). Mind is like a flash of lightning that in a moment comes to an end.

Mind is the forerunner of actions. If mind is wholesome or positive, – happiness follows one as the wheel of the cart follows the hoofs of the horse. But if the mind is unwholesome or negative – sadness follows one, as a never departing shadow.

The untrained mind is like our worst enemy that can harm us and causes us great pain. Therefore, it is of great importance that we develop awareness of the mind and understand its nature so that we have a choice. We can choose either to make ourselves happy or sad. When we know how the mind works we know the way to handle the mind, so that we don't get carried away by the mind. It is not by prayers and mere faith that we become happy.

Happiness comes from within our mind and if we learn to manage it properly, our problems would not take control of our mind and make us miserable. To do that we must understand how the mind works.

In this Discourse, Buddha named 16 types of mind. Some are very common, in that we experience it all the time except we may not be aware of it. Apart from the common ones, there are also very lofty ones which we can only experience only if we train our mind to reach up to that mental state.

I will now go through each of them briefly as set out in the Discourse.

## 6.2 Attachment Mind & Attachment-Free Mind

The Buddha continues in the Sutta, saying “...and monks, how does a monk live practising mind-contemplation in the mind? Herein a monk knows the attachment affected mind as attachment affected mind or he knows the attachment-free mind as attachment-free mind”.

The 1<sup>st</sup> type of mind is attachment-affected mind. What is attachment affected mind?

Attachment mind includes greediness, craving, selfish desire, longing, covetousness and clinging and etc. It is like glue – it sticks onto the pleasing object experienced through seeing, hearing, tasting, smelling, touching and through thoughts, and refused to let go.

To explain this type of mind, I wish to give a few illustrations. Here I repeat a story.

There was a crowd watching a big fire burning some houses and one man said to another standing next to him “*This is awesome. I have never seen such a big fire before*”. The other man replied “*But brother, that one is my house!*” To this man the fire is not awesome. It is painful to watch his house and his possessions being burnt away.

Another example –our attachment to our children – Most people love their children very much even though some may not show it. Children give us much pleasure and happiness when we see them grow up and become fine adult. Yet sometimes they can make their parents sad and troubled especially when they are naughty or don’t live up to their parents’ expectations.

Once there is this friend who asked me - “*We are like slaves to our children serving them day and night looking after them, saving every dollar to provide for them and stingy on our own wants – am I being stupid?*”

I replied – No, you are not stupid. You love your children very much. Attachment brings much happiness but also comes with pain, anxiety and worries as well – like a coin that has 2 sides. You can’t have one, without the other.

Following that what is attachment-free mind?

There are those who after taking up meditation for some time they start to feel less disturbed and stressed – things don't bother them as much as it used to. They used to be so attached to their children, grandchildren that it keeps them very busy and have no peace of mind. Slowly they learnt to delegate what they cannot do. They become more peaceful, contented and have more time for spiritual life.

If you are attached to lots of things you will not have time for spiritual life. Especially elderly people should be encouraged to spend more time for spiritual life and learn to be detached.

If you think about it – there are a lot of things which is not necessary for us to be involved in. So, we ought to learn to be detached and let go. When your mind becomes free from too much-activities, it becomes relaxed and peaceful. In other words free from attachment.

The word detachment is often confused and misunderstood as selfishness or couldn't care less. It is not so. Detachment can arise with kindness, compassion, wisdom, generosity and etc... Example of kindness with detachment is like one could be kind in helping others and be detached from expectations of rewards or returns.

Another example of detachment with knowledge or wisdom is, when one can maintain one's car with knowledge that it needs to be properly maintained like changing the engine-oil without being attached to the car. One can also do one's household daily chores of cleaning, wiping etc with knowledge that we need to keep the house livable without being attached to the house.

### **6.3 Hate Affected Mind and Hate-Free Mind**

Next, the Buddha continues with the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> type of mind: “...*Herein a monk knows the hate affected mind as hate affected mind or he knows the hate-free mind as hate-free mind*”.

The hateful mind is like a forest fire that burns everything in its path. It hurts everyone even loved or dear ones and destroys everything that stands in its way. Just like when someone is annoyed even though you may not be the cause of his annoyance, but he would still lash out at you when you are with him. This is the nature of the hateful mind.

Hateful mind includes ill-will, anger, frustration, anxiety, irritation, resentment, animosity, annoyance, remorse, loneliness, sadness, fear and many other negative mental states.

The hateful mind is not there all the time. Don't think that “I am so hateful people don't like me or I am so jealous people don't like me”. Don't associate mind with “me or I or

my”. It is just a mental state that arises and disappears. Mind is not you. It is not yours it does not belong to you. It is not me. It is just a mind.

It arises due to certain conditions and then it passes away. So, we should not think of ourselves as hateful person. It is only a mind with hate.

What is the condition that gives rise to an angry mind? An unpleasant or offensive object – whether internal or external – sight, sound, smell, taste, tangible object or mind-object. Unwise attention toward an unpleasant object gives rise to angry mind. It increases and grows when mindfulness is absent. When sadness, remorse or dissatisfaction arises and left to grow and become strong, it leads to unstable and depressed mental state.

Next we come to hate-free mind.

With mindfulness and wise reflection, anger or other negative mental states that have arisen will decrease and subside.

The power of mindfulness is the detachment from object. Once you detach your mind from the offensive object the angry mind dies off by itself. If you don't have mindfulness, the mind would continue thinking of the unpleasant object and would be pulled down, get sucked to the very bottom like a very heavy weight. Such people lose their self-esteem and become very emotional.

Not only that, negative mind states also produce loss of bodily immunity and other bodily sicknesses such as, gastritis, thyroid, migraines, hypertension and all others. Mind affects the body just as in return, body affects the mind.

It is true that when we meditate we have peace and wholesome minds. Our body immunity becomes strong and that makes the body healthy.

We have to stop here for today and continue with more types of mind in the next lesson. Before we go into the practice let's go deeper into subject by Q&A so that we can clear our doubts and clarify certain points on this subject.

## **6.4 Question and Answer**

I shall now go through some common question regarding the mind before I give instructions with regard to the practice in mindfulness in watching the mind.

### ***Question:***

- (1) Can we go straight into watching the mind instead of starting with rising and falling?

***Answer:***

At first it may not be so beneficial. It is difficult to cultivate mindfulness of the mind when mindfulness is still weak and cannot see the mind clearly. Mind is delicate and subtle. It is more beneficial to begin the practice with mindfulness on the body because body is gross. In that way, mindfulness is more easily built up from the body-base. When mindfulness is built up and then directed to watch the mind then mind becomes clear. It is easier to establish mindfulness of the mind in this way.

However, there are meditators who have already cultivated strong mindfulness and they can go directly to watch the mind as they can perceive their mind clearly whether in their formal and informal meditation in their daily life. Having said that, there are times when their mindfulness weakens or is weak. In such times, they should return to the body base to establish mindfulness.

When meditators are experiencing deeper insights mind appears very clearly to them.

***Question:***

(2) If it is so hard why must we watch the mind?

***Answer:***

The Buddha said the untrained mind is like an enemy because it brings about all kinds of misery and vexation. It can cause one to take birth in the suffering realm. It is therefore, essential to watch the mind. The untrained mind creates defilements causing mental pain without one being aware of it.

***Question:***

(3) Must we cultivate mindfulness of the mind - I can be aware of the sadness anger frustration without having to cultivate mindfulness of the mind?

***Answer:***

There is a difference between mindfulness and consciousness. It is the nature of the mind to be conscious of an object but not necessary mindful. Mindfulness arises with detachment mental states therefore the pain will subside if one keeps noting, whereas, consciousness has no detachment but merely conscious of the object. As such, pain continues for a long time without subsiding even if one is conscious of it. That is the big difference between being conscious and being mindful.

***Question:***

(4) How to deal with mind when it has sadness, remorse, illwill and etc...?

***Answer***

Firstly, recognize the mind and then, be detached from it. If one is able to quickly catch it in the beginning or when it arises, then such mind does not gain momentum. If not, the unwholesome mind having gained strong momentum would take longer time to subside when being noted.

If mindfulness is strong it usually disappears the moment it is being noted or that it disappears after a few noting. Example – it is like pulling out a small plant compare chopping a huge tree.

If it persists or if one's mindfulness is not so strong yet, one can switch base – return to Rising and Falling or Feeling – One can note the type of feeling that is being experienced at that time – like what depression feels like. The negative mind should disappear once the meditator switches to other bases.

***Question:***

(5) Must we only note the unwholesome mind (sadness, craving and etc)?

***Answer:***

No, you should equally note the positive ones for balance. If a meditator only notes the unwholesome mind, he would become disgusted and turn away from meditation. Therefore, it is essential that the meditator also equally note the positive ones such as calmness, happiness, joy and so forth.

The benefit of noting the wholesome mind is that it gives encouragement. As we meditate or progress, our mind becomes more wholesome. Noting this, we become more encouraged and become sure of the direction of our practice. It gives us the conviction to cultivate more of wholesomeness or to go deeper into the practice.

## **6.5 How does one practise contemplating mind?**

In order to get a feel on how to take mind as an object of meditation, we will start off today's practice by just watching the mind.

In the beginning, it is difficult to put the thoughts into various type of mind as mentioned in the Discourse as this will cause a lot of distraction and confusion to arise.

So, it is easier to begin by just naming the thoughts as it appears. You can name the thoughts that are clear and the ones you are aware of. The thoughts that are subtle, unclear or cannot be detected – you just let it pass noting it as “unclear, unclear”.

How do you name the thoughts in the beginning?

Example you are thinking of the house – just note house. If you are thinking of the process of marketing or things involving marketing or buying groceries – just name the word that comes to the mind like “buying, buying” or “groceries”. If you are thinking of your car parked outside the temple just note “car car”. In this way it is easier to note directly what arises in the mind rather than to classify them whether they are attachment or ill-will or ignorance mind etc...

In the later stages of your practice as mind become clearer and you become familiar with watching mind, then you will be able to classify them without much effort. For this session, you may sit to watch your mind and see how many times you are able to note it.

If you can't see the mind, it is alright, just note that you are not seeing or perceiving the thoughts. When the thoughts become clear, try to recognize the arising and disappearing of thoughts – a new thought arises and passes away – different thoughts arise and pass away.

Don't try to add further add thoughts or stop the thinking. Just observe thoughts as thoughts - it is coming together and it is disappearing. Just watch them as they really are. You can gain certain level of calmness by just perceiving the thoughts coming and going and not getting involved or interfere in its process. So there is no likes or dislikes.

Let us begin sitting for 20 minutes and after the sitting session, we will have a feedback session

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