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EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION

PAT SIMMONS

Hello everybody and welcome to the 60th issue of *New Chan Forum*. This is the second issue I've produced in the shadow of Covid 19 lockdown. I hope it will be the last, though I suspect memories of the pandemic will continue to inform much of the writing in future issues. I hope you enjoy this issue, particularly the two articles that engage directly with our Covid experience.

Editing *New Chan Forum* is not unlike painting the Forth Bridge, and I am already gathering articles for issue 61. Whether you're a regular contributor or have never had a word of yours printed here, do consider writing something – a short or long article or a poem – or producing some artwork for issue 61.

In particular I'd like to encourage women to contribute! As you can see, there is only one contribution from a woman in this issue – thank you Marian! The Western Chan Fellowship is a genuinely 'equal-ops' organisation and it would be good to have this reflected in the next issue of *New Chan Forum*.

And it would really help me if you could send your contribution in a .doc or .docx format.

WHEN THE OPPOSITES ARISE, THE BUDDHA MIND IS LOST

SIMON CHILD

2020 brought many changes for all of us. We experienced unwelcome curtailments on our freedoms such as lockdown and tiered restrictions on travel and meeting others, and on how we conducted ourselves such as in shopping and mask wearing. We experienced significant changes in working patterns, such as furlough, or loss of employment or transfer to home working, or coping with COVID-safe workplace routines. We may have experienced illness and perhaps also loss in our family, social or work circles, as well as economic and other challenges. Even the changes were themselves changeable, with quickly changing regulations and guidelines announced via frequent press conferences.

Some words from the 12th century Japanese Zen Master Dogen provide a lens through which we can review our responses to these stressors, “When the opposites arise, the buddha-mind is lost”. This quotation is familiar to many of you, not least because over 30 years ago John Crook posted a little card with these words on the wall at Maenllwyd, and it is still there. But do we really get it, and how do we respond to the implications of it?

The quotation is excerpted from *Fukanzaŕengi*, Dogen’s Rules for Meditation, in this instance as translated by the late Rev Master Jiyu Kenet and used for recitation in ceremonies at Shasta Abbey and Throssel Hole Abbey:



EIHEIJI TEMPLE, FOUNDED BY DOGEN IN 1241

WHEN THE OPPOSITES ARISE, THE BUDDHA MIND IS LOST.

*However much you may be proud of your understanding, however much you may be enlightened, whatever your attainment of wisdom and supernatural power, your finding of the way to mind illumination, your power to touch heaven and to enter into enlightenment, when the opposites arise you have almost lost the way to salvation.*¹

When we look at such a text we are drawn into interpreting it, for example wondering what is meant by “the opposites”. Which pair of opposites are referred to here, or does it include any or all opposing thoughts or situations? Does it refer only to actual opposites, such as black and white or left and right, or is it broader than that including mere differences such as blue and green or West and North?

Very likely, like me, you are not a scholar of Asian languages and you cannot read such texts in the original languages so must rely on translations by others. We risk misunderstanding what is meant if the translator’s choice of English word is not a good match for the intention of the original author, or if we happen to hear a different meaning or nuance of that English word than was intended by the translator. For this reason it is usually worth seeking out alternative translations as these can give you a synthesised view of how different translators understand the original text.

In the case of well-known text such as this an Internet search will quickly find you several alternative translations, by both well-known and respected scholars and practitioners and perhaps also by lesser-known (potentially but not necessarily less reliable) translators. Translators who are themselves experienced practitioners often seem to have a more intuitive understanding of the subtle meaning and intention of foreign

language texts than someone who is primarily a language scholar. For variations on “When the opposites arise...” I found such as: “If the slightest dualistic thinking arises...”; “If the least like or dislike arises...”; “once the slightest like or dislike arises...”; “if a trace of disagreement arises...”; “If adverse or favourable conditions arise to even a small degree...”; “If you follow one thing while you resist the other...”.

Here we see “the opposites” referred to as indicating dualistic thoughts, or to opposed responses such as like/dislike, adverse/favourable, agree/disagree. Similarly we find alternatives to “the buddha mind is lost...” indicating the mind falling into confusion or being lost in confusion instead of living from the clarity, equanimity and peace of a buddha.

Is that your experience, that when dualistic or opposed feelings or thoughts arise then your mind becomes lost and confused? Very likely so: once such opposing views arise in the mind we readily get drawn into an internal argument with ourselves, and no longer have full contact with our environment because we become preoccupied with this internal battle. Like or dislike arise, and we focus on finding a way to increase or at least hold on to whatever it is we like, or to dispel or improve whatever it is we do not like. Similarly, in the case of the arising of “this is right” or “this is wrong”, or of just about any other view with which our mind can engage, we become engaged in this particular tension and drama within our minds. It is not even necessary for these arisings to arise in paired form. As soon as one arises we tend to add its opposite: if “I like this” arises then we instinctively add “I like this better than that, or “I don’t like that” or “I don’t like that this may not persist”.

Look into your own mind and witness these processes in yourself. It will not take long before some arising of a mental phenomenon such as a thought or a feeling or an attitude takes charge of your mind, influencing the stories that you tell yourself and drawing you away from the rest of your present moment experience. When the mind is in a coarse and unstable state it might be some time before you notice that you have been drawn away. As you train in meditative concentration you catch these wanderings sooner, but still they occur. As you improve your meditative skills you begin to catch the impulse to wander earlier in its arising, perhaps even before the wandering begins, and it becomes easier to remain present and not get drawn into an oppositional mode of thinking. As you develop further the impulses to oppositional dualistic thinking may still occur, but you treat them the same way as any other arising phenomenon such as the sound of the wind or a glimpse of a bird or a memory of an event: they are noticed as part of the scenery of the moment, but they do not trigger a flood of secondary thoughts which take over your mind. The opposites no longer arise, and the mind is no longer becoming lost, confused.

Reflect on your 2020 experience from this perspective. Those extra stresses last year were all fertile opportunities for the opposites to arise. When a restriction is imposed or experienced then the wish for freedom arises. When our routine suffers an enforced change then a wish for “return to normal” arises.

For many people, significant arenas affected by the COVID pandemic have been their living situations and their relationships. Some have been separated from loved ones, family and friends, unable to visit them or receive visits due to regulations or due to being extra vulnerable. Many

have been pushed into living more closely than usual with others, due to home working, non-working, restrictions on opportunities to go out, or due to school/university closures leading to home-schooling and home studying for university students. These situations have not necessarily been easy. Visiting restrictions and isolation may have triggered loneliness, and perhaps guilt at failing to support others. Enforced closer living may have triggered irritation, anger and disputes. Our usually unconscious ways of managing our interactions with others have been off-limits, or otherwise obstructed by pandemic circumstances, and we felt frustrated, lost, confused.

An example of, “When the opposites arise, the buddha mind is lost” might be, “When others arise, the self arises”. When something disrupts our usual ways of interacting with others, thoughts of other people arise in our minds and become more prominent in our awareness, because other people have become a “problem to be solved”, a relationship for which the usual manner of relating is no longer available and we don’t know what to do. As the “problem” of other people arises in our mind, our self-concern, our “self”, arises and asserts its discomfort. We wish for things to be otherwise, perhaps wishing for a change back to how things were, or at least for a change to something better than the current enforced and unsatisfactory situation.

It too often happens, sadly, that someone experiencing adversity is told tritely, “It’s all good practice” or “It’s a good opportunity for practice”. Stated too glibly this can be cruel and unhelpful – the recipient of the remark may not be in a good place and may not be able to make use of this “advice”, at least not yet. But, as described above, it is true that adversity can bring to our awareness what has been unconscious up until

now, and this can be very useful. This is why John Crook used to say, “Chan isn’t supposed to be comfortable!” Similarly, he said that it is often helpful if the imposed and fixed structure of a retreat creates some discomfort – the self arises, wanting things to be otherwise, and then the phenomenon of self can be investigated more readily.

Our perceptions of other people, and our relationships to them, and our management of those relationships, often have a largely unconscious habitual element. We may be unaware of this because these habits generally operate smoothly and without challenge when our social structure is relatively stable. The recently enforced changes in social interactions may be unwelcome and indeed painful, but these have created an opportunity to apply our practice as our prior assumptions and unconscious actions may have become conscious in our current awareness due to their being obstructed as change happened around us.

How did we respond to those challenges which 2020 brought to us? Our instinct might have been to try to fix things. If something was not as we were used to or as we might have wanted it to be then we tried to make it so, tried to put things back to how they “should” be. We may have adopted workarounds. To adapt to lack of contact we likely increased online and telephone interaction as a replacement for in-person interaction. To adapt to increased crowding of shared spaces such as homes occupied by homeworkers we may have retreated to private spaces such as bedrooms, or taken extra outside exercise.

Fixes and workarounds may be valid responses but these operate in the dualistic realm and we must heed Dogen’s warning about becoming drawn into the opposites, “when the opposites arise you have almost lost the way to salvation”. As practitioners we have an alterna-



tive approach to explore. During our lifetimes we have developed many habitual tendencies (Sanskrit: *samskaras*, the fourth of the five *skandhas*). These operate largely unconsciously, triggered by our impressions of the situations in which we find ourselves. An important part of practice is to discover and release inappropriate and unhelpful conditioning. This is part of our cultivation of the second of the seven factors of enlightenment, to investigate the conditioned nature of our responses.

Conditioned automatic reactivity has been useful to us as it can facilitate rapid responses when dealing with the many events of a busy life. Unfortunately, our habitual tendencies were learned and embedded in past circumstances which are often only crudely relevant to current circumstances and may even be inappropriate or harmful. As adversity such as a pandemic obstructs and thereby highlights our habitual responses we are given an opportunity to choose to do something other than reflexively follow unconscious habits. Perhaps we can step out of “autopilot” and into a more aware life in which we respond to the actual circumstances of this moment, instead of continuing to live from tired old habitual responses in a present moment which is only in part like the past situations in which that habit was established.

This is the path of practice. Becoming aware of the operations of our mind and its habits, why would we continue to respond in ways which are now seen to be unhelpful or harmful. Instead of seeking fixes and workarounds to enable continuation of our ingrained ways of being, we take the opportunity to free ourselves and we evolve and mature our responses so that they fit the actual present circumstances which are now more clearly perceived.

2020 imposed modifications on your interactions with others, giving rise to loneliness, resentment, irritation, grief and more (and perhaps in some cases the contrary, relief at being granted an excuse to reduce contact). Did you automatically and perhaps unconsciously scramble to try to maintain or regain the past situation, using fixes and workarounds. Or did the disruptions to your usual habitual responses lead to a new understanding of your reactions to other people and your relationship to them, and perhaps a conscious (albeit enforced) prioritisation of some relationships over others. Perhaps there were relationships that you had rather taken for granted, allowing them to drift, and you were prompted to acknowledge their significance to you and/or the other and respond accordingly. Maybe you recognised that some other relationships had been maintained for too long, perhaps from a tired sense of duty or in order to protect your pride or neediness, and letting them go might be better for both you and for the other.

When the opposites arise, the buddha mind is lost. When our way of being in the world is threatened we become anxious or resentful and our instinct is to focus on this issue and try to preserve or restore our familiar situation. But it does not have to be that way. External change can create an opportunity for appropriate internal attitudinal change and corresponding external behavioural change.

When others arise, the self arises. When our relationships and interactions with others are jolted into our awareness by a change in circumstances, our self tends to assert itself and its desire for return to the status quo ante. Whether you just go with that habitual urge, making the best of it through fixes and workarounds, or whether you take the op-



portunity to respond creatively from this moment, is a choice to be made. You have surely experienced such challenges during 2020 – how did you respond? How will you respond to the challenges yet to arise in 2021?

NOTES

1 <https://www.shastaabbey.org/pdf/rules4md.pdf>.

RESPONDING TO THE PANDEMIC

EDDY STREET

I've had a sense that in the past weeks things have emotionally changed. I seem to get fewer silly videos through whatsapp, I receive and send out fewer e-mails and I know I'm reading the news about coronavirus less avidly. People that I talk to on the telephone appear to be just waiting for things to change. Initially there was a great feeling of the need to be creative and flexible with how life had to be managed. Everything presented as requiring a new approach and there felt to be an excitement in the anxiety of having to do things in a different way. I am sure that initially we all brought an energised enquiry into how the lockdown imposed itself onto our lives and this undoubtedly transferred into how we practised in the everyday. But now, having accepted the challenges and found solutions, we have become used to it and some aspects of life by their mundane nature have acquired a dullness. The novelty feels to have worn off and a new commonplace has inserted itself.

In meeting this daily predictability I am reminded of something James Joyce wrote in *Ulysses*:

Every life is many days, day after day. We walk through ourselves, meeting robbers, ghosts, giants, old men, young men, wives, widows, brothers-in-love, but always meeting ourselves.

It may be that at the beginning of this situation we were open to meeting our own ghosts and giants and the stark differentness in our lives then would have opened us up to meeting ourselves but as things acquire a

sense of ordinariness it is easy to stop that direct encounter as new habits and routines take over and dampen our feeling for enquiry. So it may well be that when we walk through our day-to-day, the self we now meet is just an 'ordinary' self, very likely to be all too familiar to us. Practice, however, offers a means to investigate this self thoroughly. As Reb Anderson says:

The self that comes to us through upright sitting is not the self we choose to study, not the self we expect to study, but the self that 'may exhibit itself to us by turns' when we just sit. It is a fresh unexpected, troublesome, difficult immediate self. This is the self that is fruitful to study.

JHANA MEDITATION AND SILENT ILLUMINATION

JAKE LYNE

Introduction

The derivation of the word Chan is from *Dhyana* in Sanskrit and *Jhana* in Pali. *Jhana* is translated as meditation, meditative absorption or meditative concentration. Jhana meditation practice features in several Pali suttas, and involves progression through four jhanas. These are increasingly subtle states of concentration, experienced as altered states of consciousness.¹

Buddhism crossed the seas and mountains to China in the first century CE and in the early days was close in form and content to Indian Buddhism. The change from the Indian progressive practice of the jhanas to the directness of Zen or Chan developed over the centuries, as Buddhism was influenced by Chinese culture and Daoist thought, in particular the concept of *wu wei* which roughly means non-doing or non-forcing. *Wu wei* is very much in the spirit of the Chan practice of Silent Illumination.

Chan is considered to be a ‘sudden’ school and in principle Chan teaching emphasises the fruit of meditation, which might suddenly become apparent. Whilst much Chan teaching contains advice on how to practise, this advice is considered to be ‘expedient means’, to help practitioners through obstacles, difficulties and misconceptions. There is no attempt to guide meditators systematically through recognisable states of consciousness, as there is in jhana practice.

In this article I will contrast jhana meditation with silent illumination. Whilst there are some similarities between them, they are different in purpose, method of practice, and in how they are experienced.



Both practices start from recognising the need to live an ethical life and both are informed by knowledge of the so-called hindrances to meditation and how to deal with them, in preparation for entering practice. The importance of preparation was spelt out to Zen Master Dogen, the founder of the Japanese Soto Zen school, by his teacher Chan Master Ju Ching during a retreat at Tiantong monastery in China. The story of Dogen's enlightenment is well known. One morning, Ju Ching shouted at a drowsy monk, "When you study under a master you must drop off body and mind: what is the use of single-minded intense sleeping?!" (vs. 'single-minded intense sitting', a favourite phrase of Ju Ching's). Hearing this, Dogen suddenly attained great enlightenment. Dogen later asked Ju Ching what was meant by the phrase 'drop off body and mind'. Ju Ching replied that dropping off body and mind is sitting meditation and when sitting meditation is practised, we part from the five desires, the five hindrances and the three poisons.

The five desires refer to desire in the five sense realms. The five hindrances are obstacles to meditation: they are sensory desire (wanting), ill will (aversion), sloth and torpor (too little energy), restlessness and worry, and doubt in the sense of lack of faith in oneself or practice. The three poisons are greed, aversion and ignorance: mental factors that drive the wheel of life according to classical Buddhist thought.

Ju Ching's formulation of the hindrances is similar to that found in the Pali suttas that refer to jhana practice: in both cases, hindrances are thought of as obstacles that once removed allow the main practice to begin. In jhana practice, it is only after the hindrances are set aside to some extent that "access concentration" can begin to be generated. Access concentration is a precondition for accessing the jhanas. It is a state

in which the mind is very calm and fully present with the method of practice, without becoming distracted. The usual method of practice is to follow the breath (*anapanasati* in Pali).

It would appear that the hindrances are regarded in much the same way in the Chan tradition and in jhana practice, but this is not so, at least not in the way Silent Illumination and Shikantaza are commonly taught in western traditions. Instead of being understood as obstacles, the 'hindrances', especially those to do with wanting and ill will, can be understood to contain the seeds of our awakening. From this point of view the so-called hindrances can be a spur or aid, and perhaps even an essential part of practice. It is not that this understanding is absent from jhana practice, rather there is a fundamental difference of intention between silent illumination and jhana practice and this results in a different approach to the hindrances.

The aim of practising the jhanas is to develop *samadhi* as a foundation for subsequent insight meditation. Samadhi is a state of mind that is serene, clear, and highly concentrated. Insight meditation goes beyond this towards having direct insight into the nature of reality, either through a programme of insight meditation practices or spontaneously. A simile for jhana practice is that it is like sharpening a pencil (by working up to the fourth jhana in stages) in order to begin the practice of insight, or to use a more colourful Tibetan simile, like sharpening a sword in order to cut off the head of delusion. Jhana practice and insight practice are thus done in sequence.

The principle underlying silent illumination is that samadhi and insight are developed simultaneously, not sequentially. This is a major difference from jhana practice. Both involve formal sitting meditation but

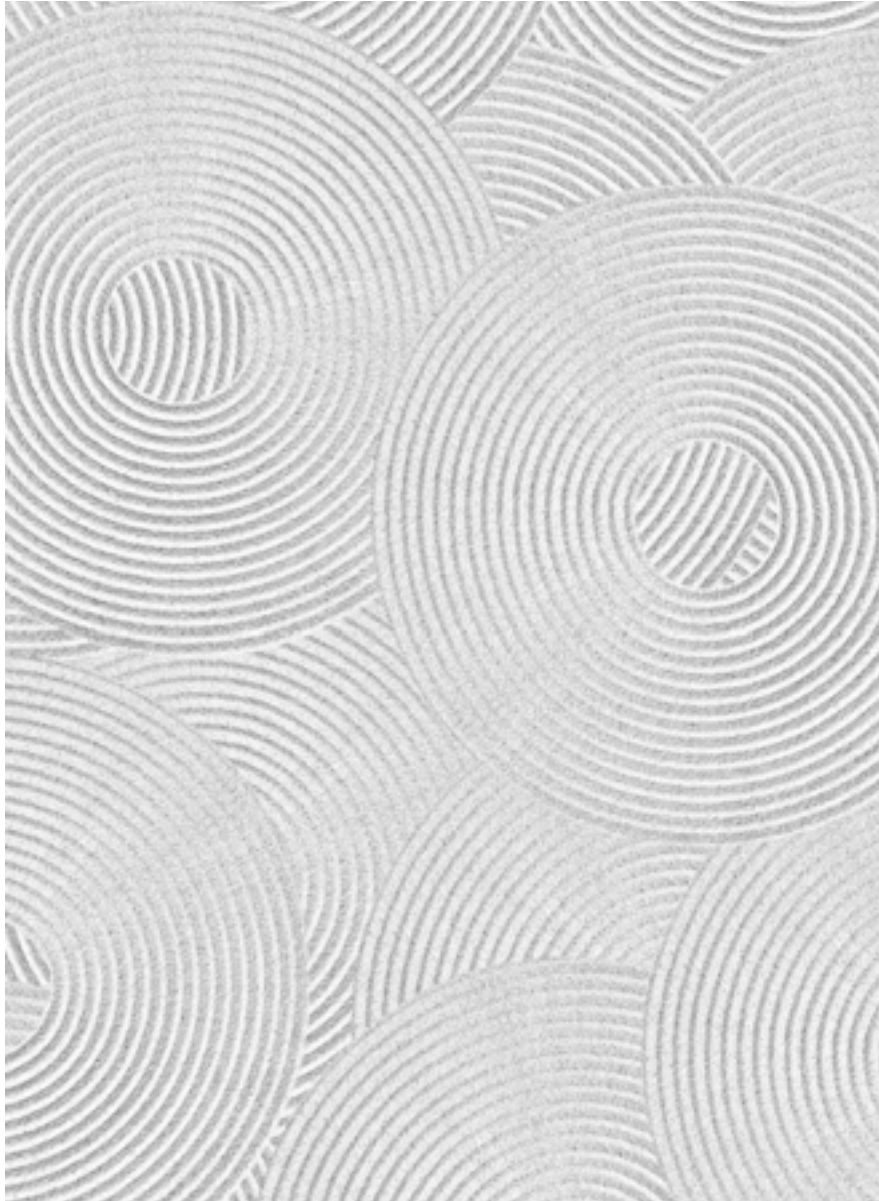


photo: Shutterstock

the usual advice for practitioners of silent illumination is to keep the eyes open, or at least partially open, in order to avoid going into so-called trance states. Jhana practice is an eyes-closed practice. There is no concern about trance states; rather the jhana practitioner is about to set out on a journey with a clear map of the staging points – the jhanas.

This difference in approach is related to a second major difference between the two practices: as the practice of silent illumination develops, internal awareness is not lost – rather awareness of the environment tends to widen and sharpen – whereas jhana practice is primarily an inward practice in which awareness of the environment fades into the background.²

The Maha Assapura Sutta: Similes for the Hindrances and Jhanas

The jhanas are mentioned in several Buddhist suttas. In the *Maha Assapura Sutta* the Buddha outlines a whole programme of practice referring to the five hindrances, the four jhanas and insight practices. Vivid similes illustrate the abandoning of the hindrances and the altered states of consciousness that occur in each of the jhanas.

- With respect to the first hindrance, the practitioner abandons longing for the world and dwells in a mind free from longing and greed. This inner freedom is compared to the situation of someone who has lived for a long time under the burden of crippling debt; when the debt is paid off the person is ecstatic and full of joy.
- Abandoning ill will and dwelling in a mind that is compassionate is compared to the experience of being cured of a long-term illness.

- Abandoning dullness and dwelling in a mind that is mindful and clearly comprehending is like the freedom experienced on being released from a dark prison.
- Abandoning restlessness and worry and dwelling free from agitation with a peaceful mind is like escaping from the tyranny of slavery and being at liberty.
- Abandoning doubt is compared to getting to the end of a journey across a wide desert without dying of thirst along the way!

In the *Sangaravo Sutta*, there is a different simile for the five hindrances involving water in a pot. Someone looking into the pot would not be able to see their face in the water if it were coloured with red, yellow, blue or orange dye (sensual desire), or if it were boiling up and bubbling over (ill will), or covered in slimy moss and water plants (sleepiness) or stirred by the wind and producing waves (agitated), or turbid, stirred up and muddy with the pot placed in a dark place (doubt).

Overcoming the hindrances is not seen as the work of a few hours of meditation practice. They are regarded as significant obstacles and overcoming or weakening them in the course of one's life results in a sense of joyful freedom and release, opening the way for meditation to deepen.

After overcoming or – more realistically – substantially reducing the five hindrances, the meditator is able to practice breath awareness (*anapanasati*) to enter the first jhana,³ in which there is rapture and happiness with some mild discursive thought in the background. Rapture and happiness pervade the whole body, just as water pervades a paste that is fully saturated. The idea is that this state is physical and intense, yet there is containment.

In the second jhana, there is internal confidence and unification of the mind. Discursive thoughts subside, but rapture and happiness continue and pervade the whole body, just as cool water might entirely and evenly pervade a lake in a hot climate. At this stage rapture and happiness have a quality of lightness and coolness; there is more subtlety than in the first jhana.

In the third jhana, the meditator dwells happily in mindful equanimity, without rapture. The image is of a lotus flower that doesn't break through the surface of a lake, but is steeped in cool water throughout. This simile points to a sense of inner spaciousness, with equanimity in the body that is reflective of the state of the meditator's mind during meditation.

In the fourth jhana there is neither pleasure nor pain. Joy and dejection have disappeared, there is a purity of mindfulness born of equanimity. The image is of the whole body pervaded by a pure bright mind.

A well-trained meditator might progress through the jhanas in a single period of concentrated practice, but beginners can take a long time to learn how to do this.

Once the fourth jhana has been established and is stable, the practitioner is ready to begin the practice of insight. Traditionally, this was directed to specific topics. The three mentioned in the *Maha Assapura Sutra* are meditation on past lives, on the impermanence of life, and on what are known as the taints. The taints are sensual desire, desire for existence, ignorance of impermanence and ignorance of an understanding that there is no separate, independent, permanent self. In contemporary practice, insight meditation tends to be thematic, e.g., meditation on the body, meditation on the emotions, meditation on states of mind, meditation on not-self and so forth.

Ultimately, insight is another term for awakening. Though insight meditation involves topics or themes, the destination is the same as for Chan meditation: what Chan Master Sheng Yen called seeing the nature, or as John Crook once put it, seeing the nature with a compassionate heart.

Comparison with Silent Illumination

Jhana practice and silent illumination both involve some focus on body awareness, especially in the early stages (though silent illumination can also be practised without this focus) and as practice deepens both involve reduction in internal verbalisation, a sense of the boundaries of the body changing and experience that becomes increasingly subtle.

As already mentioned, the most crucial difference is that in silent illumination, insight and samadhi are practiced simultaneously, not sequentially. In silent illumination there is an emphasis on maintaining a balance between equanimity and serenity on the one hand and subtle non-directed investigation and conscious awareness on the other. When the practice is established, investigation or insight can occur spontaneously and naturally. The content of this investigation is the functioning of the mind itself; unlike for the practices described in the *Maha Assapura Sutra*, no formal topic or theme is prescribed. This gives the potential for silent illumination to be directly relevant to the immediate realities of the meditator's experience and life, because whatever comes to mind is noticed, in all fields of awareness, including thought, emotion and sensory experience.

Another important difference is that states of joy and rapture are not focused on in Chan teaching. From the beginning the attitude to practice

is supposed to be one of equanimity; happiness may arise, a sense of spaciousness might occur, obstruction and discomfort may arise, painful feelings may be experienced – in principle all these states are grist to the mill. Though usually people have a preference for pleasurable meditation, meditation is not taught with the intention of generating rapture and happiness.

This is quite different from jhana practice. To enter the first jhana a meditator identifies a pleasant sensation anywhere in the body and focuses on it. This facilitates the development of rapture and happiness, which can become extremely powerful.

Silent illumination has been called 'The Method of No Method';⁴ a state of mind becomes established where there is no need for the meditator to 'do' anything, awareness stabilises and the mind flows along on its own. Once practice stabilises, the meditative state can carry quite naturally into any other activity. The experienced distinction between sitting meditation and any other activity can even drop away entirely. Ultimately, the term silent illumination is a phrase that points to the nature of the awakened mind.

In principle, the combination of jhana and insight meditation has the same function as silent illumination practice. They are both paths to awakening and both ways to develop wisdom and kindness in everyday life.

Spiritual Bypassing

It is important to understand the function of both types of practice and to be clear about their differences. Without this understanding the essential link to insight practice, whether simultaneous with samadhi prac-

tice as for silent illumination, or following samadhi practice as for jhana practice, can be lost. There is then a risk that meditation becomes a form of avoidance, rather than a path in which preoccupation with self-concern is faced and overcome.

A pitfall in all forms of meditation is getting stuck in the ‘cave of demons.’ This can take different forms, the most common being meditative quietism, a peaceful state of mental blankness or even dullness in which thoughts are suppressed. Other possibilities are attachment to pleasurable states, or becoming stuck in mental self-punishment.

Of these possible ‘demonic states’, attachment to pleasurable states is the main risk for the jhana practitioner. For silent illumination it is quietism: a state of serenity or even dullness in which thoughts are stilled so that the mind seems silent, but with very little illumination.

These are forms of spiritual bypassing, a psychological defence mechanism that is used to avoid facing difficulties, uncomfortable feelings, pain and distress. Socially it manifests as niceness and superficial good will, or as detachment, withdrawal and aloofness.

To leave the cave of demons it is necessary to move on from serenity and in the case of jhana practice, this means using the state of mind generated in the jhanas to begin insight meditation – the mind has to start to move. For a silent illumination practitioner, the move away from dullness is often resisted, because of a misunderstanding that lack of thought in the mind is intrinsic to strong practice. In moving out of the cave of demons, the mind gets going again – the practice is to be aware of this and to see the mind moving without getting caught up in reactivity to what is arising.

The Second Jhana: A meeting point between the two practices?

The simile for the second jhana, of cool water evenly pervading a lake in a warm climate, is somewhat similar to some of the similes for silent illumination, e.g., snow filling a silver bowl, clear still water in an autumn pool, or the dreaming of a crane flying in empty space.⁵ These similes express something of the experience of the practice of silent illumination.

The state arrived at in the second jhana is perhaps where the two practices meet each other, but the orientation from then on is very different. In jhana practice the meditator goes more deeply inward as indicated by the simile for the third jhana, in which the lotus flower is entirely submerged in the lake, whereas already at this stage the silent illumination practitioner is very aware of the wider environment, which is the backdrop to the experiences referred to by these similes.

This gives a clue as to how jhana practice might complement silent illumination practice. Whilst there is no need to learn how to practise the jhanas in order to practise silent illumination, nevertheless there is no problem with following jhana practice through access concentration, on to the phase of rapture and happiness in the first jhana, and then to confidence and unification of mind (or ‘self at ease’) characteristic of the second jhana, but then letting go of the inner focus so as not to proceed to the third jhana. The stability achieved at the second jhana can then become implicit in an awareness of the movement of the mind together with a widening of awareness of the environment, as silent illumination deepens.

NOTES

- 1 The first four jhanas are linked to four further states of consciousness, called the ayatanas in early Buddhist texts. In later texts the ayatanas were referred to as the four formless jhanas, giving a total of eight jhanas. All eight states are preparatory practices for insight meditation, which begins after the fourth or higher jhanas.
- 2 Neurological correlates of the experience of the environment fading into the background have been observed in a study of an experienced jhana practitioner, whose brain activity was monitored whilst practising the jhanas. Hegarty et al. 2013 Case study of ecstatic meditation: fMRI and EEG evidence of self-stimulating a reward system. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1155/2013/653572>
- 3 Brassington, Leigh (2015). *Right Concentration: A Practical Guide to the Jhanas*. Shambhala, for a guide on how to enter to the first jhana and then move from the first to second and so on up to the fourth jhana.
- 4 Sheng Yen (2008). *The Method of No Method: The Chan Practice of Silent Illumination*. Shambhala.
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'IT IS FAR BETTER TO LIGHT A CANDLE THAN CURSE THE DARKNESS'

PETER REASON

Our retreat teacher in her introductory remarks emphasized the importance of silence: both cultivating our own inner silence and maintaining silence in our interactions with others. Silence meant no conversations, but it didn't mean that we couldn't ask someone to pass the butter at lunch time. It did mean, however, that we should draw ourselves away from social contact with our fellow retreatants: walk quietly, avoid eye contact and those tiny non-verbal gestures that can convey so much. But she didn't say anything about communication by flashlight.

The retreat centre was off-grid, with only gas and oil lamps indoors, as well as a few motion-sensitive lights. Outside, halfway up the hillside in mid-Wales, it was seriously dark, although the moon, waxing toward full during the week, provided lots of illumination. But torches were essential, and everyone seemed to have come with a powerful modern LED light of one kind or another, many worn as headtorches.

As soon as it was dark, the torches came out. There seemed to be an immediate, and maybe unthinking reaction: "It is dark outside, so I need my torch"; rather than, "It's dark outside, let me take my torch in case I need it". The same pattern was repeated indoors: as we got ready for sleep and rose in the morning, everyone had their torches lit and flashing across the room. At times it approached the absurd, as when one man kept his head torch alight while brushing his teeth, so the light flashed back and forth with the shaking of his head.

I continually put my obsession to one side in an attempt to return to empty mind, only to have it violently reawakened by a powerful LED light shining straight in my face. And I allowed myself particular pleasure when, in the rest time after supper, I walked away from the buildings into the unlit fields, my wonderfully dark moon shadow going before me.

One of the great disadvantages of lights of all kinds is that they create a pool of light and also their own shadow, a deeper extension of darkness. One's eyes respond to the brightness and so are unable to catch the glimmers beyond. The more you rely on light, the more habituated you get. In contrast, allowing eyes to grow accustomed to low light greatly extends the range of sight. It is said that human eyes can adapt so as to distinguish a single photon.

We in the modern west do seem to be obsessed with light and enlightenment. The first verses of St John's gospel, read every Christmas at carol services, tell of the light of Christ 'shining in the darkness', and of course that the darkness 'comprehended it not' according to the King James Bible, meaning that the darkness was not able to extinguish the light. In Paul's letter to the Romans we are urged to 'cast off the works of darkness', and 'put on the armour of light'. We refer to the period in the later seventeenth century when the essence of modernity was laid down by Descartes, Newton and the rest of them as the Age of Enlightenment. As Alexander Pope had it, 'Nature and Nature's laws lay hid in night:/God said, Let Newton be! and all was light.'

Light is often associated with archetypal masculinity and qualities associated in Taoist philosophy with yang. Richard Tarnas, in his epic account of western philosophy, *The Passion of the Western Mind*,¹ writes that

the western philosophical project has been an essentially masculine endeavour. 'Man' in western tradition is 'a Promethean biological and metaphysical rebel who has constantly sought freedom and progress for himself, and who has thus constantly striven to differentiate himself from the matrix out of which he emerged' by shining the light of awareness and consciousness onto the world. The dark is often associated with archetypal feminine, with yin, the mysterious, the descent, as for example in the ancient myths of Inanna's descent into the underworld.

Western thought is based on dualist thinking, and radically separates light from dark, subject from object, male from female, human from nature, and so on, denying the dependency of one on the other. Always, opposites are radically separated, one side esteemed, the other invalidated. Buddhist thought, in contrast, holds opposites as interdependent and mutually informing; as John Crook tells us in *World Crisis and Buddhist Humanism*, experience is an 'unbroken flow... inner and outer are related'; there is 'an endless flow of co-dependent arising... a vast differentiating diversity'.² And of course, 'form is emptiness and emptiness is form'.

Unthinking, we tend to seek the light and shun the dark. We light our modern LED torches and walk around in their pool of light, blithely unaware of their impact on other people. Not only other people: our modern habit of brightly lighting our towns and major highways disturbs other creatures. It draws insects into the pools of light, and bats in turn to prey on them. This disrupts many biological patterns based on diurnal rhythms and is thought to contribute to the worrying diminution of insect populations. The rhythms of day and night, light and dark, heat and cold, high tide and low tide – and the liminal spaces between them – are important places for biological diversity.³

There is a popular phrase “It is better to light a single candle than to curse the darkness” which in many ways sums up this perspective. It is attributed to many sources, but, like all popular sayings, it draws together many of our Western prejudices in one catchy phrase: light is set against darkness; one small, specific action against the foreboding horror of the dark. It is a phrase unthinkingly saturated with dualist thinking.

It is of course silly to curse the darkness. But it is just as silly to over-value the light. We may well choose at times to light a candle, turn on the electric lights, build a power station. But we might also learn, at the right times and in the right places, to live with and appreciate the darkness. This may mean walking more slowly and with awareness, allowing our peripheral vision and other senses to develop.

It is good to learn to love the dark.

NOTES

- 1 Tarnas, Richard. *The Passion of the Western Mind*. New York: Ballantine, 1991, p.441
- 2 Crook, John H. *World Crisis and Buddhist Humanism. End Games: Collapse or Renewal of Civilization*. New Delhi: New Age Books, 2009, p.144
- 3 <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2019/nov/22/light-pollution-insect-apocalypse>



POEMS

STEVE GRUNDY

fanfares
celestial choirs
no
a soft 'aha'
paradigm shifted

eating my breakfast
cat on my lap
if I need to add to it
I have not grasped it
I have misunderstood

we zen practitioners
need to
get over
our selves [sic]

just sit ...
too simple ...
we are desperate
to add to it ...

DON'T

Drop attempts at explanation.
Drop teachings.
Sit.
Live life.
Nothing extra.
Nothing missing.
Nothing lasts.
Gratitude.

HAIBUN

EDDY STREET

For a few moments I believe I've forgotten what day it is. The pandemic has removed an element of usual time for me as my accustomed props and punctuations of the week have become redundant and my old map for time spent has become obsolete. Global and local are now not so separated as 'remote' acquires a new meaning and I can spend time, described as real, with distant friends. I idle away at bits and pieces, but knowingly wait for the reminder of the meditation session that provides a new found structure.

Phone flashes
a call to meditation
to end the shapeless day

It is a short step to practice as my journey to the Zendo involves a walk from the kitchen to the study. There was a time when I imagined all this would be just a brief interlude so this room and its Buddha were prepared in a compromised manner as I had made arrangements of the furniture without much planning or forethought.

Familiar routines
once shielded by habits
now requiring amendment

My portal for joining other practitioners is my computer and a whirring begins as I turn it on. Before logging on, I light the candle and incense

and take pleasure at the way I am accustomed to this. The strong evening light forces me reluctantly to curtain out the sun so that I can avoid a shining screen as I go to the website. And now – where to sit? profile or face on? sound or muted? video or not? – choices absent from my introduction to the method long ago.

First instruction
the cushion, the breath
at the bell bow to the wall

I click to join the zoom meeting and the screen announces my name. That persistent koan "who am I?" now finds its digital manifestation. I smile at the screen and smile at the picture of me that then smiles back. I wonder if I am watching a ghost that is me as my waving hand of welcome moves of its own volition well after my experienced intention. We begin.

Bell rings
the silence of sitters
now in gallery view

We share a space but not the ambiance as only I can hear the noises of my house and the outside traffic, but sitting in the enquiry of adaption I am still comforted by the palpable presence of others. This mutual endeavour is just as it is. It's just like this.¹ Just this.

Together
expressing a small testimony
to the nature of being



photo: Shutterstock

NOTES

- 1 Once a monastic asked Quingyan, “What is the meaning of Bodhidharma’s coming from India?” Quingyan said, “It’s just like this!” Case #10: Kazuaki Tanahashi & John Daido Looi (trans) 2005 *The True Dharma Eye. Zen Master Dogen’s Three Hundred Koans*: Shambhala. Boston

MAKE LOVE NOT WAR: THE BUDDHA’S RESPONSE TO CONFLICT

MARTIN NELLANY

So, what might the Buddha have said nearly 2500 years ago as a means to resolve conflict, disputes and arguments? The solution to that question is perhaps even more relevant today, with a perceived increase in polarisation amongst groups as well as in our interpersonal relationships.

Well, there is an account in a lesser known Sutta within the Pali Canon which may provide pointers. In the *Kosambiya Sutta* the Buddha is called upon to resolve a dispute which has arisen within the sangha of monks. In this essay there will be an attempt to investigate the Buddha’s prescription to the monks, to observe any resonances to the Chan teachings and also explore any links to our modern predicament.

The *Kosambiya Sutta* is set within the *Majjhima Nikaya* (MN), which is the second collection of the Buddha’s discourses found in the *Sutta Pitaka* of the Pali Canon. For the purposes of this essay the translation and primary reference to the Sutta is that of ‘The Middle Length sayings of the Buddha by Bhikkhu Nanamoli.’¹ What is of note is that the MN can be distinguished among other books in the Pali Canon as it combines the richest variety of contextual settings with the deepest and most comprehensive assortment of teachings² (as opposed to shorter self-contained utterances found in, for example, the *Dhammapada*). The Buddha is noted here, in particular, for his wisdom and skill in adapting his teachings to meet the needs and dispositions of his audience. And so it is shown here in the *Kosambiya Sutta*.

In the Sutta we find ourselves in the ancient city of Kosambi (modern day Kaushambi in the state of Uttar Pradesh), an important city in ancient India. On this occasion it is reported that the Buddha was residing there in Ghosita's Park when he was informed of a dispute that had arisen within the local monastic community. It is simply stated that the monks had taken to quarrelling and brawling and were deep in disputes "stabbing each other with verbal daggers". They could not resolve the issues between themselves or be persuaded by others.

There is no indication within the Sutta itself as to the cause of the conflict and the Buddha does not appear to be interested in the specific detail of whatever arose. This is considered wise and skilful in the context of the account in that the listener (via the earlier oral transmission of the story) or the modern reader might invest their own opinion as to the rights or wrongs of whatever the initial incident was. In turn, this might involve details of any subsequent arguments, justifications and reactions (including perceived righteous ones). Such extended narrative might well have clouded the Buddha's core message.

However, what has been reported elsewhere,³ and is relevant to this discussion, is that a quarrel, which began with a casual misunderstanding of a minor disciplinary rule, quickly flared up and divided a large part of the sangha and laity into hostile factions. It is also an example of cause and effect and reflects how in recent times arguments and disputes can be amplified exponentially via social media, creating societal discord.

Now, this was not the only reported dispute within the monastic sangha. In the *Samagama Sutta*, again within the body of the MN,⁴ the Buddha primarily described procedures for resolving disputes specifically within the monastic community. Indeed, it could have been the *Samagama*

Sutta to which this essay makes primary reference. It appears to be an entire discourse on conflict management. Starting with a root cause analysis deeply resonant with modern conflict resolution theory, it offers seven working models for the settlement of disputes.⁵

But instead, here at Kosambi, the Buddha encourages the monks to regard each other with loving kindness. His first response to the issue is to ask the monks if they have been able to maintain acts of loving kindness. It can be assumed that the attitude of loving kindness is a given within the spiritual community. When the monks respond that they have not been able to do so the Buddha advises them that they are misguided and it will lead to long term harm and suffering. He then sets forth his prescription.

The Buddha first outlines six "principles of cordiality" conducive to reverence, unity, friendliness and love for each other. These are:

1. Establishing bodily actions of loving kindness towards each other both openly and secretly
2. Establishing verbal actions of loving kindness towards each other both openly and secretly
3. Establishing mental actions of loving kindness towards each other both openly and secretly
4. Sharing things with one another (with other monks in this case)
5. Possessing virtues that lead to concentration and are liberating
6. Possessing that view which is noble and emancipating, and leads to complete destruction of suffering

The first three principles relate directly to the acts of loving kindness which, together with the fourth principle of sharing, would seem to be

obvious behaviours conducive to good relationships. But it is perhaps less directly so with the fifth and sixth principles of virtues leading to concentration and noble view. It is assumed here that the noble view equates to the right view belonging to the Noble Eightfold Path.

In fact, the Buddha goes on to say that noble or right view is the most important of these principles. The remainder of the Sutta involves the Buddha outlining a series of rhetorical questions monks should ask themselves, on how to practise the development of this right view which leads to the destruction of suffering. The Buddha's responses to his own questions detail seven knowledges that a monk would ascertain about themselves if they are to meditate and investigate the questions. These knowledges are summarised below for reference but in the Sutta he particularly expands (without explicitly elevating) on the first personal insight that an obsessed mind is an obstacle to seeing and knowing things as they actually are.

- To know that the mind is free of obsessions and so can see things as they really are and is therefore well-disposed for awakening to the truths.
- To know that with development of right view one's mind attains serenity.
- To know that one's view is in accordance with the Buddha's dispensation, not that of other teachers.
- To know oneself to be open in character so that one will immediately confess any breach of monastic rules and practice restraint in the future.
- To know oneself to possess the character that would remain diligent to training in virtue, meditation and wisdom despite being active in monastic affairs.

- To know oneself to have the strength to remain eagerly attentive and engaged when listening to the Dharma and Discipline taught by the Buddha.
- To know oneself to have the strength of someone who gains inspiration and gladness when hearing the Buddha's teaching of the Dhamma and Discipline.

And the Buddha ends his teaching in this Sutta by stating that when the noble disciple is endowed with these seven characteristics, they will be ready to realise the fruits of stream entry.

So the question might well arise as to whether the Buddha managed to resolve the conflict. Well, the Sutta does end by saying that the monks were satisfied and delighted by the Buddha's words,⁶ but it does not elaborate and we are left with no definitive answer. As stated previously, neither are we provided with any details of the cause of the conflict. Reminiscent of a Zen koan we are left to contemplate these matters. But it has been reported elsewhere that the dispute continued despite the Buddha's intervention.⁷ This may not be the happy ending we expected. Perhaps this too is an important lesson that sometimes we can only do our best when attempting to resolve conflict, and not invest or overlay our desired outcomes upon the situation.

We may ask then why the Buddha chose to expound these seven factors or knowledges here, as a prescription to the discord amongst the monks. Similarly, why might the Buddha have prescribed the six principles of cordiality? As mentioned previously, it is a characteristic of the MN to show the Buddha using skilful means to expound his teachings in a way that is most appropriate to the circumstances and needs of the particular situa-



tion. Here, he is addressing the monastic community and appears to be appealing directly to the monks' interests and idealised way of life, in fact to the life to which they have dedicated themselves, the goal of enlightenment. He emphasises this by stating that the most important principle of cordiality is possessing that noble view which is emancipating and leads to the complete destruction of suffering. And then by elaborating this principle of noble or right view further, via the seven knowledges, he is strengthening the connection the monks would have with their practice. Ultimately, as stated in the final paragraph of the Sutta, there is the fruit of stream entry offered to those who possess these seven knowledges.

How then might these teachings be more widely used and applied? The Buddha's initial response to the divided monks referred to loving kindness in body, speech and mind as a remedy. Whilst he was addressing his own monastic community we might consider what may be applicable to our

own practice and that of the wider community. The loving kindness meditation technique known as "metta bhavana" is practised in many traditions. The Buddha repeatedly refers to metta within the MN as well as other early Suttas, but actual meditation instructions on how to develop and maintain metta can be found in the early meditation manual, the *Vissuddhimagga* or "Path of Purification".⁸ Of particular interest here is the instruction to develop metta towards persons with whom we are in enmity. Traditionally, as a staged approach we are instructed to direct this metta first to ourselves, a friend, a neutral person, and then the difficult person or enemy (before directing in equal measure to all beings). It would seem self-evident that the repeated mental projection of positive or friendly thoughts towards a person we are having difficulty with would be likely to at least improve the quality of personal relationships with that person.

For many it is likely that the repetition of positive and friendly thoughts and feelings towards an antagonistic person or group will break down barriers. However, it is also suggested that taking on such a practice might be best discussed with a skilful teacher. It has been reported that there are potential dangers with such a practice. By directing loving kindness to a person we may unintentionally be imposing our own wishes on them. And, more importantly, there is the issue of spiritual by-passing where, satisfied with the behavioural effects of loving-kindness meditation, we may fail to pursue more deeply our inquiry into the origins of our antagonism to the perceived enemy or opposing group.⁹ Perhaps complementary, or as an alternative, to the traditional metta bhavana meditation it might be more appropriate to engage the practice of emotional awareness. This practice has been advocated by Ken Jones, who suggests that emotional states find cognitive expres-

sion in views, opinions, beliefs and ideologies, of whose origin we need to be aware. So emotional awareness practice could help us see the root cause of any enmity that we may have. It is also a practice which would seem quite compatible with the Chan practice of Silent Illumination as well as within mindfulness meditation practice in general.

But what about groups of people, especially those associated with an ideology that we do not agree with, or may in fact find abhorrent? As a result of globalisation and particularly the internet, polarisation in respect of group ideology has increased the opportunity for disputes and “stabbing each other with verbal daggers”, as with the monks in ancient Kosambi. We could consider using the metta bhavana meditation practice perhaps to soften any extreme feelings of anger that may arise. However, as stated previously the practice of emotional awareness may lead us to deeper investigation of our views.

Further, the modern practitioner has the conditioning, arguably a double-edged sword, of scientific knowledge and the increased understanding of modern psychology. Journalist and author, Robert Wright, has recently attempted to merge the understandings of ancient Buddhist teachings, in particular, with the field of evolutionary psychology.¹⁰ Understanding the origins of our cognitive biases helps us see how these tendencies play out in our own lives as well as in groups. This hopefully might increase the possibility of transforming these distortions and help us see the world more clearly.

At Kosambi the Buddha used skilful means to engage the factional monks, using their practices at the time, to enable them to investigate themselves so that they could see their own obsessions. This is how he taught them to be free of self-imposed suffering, and maintain an atti-

tude of loving kindness.

To study the Way is to study the self.

To study the self is to forget the self.

To forget the self is to be enlightened by all things.

To be enlightened by all things is to remove the barriers between one's self and others.

DOGEN

NOTES

- 1 Bhikkhu Nanamoli, *The Middle Length Discourses of the Buddha*, (Wisdom 2009), MN 48 The Kosambiya Sutta
- 2 Bhikkhu Nanamoli, *The Middle Length Discourses of the Buddha*, (Wisdom 2009), The Introduction by Bhikku Bhodi
- 3 Bhikkhu Nanamoli, *The Life of the Buddha: According to the Pali Canon*, (Pariyatti 2001) pp 109-119
- 4 Bhikkhu Nanamoli, *The Middle Length Discourses of the Buddha*, (Wisdom 2009), MN 104 The Samagam Sutta
- 5 See Somaratne for further details and commentary
- 6 Words expressing gratitude or praising the Buddha's teaching seem to appear at the end of every Sutta within the *Majjhima Nikaya*
- 7 Vishvapani 2011
- 8 Bhikkhu Nanamoli, *The Path of Purification, Visuddhimagga*, (Buddhist Publication Society 2011) pp 291-307
- 9 Ken Jones, *Beyond Mindfulness: Living a life through Everyday Zen – Talks and Writings* (Alba 2015), p144
- 10 See Wright for further details and commentary

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WHAT IS THE SATIPATTHANA SUTTA?

GUY ROBERTS

What is the *Satipatthana Sutta*? Taken from the early Pali canon it seems, at first, a straightforward teaching of the Buddha, but as I read articles and listened to online talks it opened out into something with an endless depth and opportunity for a lifetime of study. A nuanced, ever growing exploration of the human condition showcasing the Buddha's skilful teaching. I have become mildly obsessed with this sutta, and I know I will continue to return to it.

The *Sati* (Mindful) *Patthana* (Presence) sutta, begins with a very strong declaration by the Buddha in his first sentence: “Bhikkus, this is the only way for the destruction of suffering”.¹ Other translations state it is “The Direct path”² or “The One Path”.³ This dramatic start also highlights the variation in translation from Pali to English.

After declaring “This is the only way...for the overcoming of sorrow and lamentation”, Buddha goes on to guide us through the four foundations of mindfulness. He describes how a follower should observe the Body (*kaya*), Feelings/Sensations (*vedana*), Mind (*citta*) and Mental Objects//Phenomena (*dhamma*). Each of the four is then broken down further.

Body

*If we want to understand the nature of form, we have to examine the form we are in.*⁴

The starting place is the breath, the most overlooked but most constant movement our body performs. Our breathing is so ever-present

that we tend not to notice it. When meditating, it is an excellent starting point to focus a busy mind and enable concentration. It is always there and can be relied upon to gently pull you back to the present moment when in the midst of emotions. This is the starting point of the rabbit hole this sutta takes us into: the first step, and for many the easiest step, into mindfulness.

Then the sutta follows with instruction to know our posture, followed by full attention which relates to all movements and activities of the body, then to reflection on the impurity of all of the components of the body, from hair to urine, then to reflection on the material elements of the body: earth, water, fire and wind. The sixth and final observation of the body are the nine ‘cemetery objects’, where followers are asked to recall the various stages of decay of a corpse that is thrown into a cemetery, from swollen, blue and festering to dust. We are asked to apply this perception to our own body. The cemetery passage contains detailed descriptions of decomposition, trying to drive it home and make people really consider the ending of their physical form. The body we hold in such regard may one day be eaten by dogs or crows. Buddha isn't just saying that one day we will die, a thought we all have from time to time, but try to push aside and ignore and deal with later. He is really emphasizing the point, repeatedly and graphically that we are skin and bones, and we will die and our body will decompose and become dust. He is pointing to impermanence.

The first foundation introduces the concept of emptiness. Form is not the solid entity we think it is. This is identified by looking at the thing we are most familiar with and have most time to study, our own form. Buddha in no uncertain terms points out the impermanence of our own

form and therefore the idea of no-self and the inherent emptiness of our own and all other forms. His commentary on the repulsiveness of the body and description of decomposition of corpses also point to suffering. To face and deal with suffering, we first need to accept its presence.

Feelings/Sensations

*Responding to feelings with mindfulness instead of craving and clinging stops feelings from instigating afflictions....Investigating its nature, we see it isn't one solid entity. It's a flowing process, a series of moments of pain or pleasure.*⁵

In the second foundation, Buddha explains how to observe feelings by being aware of whether we are experiencing pleasant, unpleasant or neutral feeling. As with the observations of the body he talks of seeing origination factors and dissolution factors of feelings, building on the first foundation and again pointing out impermanence and emptiness.

Feelings or sensations are the bridge between the body and mind where physical gut reactions lead to perception. The second foundation reveals the starting point for the mistaken view of the solidity of things. Feelings start the process of desire/aversion/indifference (pleasant/unpleasant/neutral) on objects that we take to be real.

Mind

*The Buddha is essentially saying in this passage, “Arrest the argument, just leave the mind alone, and let it unify itself without your intrusion”*⁶

This wonderful teaching now delves further down the rabbit hole. The third foundation is where the feelings of the second foundation are built upon with our history and conditioning, to create mind states.



Buddha teaches that a follower observes the mind, knowing a mind with lust as being with lust, a mind with hate as being with hate. Each mind state is observed, simply seen. There is no judging or correcting or removing, but simply observing, seeing patterns. The sutta does not comment on hate or lust; there is no recommendation to remove or improve, as this adds further thought and further layers onto the papier maché self. If hate is there, you know that in your mind hate is there. Buddha is not hiding away from these states or saying they need to be removed or are unholy; he is saying that if in your mind there is hate, then you observe it is there. Face it. See it. Don't ignore it or pretend it isn't there or add guilt onto it or try to remove it. Just see it. Add nothing to it and do not try to remove it. See it originate and see it dissolve.

Seeing patterns over time relinquishes their hold as the impermanence and lack of substance to feelings and mind states are seen. They come and go and don't need to be latched onto and emphasised. They arise and they pass, so observing this process allows the observer to realise they don't need to be controlled by them. Lust arises and passes. Hatred arises and passes. See it come and go. It does not need to be acted out. This awareness allows choice or allows the observer to realise they have a choice and are not at the mercy of feelings or mind states.

Over time this also allows the observer to see that their mind states are created from their self which is conditioned over time. Reactions are created from beliefs based on previous experience. The self is slowly built over time from “if I do this, then that happens, and I want that.” The sense of self is created in the discovery that current circumstances are not how I wish them to be. The sense of self is created in the plea-

sure derived from the current circumstances that you enjoy. I do not like that. I derive pleasure from this.

Seeing this process opens the lid on the box of tricks of personality and exposes it as groundless. Empty. Something created from nothing which is not a concrete, permanent, unchanging entity. In the Third Foundation, Buddha leads us to see the states of mind and their flow: their origination and dissolution. How they come and go over time, their impermanent nature. This follows seeing the flow of feelings in the Second Foundation and the flow of form in the First Foundation and reinforces the emptiness of things. Emptiness of mind states, feelings and form. Ultimately, the emptiness of self.

Mind states and accompanying thoughts can create separation from the sense of self. I am not a good Buddhist when I'm angry. Judgement of self is part of judgement of others, which creates separation between self and other and pours petrol on the flames of self. We have a sense of self which we wish to portray in public which may sometimes conflict with mind states and thoughts. In this foundation we are being pointed towards seeing these conflicts and beginning the process of dismantling the self. This is not an active dismantling, a chosen, forced attempt, but an unintended process which is a result of seeing. Buddha is saying when the mind is angry see that the mind is angry. No judgements. Accept yourself in all your perfection.

'I' comes from the difference between how things are and how we wish them to be. To remove this 'I' we need to see what it is we want/reject and what conditioning has led us to that point. We need to see without judgements which would heap further conditioning onto

our state. To see without judgements we need to see outside of our sense of self, with awareness. We cannot use the self to be free of the self.

Mental Objects/Phenomena

The sequence of the five sets is itself a map...Overcoming (the five hindrances) is an essential first step, enabling us to explore the field of our experience using the framework of the five aggregates and six sources. As insight develops, the seven awakening factors become prominent, and as they mature, penetrative understanding of the four truths arises.⁷

Finally we arrive at the Fourth foundation which builds upon the first three and takes us deeper into the awareness of self. The first three foundations have pointed to impermanence, emptiness and suffering, the three marks of existence. (The word suffering is another example of the difficulties of translation. For me, *dukkha* is more like a sense of unease with the knowledge that there is no lasting satisfaction). The impermanence, emptiness and suffering of our form, feelings and mind states has been gradually revealed simply by seeing. Observing. A beautifully simple instruction. In the Fourth Foundation, the Buddha asks us to observe his teachings. He asks us to observe the following thoughts as objects within the mind, pointing towards the fact they are created states within our own mind and not external influences that govern how we feel. This indicates we potentially have control of these states. The mental objects are:

- Five Hindrances – sense-desire, anger, torpor and languor, restlessness and worry, doubt

- Five Aggregates of clinging – form, feeling, perception, mental formations, consciousness
- Six Sense Bases – eye/visual forms, ear/sounds, nose/smells, tongue/flavours, mind/mental objects
- Seven Factors of Enlightenment – mindfulness, investigation of mental objects, energy, joy, relaxation (of body and mind), concentration, equanimity
- Four Noble Truths – dukkha, origin of dukkha, cessation of dukkha, path leading to the cessation of dukkha

At the end of each Foundation, the Buddha states that the follower observes arising and decaying factors of form, feelings, mind and mental objects. Or “mindfulness is established to the extent necessary just for knowledge and awareness that mind exists and he lives unattached and clings to naught in the world”.⁸ Here we are shown that once arising and decaying factors are seen often enough, the mind can calm to awareness where our own stories are not added to what is present.

The Satipatthana Sutta is a set of instructions, a lesson in how to remove suffering but also a rabbit hole into one's being, delving further and further inward to the heart of the issue of suffering. A process to follow with sequential, increasingly nuanced steps for the novice to be guided through awareness of body, feelings, mind states and finally the concepts that point towards the release of suffering. A beautiful teaching with skilful means. With the instruction to observe, we start at the easiest point, the body and its constant movement with the breath. We can sense the body, then move inward to feelings, then mind in a flow of cumula-

tive observations. The sutta is training you to see. Eihei Dogen, the 13th Century Zen Master said:

To study the Buddha way is to study the self.

To study the self is to forget the self.

To forget the self is to be actualized by myriad things.

This is where the *Satipatthana Sutta* points.

NOTES

- 1 Walpola Sri Rahula *What the Buddha Taught* (London:Oneworld Publications 2017) p109
- 2 <https://www.accesstoinsight.org/tipitaka/mn/mn.010.than.html>
- 3 John J Holder *Early Buddhist Discourses* (Indianapolis: Hacket Publishing Co, 2006) p43
- 4 Rodney Smith *Touching The Infinite: A New Perspective on the Buddha's Four Foundations of Mindfulness* (Boulder: Shambhala Publications Inc, 2017) p54
- 5 The Dalai Lama and Thubten Chodron *Buddhism. One teacher, Many Traditions* (Somerville: Wisdom Publications, 2014) P121
- 6 Rodney Smith *Touching The Infinite: A New Perspective on the Buddha's Four Foundations of Mindfulness* (Boulder: Shambhala Publications Inc, 2017) p178
- 7 The Dalai Lama and Thubten Chodron *Buddhism. One teacher, Many Traditions* (Somerville: Wisdom Publications, 2014) p126
- 8 John J Holder *Early Buddhist Discourses* (Indianapolis: Hacket Publishing Co, 2006) p114

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BOOKS REVIEW: YARN; SUNSHINE AND SHADOW
BY HUGHIE CARROL

MARIAN PARTINGTON



Hughie Carroll's public début as a poet began on social media during the first national lockdown in May 2020. The variety of direct, colloquial, honest, and tender poems were immediately engaging: pared to the core and punchy. I joined with the many who encouraged what rapidly became two books of poetic memoir: *Yarn* and *Sunshine and Shadow*.

The early poems take us to the perilous edges of being Hughie in all of its risky, rebellious engagement with adolescence and young adulthood. He does not turn away nor edit out unflattering details. His young self emerges as a performer of many talents, juggling with audiences and adrenalin. A musician, a magician, a clown, a juggler and a stunt man in a 'new circus', he delights in the creativity and 'nonsense of it all', jesting with life like a medieval fool.

In 1991, when Hughie was 26 years old, he suffered a serious fall when a stunt with Snapdragon Circus went wrong during a rehearsal. The effects of the fall, physically and psychologically, have resulted in chronic PTSD and ME. He began to attend Buddhist retreats at Maenllwyd in 1996.

Yarn was written during a three-month solitary retreat at Gaia House in 2019. In 2005, inspired by John Crook's *The Yogins of Ladakh* he went

on a long pilgrimage to many important Buddhist sites: Ladakh, India and Thailand, all touched upon in the second section of *Sunshine and Shadow*. This poetry is more contemplative and spacious, sometimes using rhyme and haiku forms to express his inner changes.

We meet Hughie in search of healing and meaning, articulating the unspeakable (both trauma and awe). He lays bare the delusions of the small self with empathy and self-irony. He conjures light relief with sleight of hand.

LADAKH

*...behind the noise
the same silence of
home*

Thank you, Hughie. These poems have helped me to wake up and feel the ‘aching heart of the world’. They call to be read, heard and embraced by all who tread the Way of the Bodhisattva.

Yarn, Hugh Carroll, 2020; *Sunshine and Shadow*, Hugh Carroll, 2020.

Obtainable from the author: <https://carrollonline.uk>

Also available from:

<https://www.blurb.com/b/10210368-yarn>

<https://www.blurb.com/b/10258007-sunshine-and-shadow>



HUGHIE'S SKILLS AS A MAGICIAN ENABLED HIM TO MAKE MANY FRIENDS ON HIS PILGRIMAGE

RETREAT REPORT

Covid 19 restrictions have meant that WCF's normal retreat programme has had to be abandoned. Instead we have developed a format for online day and week retreats, which are proving to be very valuable.

ONLINE RETREAT REPORT

WCF's first online retreat – and I loved it!

I found the whole process of bringing the retreat out into my 'market place', into my living room, was really wonderful. And I enjoyed the experience of communicating in break-out rooms with my fellow retreatants.

On retreat a few years ago an image burst into my awareness of myself surrounded by a horde of what I named 'my scabby kids'. There were about a dozen of them, and they were most unpleasant. They were/are aged about nine or ten, and they are a mess of spots, snot, scabs and boils. They are mocking, leering, quarrelling. In my image we are standing in front of a gate. I want to go through it but I know I can only do so if I take them all with me. And they're too horrible and they're fighting themselves and me too much for us to get through that gate. I've lived with this image for several years now, never imagining I might resolve it.

On this retreat, however, I was contemplating this image yet again, when suddenly a voice in my head suggested I tried simply walking through the gate if that was what I wanted. So I did, and – lo and behold! – the scabby kids followed me. They were sulking and they pushed and

shoved a bit, but they managed to get through the gate after me. It was all relatively easy. So then we were through the gate, and we all went off into separate spots and just lay down quietly in the grass. The scabby kids were calm and silent.

And I realised two things. The first was that the gate was simply a gate in the middle of nowhere – there was no fence on either side of it, just string laid across the grass. The second was that the field we had finally managed to burst into after so much anguish, and were now lying down in, was exactly the same as the field we had been stuck in for so long. It was just a field, an area of rough grass with the odd clump of thistles.

There was/is no sense of disappointment in my mind, not even of surprise. All that comes into my mind is the question 'So now what?' or 'So what now?' The scabby kids also seem to be asking the same question: 'OK, we've come through the gate. So now what?'

So it looks as if I have a new koan: So now what? Or, rather, it's a koan I've had in my subconscious for a long time, if not all my adult life. It commands me to be alert, awake and questioning. It's about being breast-on to the passing of time. In fact death seems to pose the same question: OK, I'm going to die sooner or later – so now what?



About Us

Chan is the Chinese ancestor of Zen Buddhism. The Western Chan Fellowship is an association of non-monastic practitioners – a lay sangha – based in the UK and with contacts elsewhere in Europe and in the USA. Our Zen retreats and other activities are open equally to Buddhists and non-Buddhists, and we welcome everyone, regardless of their gender, ethnicity, religious beliefs, sexual orientation, class or disability. Our new retreat and meditation centre in central England – to be opened shortly – includes fully accessible accommodation.

Visit our Website

www.westernchanfellowship.org

Our website includes:

- Introductory articles on Chan, Zen, Buddhism and meditation
- talks by Chan masters
- reports by participants at our retreats
- details of activities and events, including our retreat programme
- back-issues of this journal
- contacts for local meditation groups

Contacting Us

To contact any of the Officers of the WCF please go to:

www.westernchanfellowship.org/contacts/committee-and-officers

To contact any of our UK Groups and affiliates go to:

www.westernchanfellowship.org/chan-meditation-groups

To contact our overseas Groups and overseas contacts go to:

www.westernchanfellowship.org/chan-meditation-groups/overseas-groups

Contributing to New Chan Forum

We are always delighted to receive articles, artwork, photographs, poetry etc. If possible please send as .doc documents, to the Editor, Pat Simmons, at editor@westernchanfellowship.doc. She will also be happy to discuss with you any ideas you may have for contributions. You do not need to be a Buddhist scholar – she would prefer something that springs from your own experience and insight.

Retreats & local meditation groups

COVID-19 has caused a halt in our in-person events but triggered a growth in our online events. In particular, many of our previously 'local' groups are now meeting online and are able and pleased to welcome participation by people who are not local to the group.

There are events held on most weekday evenings, and also weekend daytimes. Visit the Online Events page of our website to see the full list of activities, as well as details of our new online day and week-long retreats.

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*The entire world is not unchangeable,
is not immovable.
It flows.*

ZEN MASTER DOGEN

