

Lesson 7

by Bro James Ong (30 minutes)

CONTEMPLATION OF MIND

Part 2

7.1 Introduction

This is the 7th lesson of the Satipatthana Meditation Discourse and today we will continue with Contemplation of Mind Part 2.

7.2 Deluded Mind and Delusion-Free Mind

The Buddha continues with the 5th and 6th type of mind “...*Herein a monk knows the deluded mind as deluded or he knows the delusion-free mind as delusion-free*”.

What is a deluded mind? It is ignorance, confusion, not knowing or mental blindness. Mind whirls around like merry go round. Just like a confused mind when it goes round and round and not knowing what to do.

The deluded mind can also arise as a doubtful mind or dispersed mind. It is because of deluded mind, there arises the doubt about enlightenment (Nibbana), the way of enlightenment – which is the Noble 8 Fold Path and those who have attained enlightenment. The dispersed mind is like grasping for happiness but not knowing what or like a drowning man splashing wildly and reaching to all directions to grasp onto something to be saved or like a ship in the stormy sea, swept by the wind, without heading towards any direction.

It is ignorance that covers up our mind that causes suffering. It conceals reality of the 4 Noble Truths – it conceals suffering, cause of suffering, cessation of suffering and the way out of suffering.

The deluded mind is like mental blindness. Example: sometimes meditator can experience this in their practice – just not being aware of feelings, mind state, body or anything at all – don’t even know if they are meditating or sleeping. Delusion is like cataract covering the eyes. One is unable to see deeper into reality –only anchoring on the surface with concepts – which is just conventional reality. Concept leads to more concepts and hence one can argue to no end because no one is really right. One can think that one’s concept is right and so the other person thinks likewise.

The near cause of ignorance is unwise attention in perceiving the impermanent as permanent, suffering as happiness and egoless as self. For example when things start to change, one becomes disturbed, distraught, not knowing that things are actually changing all the time. One gets into intense pain and suffering when the changes are not in our favour like what is precious to us is lost and what we dislike or fear, happens.

We often think if we can attain or have certain things in life we will be the happiest person in the world. When we do achieve that, we would realize that our expectation has changed, the fascination of external objects has also changed. In this ever-changing world which we live in, no true lasting happiness, that we yearn for, could be found.

By seeing the egoless as ego, we build up fantasy or view such as 'I am rich, I am great or I am famous and etc...' then this view is inflated with greediness or desire like 'I want this or I want that...' or with aversion to painful objects like 'I don't want this or that'. Thereby, we intensify the mental pain by holding onto the ego or self.

Coming to the 6th type of mind – is the mind that is free from delusion. In order to keep our mind free from delusion, we develop the 4 kinds of clear comprehension (Sampajanna) as mentioned in the Discourse that is clearly-knowing the purpose, suitability, domain and the reality.

I would like to explain clearly knowing the 'purpose' means whatever activities we do are conducive for our spiritual growth, such as Dana (which is giving, performing charity), Sila (which is morals) and Samadhi (that is developing concentration).

Clearly knowing the 'suitability' includes knowing (example):

- (a) suitable time to meditate
- (b) suitable time to eat, suitable food
- (c) suitable place (quiet, peaceful and free from danger)
- (d) suitable and proper guide or experienced teacher
- (e) suitable climate (not too hot or not too cold)
- (f) suitable meditation method and etc...

Clearly knowing the 'domain' means cultivating mindfulness in whatever we are doing in the present moment like walking, bathing, cleaning, eating, and even while working, etc...

Clearly comprehending the 'reality' means looking deeply into the realities of mind and body and, not just superficially. It means perceiving its characteristics of constant change, un-satisfactoriness and selflessness.

7.3 Contracted Mind and Distracted Mind

We now move on to the 7th and 8th type of mind. The Buddha continues “...*Herein a monk knows the contracted state of mind as contracted state of mind or he knows the distracted state of mind as distracted state of mind*”.

What is this contracted mind? It is a mind that is sort of constricted, shrunken, unworkable, stuck or stagnant. We do experience this mental state during meditation sometimes. You feel that the mind is just stuck, refuses to work or move. You may want to direct the attention to watch rise and fall but it just won't oblige. It just wants to sleep, feeling drowsy, everything is unclear – the mind is just blur and unworkable. It refuses to watch feelings, mind – nothing works and this state is a form of shrunken mind.

So what do we do with the shrunken mind? Firstly you ought to note the shrunken mind – try to experience what a shrunken mind is like – try to see the change. If this does not work, one should go to the stronger object such as standing or walking meditation. It will surely disappear if one induces more effort.

Next is the distracted mind. The distracted mind is the restless, wandering or scattered mind. This is when our mind does not stay on the object – it runs all over the place. Now, why are we distracted? It is because there are things done not to our satisfaction or things not done such as marketing, fetching children from tuition centre, etc... The mind may also be busy trying to solve problems. This mind comes with worry – it is distracted. When experiencing this type of mind the meditator should know it as a distracted mind and what can we do with the distracted mind? One should then try to bring it back to the meditation object such as rising, falling or feelings ... otherwise one is no longer meditating even though he may be sitting still and not moving – he is actually *not* cultivating mindfulness.

Not recognizing the distracted mind, the mind can become very restless and even causes insomnia. One may not sleep well or have bad dreams.

Mind is like strong current. If the unwholesome mind gets caught in the current then it would be pulled down to the bottom – meaning one can be dragged into sadness and unhappiness where one finds it difficult to get out. So, one should develop mindfulness to watch the mind so that one would not be dragged down by the strong current.

If you are not mindful and get dragged by the current, then the mind could be in that suffering state for a long-long time.

Now, moving on to the next that is... the great minds...

7.4 Great Mind and Undeveloped Mind

The 9th and 10th type of mind is the great mind and undeveloped mind. The Buddha continues “...*Herein a monk knows the great state of mind as great state of mind or he knows the undeveloped state of mind as undeveloped state of mind*”.

Well when we talk about a great mind we may probably find it quite abstract or difficult to comprehend what a great mind is unless we experience it. Example: like the Boddhisatta who had to undergo immense suffering and pain for incalculable rebirths for his perfection for Buddhahood in order to save all beings from suffering. That is indeed a great mind – a mind full of great kindness and compassion.

As for the undeveloped mind – it is easier to understand. The undeveloped mind is weak. Fear arises easily in weak mind. It gets agitated easily and quickly. It is superstitious and is easily influenced. A weak mind finds it difficult to keep their morals and be trained in concentration because they find it very difficult to concentrate. These are signs of a weak mind and can easily be possessed or influenced by another being! Others can easily manipulate or cheat one with a weak mind. They only need to instill fear in them and they would obey what he says.

As a meditator, one should note such mind state – tell yourself that fear is just a state of mind – it arise and it will disappear very quickly if you do not hold on to that state of mind. Each time you watch that mind you become stronger and detached. If one does not practice watching such mental state, fear gripes and weakens the intellect. One becomes more and more dependent on others for protection and salvation.

We shall deal with some Q & A for clarity.

7.5 Question and Answer

Question:

- (1) With regard to the earlier talk, the question, why is the mind contracted or unworkable?

Answer:

- (a) Well, the mind is probably fatigued or tired from work that requires either a lot of thinking or bodily strength. When these people come for the meditation class they experience strong unworkable, stuck, contracted state of mind; or
- (b) When a mind experiences great stress, remorse or sadness the mind also becomes unworkable; or
- (c) When the mind or body is sick one may also experience unworkable mind; or
- (d) If the meditator experiences too much discomfort, tension or pain, the mind could become stuck and unworkable.

Question:

- (2) Do parents have great mind?

Answer:

Parents are great to their children but a really great mind extends beyond their close and dear ones. It recognizes all beings in great pain and suffering. They would help to alleviate their pain and suffering with impartiality.

Question:

(3) What is the mind? Is mind thinking?

Answer:

Mind is mental formation.

Question:

(4) Then is mental formation thinking?

Firstly, let us define what is thinking.

Thinking usually means solving problems, generating words mentally, thinking what to do, planning, likes, dislikes etc...

Mental formation is part of that process but there is also thinking without thoughts. For example, when we are aware of rising and falling, we do not have to think, we just need to note or be aware of the motion of the air element – and that is all.

Another example: when we hear certain sound and may not know what type of sound or where it comes from or who is making the sound, then there is only hearing consciousness without thinking. So that can be defined as the hearing mind without thinking – so that can be defined as the hearing mind without thinking – likewise the smelling consciousness, tasting consciousness, seeing consciousness and etc. There is a continuous arising and disappearing of mind arising by way of 6 types of consciousness.

This explains the other part of formation – one with thinking and the other without thinking.

Question:

(5) If the mind is continuously arising why am I not able to perceive the mind?

Answer:

The mind is very subtle, fleeting and quick. Only a meditator who is trained in habitually watching the mind is able to detect with awareness the subtle mind arising through the external 5 sense-doors or directly through the mind door.

On the other hand, when mind has become strong with anger, hatred, fear or sensuous-desire etc..., even a non-meditator can be conscious of such mental-states except they are not aware and therefore cannot detach from the object. They are thereby pulled and controlled by the current of unwholesome mind, experiencing pain and sorrow.

Question:

(6) Are we thinking all the time?

Answer:

The mind arises and passes away continuously but we may not have thinking all the time.

Question:

(7) I can't see the mind. Where to look for the mind? Where is it?

Answer:

You can't see the mind with your eyes. It is intangible and formless. You can perceive the mind with your mind (mind watching mind). Mind arises by 2 ways – from the mind door or from the 5 sense doors.

Question:

(8) Is the mind, the brain? Is it in the brain?

Answer:

The brain is just a form aggregate – Rupa. Mind is formless. The mind is not residing inside or outside or in-between. It arises only when there is external or internal object coming into contact with the senses. Therefore, mind arises through the sense-door.

When the mind comes into contact with the ear, then it arises the ear consciousness which is the hearing mind or the object coming into contact with the eye – eye consciousness which is the seeing mind...

So, with this question we wrap up today's talk on the Mind. We will continue with more types of mind from the scripture next week. Let us begin sitting for half an hour.

7.6 Feedback

Now I will deal with the feedback from the practical session:

(1) *Why do I feel like falling to the front?*

The sitting posture should be equally balanced at the 3 points – the 2 points in front, (the left and right leg, in the half lotus posture) and one on the backside. If the body is leaning towards the front, then the body feels like falling forward after some time.

It is good that the beginner have a cushion 3-4 inches higher on the buttock so that they would have a more upright back with stable posture at the back and less pressure on the front legs.

(2) *What to do when I am sleepy?*

Give more work to the mind – go to the touching points as mentioned in my previous lessons. If it does not work, then stand up and do the walking meditation.

(3) *I feel intense pain what should I do?*

If you can bear the pain, try to separate the mind from the object – in other words, to be detached. Look deeper into the painful feeling and try to see the change in intensity. When the meditator finds it is unbearable he can change his posture mindfully or do standing or walking meditation.

(4) *Can I do walking meditation for the whole half an hour because I don't feel like sitting?*

In fact, it is good to do walking first before sitting. Walking meditation has great benefits. The object is more gross and clear so it is easier to cultivate and maintain continuous mindfulness.

(5) *I am sweating why do I feel so hot?*

Well, it is quite alright – perhaps it may be due to the many meditators in the hall or it may be due to strong concentration of the mind which builds up heat in the body.

That will be all for this week, see you again next week. Take good care of yourself, practice at home. Sadhu Sadhu Sadhu!!!