

## Lesson 8

by Bro James Ong (30 minutes)

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### CONTEMPLATION OF MIND

#### Part 3

#### 8.1 Introduction

This is the 8<sup>th</sup> lesson of Satipatthana Meditation Discourse, part 3 of Contemplation of Mind.

#### 8.2 Surpassable Mind and Unsurpassable Mind

The Buddha continues with the 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> type of mind in the Discourse that is the surpassable mind and unsurpassable mind. He says: “...*Herein, a monk knows the surpassable state of mind as surpassable state of mind or he knows the unsurpassable state of mind as unsurpassable state of mind*”.

What is the surpassable and unsurpassable state of mind?

Surpassable mind refers to the “absorption-mind” or the form-sphere consciousness while the unsurpassable mind as formless-sphere consciousness. These minds are lofty, sublime, pure, and the mental defilements are temporarily suppressed. These mental states were mentioned by the Buddha in the Discourse because the Buddha, Arahants and some of his disciples at that time have experienced such minds. If we practise such ways, we too, can experience these minds as did the Buddha and his disciples in the past.

#### 8.3 Concentrated state of mind

...is the 13<sup>th</sup> type of mind mentioned by the Buddha in the Discourse. He says: “...*Herein a monk knows the concentrated state of mind as concentrated state of mind*”.

What is concentrated mind?

It is the one-pointedness of mind whereby the mind is fixed to the object. Occasionally in your meditation practice, you may experience peacefulness and calmness when the mind stays with the meditation object and it is not distracted or restless.

However, one must not forget, that mind is constantly changing – different states of mind arising and disappearing all the time. Sometimes the mind is concentrated, next moment it runs all over the place – the mind wouldn’t stay on the object. Today’s meditation may be peaceful but tomorrow may be restless. It arises and passes away due to conditions. If one is not aware of the mind he will be disturbed by negative thoughts and emotions like tension, stress, ill-will, frustrations, attachment, etc. He then finds it very difficult to settle the mind down in the evening when he tries to meditate.

So, we should note that the mind is impermanent and one should not attach to any mind state or be depressed, angry or frustrated, thinking that one's meditation is getting worse. Instead, we should know that mind can be a meditation object for the mind itself.

What are the factors that must be developed to make the mind concentrated?

For a concentrated mind, there are 5 factors that must be developed starting with (1) *initial application of mind (Vitaka)*. Now, I will explain initial application of mind and how it can be developed in daily life and also in formal meditation. Initial application means that the mind is always directed towards an object.

In daily life, if the mind is constantly directed towards objects that are unpleasant through seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting or touching, it can give rise to irritation, anger, ill-will, discontentment and such other mental disturbances. For instance, being scolded or seeing unpleasant sight like rubbish in front of your house.

On the other hand, if the mind is constantly directed towards pleasant object it can give rise to strong craving. If it is not fulfilled, it leads to disappointment, frustrations, despair, sadness... Sensual desire or craving in itself, produces discomfort and agitates the mind.

In order to develop concentration, the mind needs to be directed with mindfulness towards the meditation objects as frequently as possible. For example, if one is doing housework, the mind should then be anchored to the bodily actions at that present moment like washing car, mopping, bathing, so on and so forth.

When the mind is constantly directed to meditation objects in daily life, it gives rise to the 2<sup>nd</sup> factor which is the *sustained application of mind (Vicara)*. As the mind stays with the object it does not give opportunity or loophole for defilements to surface which troubles the mind.

The sustained mind produces a certain degree of calmness depending on how strong the mind is sustained in the mindfulness practice. After some time, the peaceful mind produces *joy*, which is the 3<sup>rd</sup> factor of concentration. Joy which is known in Pali as *Piti*. This joy is borne out of wholesomeness and peacefulness which is not the same happiness derived from sense-enjoyment. When such joy arises it becomes easier to stay with whatever one is doing with mindfulness as the mind finds joy and peacefulness in doing so.

When joy is intensified with sustained mindfulness, happiness, which is the 4<sup>th</sup> factor of concentration, arises, in Pali known as *Sukha*. When there arises happiness, the mind is at ease and stays contented with whatever he is doing.

What is the difference between joy and happiness? Joy is like a thirsty traveller seeing a pool of clear, clean and fresh water. Happiness is the quenching of the thirst. Joy can also be compared to a hungry person who finds a nice restaurant and happiness is the fulfilling of his hunger.

With happiness, the mind becomes focussed and concentrated, which is the 5<sup>th</sup> factor. In Pali, known as *Ekagatta*. In other words, the mind is not wandering, not restless, thinking of past or future or worried about other things (like family, etc...) or solving problems. The mind remains fixed, calm and concentrated in that present moment. When concentration factor is developed in

daily life, the hindrances become inactive and weaken, this helps greatly in the formal meditation. The mind could easily focus on the meditation objects, clearly comprehending it.

How do we develop these 5 mental factors in the formal sitting meditation?

First the meditator needs to apply initial application of mind to one of the meditation objects. When the mind strays away from it, in the form of thinking, dreaming or sleeping then the meditator should be mindful that he is not meditating any more. He should then bring his attention back to the meditation object. By such repeated action, the mind begins to stay closely to it. When it stays long enough the sustaining mind arises.

I would like to give a simile here. Initial application is like the bird taking flight. Sustained application is like the bird gliding in the air after it has reached a certain height. Another one, initial application is like a bee flying in the direction of a flower, while sustained application is the circling around that flower. When sustained application stays long enough, peacefulness and calmness of mind occur and spiritual joy is borne out of this calmness of mind.

Normally, joy that arises in the formal meditation can be experienced by the meditator in greater intensity, compared to the daily life practice. Why? Because the mind is less distracted and more focussed during the formal meditation, as other activities are set aside.

Such spiritual joy can manifest in many ways such as lightness of mind and body, coolness sensations, floating sensations, pleasant feelings that come like ocean waves, deep contentment or fulfilment, feeling at ease and comfortable, etc... If the meditator is not attached to the joyful experiences and maintains his continuous mindfulness, then joy intensifies leading to the arising of happiness.

Happiness can be experienced as buoyancy of mind and body or the very blissful state of mind like free from all worldly burdens or cooling sensations that permeates the whole body and the mind, as if sitting under a waterfall, the happy feeling that prompts constant smiling and laughing, the feeling of lightness like a feather blown by the wind especially when walking. The happiness mental state is more intense and has longer lasting effect than the joyful mental state. During that period of happiness that last for hours there is no desire for sense-enjoyment. There is also no feeling of hunger. There are meditators who have similar experiences and there are also some who experience happiness in other forms.

If one is not attached to the happiness, mindfulness further develops and the mind becomes focussed and one-pointed. One-pointedness is the anchoring of mind onto the object like it is being stuck to it and unmoveable. The mind appears solid, stable, still and not dispersed. With one-pointedness of mind, the hindrances are suppressed and the mind becomes sharp, clear and bright just like sediment sinking to the bottom and water becomes clear.

In the case of Samatha meditation, the mind can gain access to absorption. But the concentrated mind developed through mindfulness is different. In the practice of mindfulness meditation the mind clearly comprehends the object. Its characteristics are revealed and wisdom arises. Example – when noting the arising and disappearing of mind one can see the different types of thoughts arising and disappearing in sequence one after another like a row of marching ants or various sensations arising and disappearing throughout the body. In the case of noting the rising and falling of the abdomen which is the air element, the meditator can perceive in one breath, the many arising and disappearing of air element or the breaking apart of the air element. Owing to

the strength of one-pointedness that is developed, it holds the mind to the object and such phenomena can be perceived and maintained for some time and not a brief moment. So the characteristic of impermanence is clearly perceived and experienced.

#### 8.4 Un-concentrated state of mind

The Buddha continues with the 14<sup>th</sup> type of mind: “...or he knows the un-concentrated state of mind as the un-concentrated state of mind”.

The un-concentrated mind is restless, dispersed, scattered and lacks focus. The un-concentrated mind is unable to achieve much because it is not focus on any given task and is easily distracted. It can't stay put to finish any job. In that sense an un-concentrated mind is similar to a disabled-mind – a mind that is not useful at all.

A mind that is untrained and un-concentrated is also a danger to oneself and others. For example, accident may occur when the mind wanders off to other things and pays no attention to the road when driving. One may cut one's finger if he does not pay attention to the simple chore of cutting vegetables. An un-concentrated mind is unprofitable in spiritual and material world and is regressive in those respects.

So how does one deal with the un-concentrated mind in formal practice and daily life?

They should first, recognise this type of mind. Seeing the danger in such mind, they should put more effort in their practice to develop concentration as mentioned above.

#### 8.5 Freed mind

Continuing on with the 15<sup>th</sup> type of mind: the Buddha says: “...Herein a monk knows the freed mind as freed mind”.

What is the freed mind? Freed mind is the consciousness that is free – being freed from defilements. Freed mind can be divided into 3 levels.

- (1) Momentary freedom – when mindfulness is present during meditation practice, defilements are temporarily inhibited. In every moment one notes rising, falling, feelings, mind and etc, mindfulness is present and defilements cannot enter the mind and the mind is momentarily freed. In other words the purity is only from moment to moment.

However, you may not be able to see that the mind is pure because mind arises and passes away very fast, unless one experiences a stretch of moments with mindfulness. In this instant, you are able to perceive the momentary freed-mind, that is the mind which is pure and wholesome devoid of defilements. This is only possible if mindfulness is built up and stays on the vipassana objects from moment to moment for some period of time.

- (2) Temporary freedom – This is more intense. When concentration is strong, the unwholesome mind cannot arise for some time. If you are very consistent with your meditation practice, you will gain good concentration. You will find that even in daily

life you become peaceful and mindful. In whatever you do, you are mindful. When concentration is thus built-up, there is calmness and peacefulness of mind and defilements are suppressed.

Sometimes this peacefulness and calmness last a long time even for days and you may think that you have attained Arahantship or enlightenment and that you are really pure. You could see objects clearly with certain brightness. You could even smile when being scolded as anger does not arise in that instant. This is just temporary freedom and many meditators have experienced this.

In this case of strong concentration but not attaining absorption, when concentration weakens defilements can still arise. When they do arise, it is weak and disappears fast.

Now in the case of those who practise tranquillity meditation (*Samatha Bhavana*) and gained absorption (*Jhana*), the temporary freedom of mind could last from 1 day up to 7 days without a break, where defilements are temporarily blocked and find no entry into the mind – like a well thatched hut where rain finds no entry.

- (3) The best is of course – permanent freedom – this mind can only arise in those who are completely enlightened. When one gains the various stages of sainthood from the practice of this wisdom meditation, various defilements are cut-off. Upon attaining Arahantship all defilements are completely cut-off. The Arahant's mind is permanently freed, meaning, there will be no further arising of negative mental states anymore such as attachment, sensual-craving, sorrow, distress, fear, anger, discontentment, jealousy, grief, and the whole mass of mental sorrow or pain.

Some may say “I do not want to have any religion” or “I am a free-thinker”. By this, he thinks he is free to think whatever he likes. But he is not free – neither is he free to think what he wants to think. Thoughts arise due to past conditioning and if he has an angry disposition, he will constantly have angry thoughts, if he has fearful disposition, fearful thoughts will constantly arise, if he has strong craving, he will have many attachment or craving thoughts arising. These thoughts regularly surface and hence the mind is constantly harassed by mental suffering although he calls himself a free-thinker.

## 8.6 Un-freed mind

Continuing on with the 16<sup>th</sup> and the last type of mind mentioned in the Discourse: the Buddha says: “...or he knows the un-freed mind as the un-freed mind”.

What is the un-freed mind?

The un-freed mind is bound by the 10 fetters and these fetters are (1) rites and rituals, (2) doubts (3) wrong view of a personality or ego, (4) sensual-craving (5) ill-will (6) attachment to form sphere (7) attachment to formless spheres (8) conceit (9) restlessness and (10) ignorance. I will briefly explain the fetters that bind the mind to suffering.

- (1) Rites and rituals are repeated unwholesome actions based on wrong views. They are fetters because it leads to more suffering and not liberation.

- (2) Doubts that are not followed by mindfulness and investigation lead to non-action – there is no cultivation of the Noble 8 Fold Path. Therefore it is a fetter. However, doubt can be overcome by knowledge and faith.
- (3) Wrong view of personality or ego is a fetter because ego strengthens defilements such as craving, hatred and confusion. Wrong views produce strong attachment. So, it leads to unwholesome mental and physical actions resulting in further suffering. However, wrong views can be discarded when insight-knowledge arises perceiving that there is no entity, ego or personality abiding in the ever changing mind and body.

When these 3 fetters are overcome by the 4 Foundations of Mindfulness cultivation, the 1<sup>st</sup> stage of sainthood is attained. There are 4 stages of sainthood as mentioned in the scriptures.

- (4) The 4<sup>th</sup> fetter is indulgence in sensual-craving. It is the characteristic of sensual-craving to enjoy objects through the sense-fulfilment even at the expense of harming or hurting other beings. In such way it does not lead to wholesomeness, purity of mind, wisdom or realisation. Therefore, it is a fetter.
- (5) Ill-will is the 5<sup>th</sup> fetter. It has the characteristic of revenge, hatred and causing harm like a forest fire that burns everything in its path. Ill-will produces suffering. Obviously, this does not lead to wisdom, peace or happiness. However this can be overcome by the mental development of loving-kindness.

In the second stage of sainthood, the intensity of sensual-craving and ill-will is greatly reduced. In the third stage of sainthood, sensual-craving and ill-will are totally eliminated and one will never get angry anymore.

- (6&7) Attachment to form and formless spheres are fetters. These are more refined and subtle attachments compared to the gross sensual-craving eliminated in 3<sup>rd</sup> stage of sainthood.
- (8) Conceit is the 8<sup>th</sup> fetter. Conceit is the pride of achievement like for instance when the mind compares to those things that makes one more superior or better than the other.
- (9) The 9<sup>th</sup> fetter is restlessness. It is a fetter because the mind that is constantly moving produces distortion and the object cannot be clearly perceived in its true nature. This however can be overcome by strong concentration.
- (10) Ignorance is a fetter because it blinds the mind and makes the mind confused. It covers up the true nature of objects. This is finally destroyed by full enlightenment.

The Arahant would have gotten rid of all the remaining 5 fetters (no: 6-10).

I have just explained how an un-freed mind is bound by the 10 fetters and how the un-freed mind is liberated by the 4 stages of sainthood.

Every meditator who seeks enlightenment needs to overcome all these 10 fetters in order to gain full enlightenment and this process is undertaken gradually step by step. When a meditator cultivates mindfulness to see things as they really are, he becomes more detached and defilements gradually weaken. This process is automatic and not to be forced upon oneself. In one of the discourses, the Buddha told a group of monks that the ocean slopes gradually and does not

deepens suddenly, just as wisdom is matured gradually and cannot be forced upon. Otherwise, it is like plucking an unripe fruit that cannot be eaten.

A thousand miles journey begins with the 1<sup>st</sup> step. The meditator should not lose faith as he keeps on moving. With every step taken, they are closer to the goal.

## 8.7 Q & A

I would answer a couple of questions now.

*Question:* What if I have no time to attend the regular sitting in the temple – can I do the sitting at home by myself?

*Answer:*

For beginners, group sitting is very encouraging because a group of persons having the same intention, reinforces the strength and faith in each other.

If the meditator stays away from the group sitting for some time the mind can easily become influenced by sensual craving or encountering various problems and misfortunes, the mind can be pulled away from the meditation practice. Regular group sitting can help the meditator to anchor the mind back on the Right Path.

In the regular group sitting, there are also discussions on the finer and deeper points of meditation. Different approaches are also introduced to help meditators in their practice. New topics are also regularly introduced to the meditators. Also, meditators are in need of new instructions and motivations as he progresses. In regular sitting, there is also Q & A session where the teacher clarifies the meditator's doubts. Some strong doubts that are not clarified can obstruct and stop the meditator from further cultivation.

Without proper guidance or instructions or Q&A, one could go off from the Right Path without knowing it. If they continue deeper into the wrong practices, it could result in serious consequences.

Therefore it is useful and essential for meditators to avail themselves for the regular sittings until they have sufficient knowledge and experiences to be on their own.

*Question:* I am so busy I can hardly find time to sit and meditate – what can I do?

*Answer:*

Most people think meditation is only to be practiced sitting down at a temple or retreat centre. It is not so. It is essential to maintain our mindfulness in daily life (as spoken before) as much as possible throughout the day: noting the mind, feelings and body at the present moment.

Next week – will be the final part of Contemplation of Mind.

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