

SIDDHARTHA FESTIVAL, 11TH – 13TH NOVEMBER, 2016

Chai and Conversation with Venerable Dhammadipa

This morning we have a chance to learn a little bit of meditation. I hope, with my little experience I have tried my best to explain in brief the essence of meditation. Now, if there are any questions, of course, through questions, through asking questions we are learning. We learn because we ask questions. If I have learnt something, it was because I asked some questions – I was really fortunate, I was able to ask some competent teachers – so I have gotten a little bit of clarity. So I encourage you to ask questions not just for fun but for clarifying anything. If you ask good questions it will clarify things for many of us including myself. Please.

Now, the first question.

“Venerable, yesterday you talked about pure Samadhi and the divine eye. I want to request to elaborate on that. That’s question number one. Question number two, in meditation, you mentioned about the *ana pana sati* sutra. That sutra only talks about in-breath and out-breath – the retention and the suspension, which is the kumbha. It doesn’t mention, at least explicitly (I don’t know if it mentions it implicitly) – So which is the sutra from which the tradition of kumbhaka has originated? Thank you.”

That was a good question, that gives me a chance to think. So the first question was? If I understood it correctly – could you repeat it?

(Pure Samadhi, hushed)

Yes. Yes. I will elaborate. So, according to all Buddhist traditions, the mastery of Samadhi leads to Abhinya. To supernatural powers. If our Samadhi is not pure, we cannot use supernatural powers. Now, there is, in the middle discourses of Buddha, the *Majjhima Nikaya* – the sutra is available in Chinese too – maybe a translation – so called *Uppakilesa Suta*. The Buddha explains his experience under the Bodhi tree. When he was under the Bodhi tree, first, he purified his Samadhi. This was the first thing – because he purified his Samadhi, he could use supernatural powers. He could use two powers, which are especially related to vipassana. The others are, to some extent, related to vipassana, but two powers which were definitely related to vipassana. The first, is *upayavivasa* – he saw his innumerable previous lives. Then, he used the divine eye to see how we beings, according to our karma and according to our kaleshas, our impurities of mind and feelings, we are driven to go from birth to birth. This he saw very clearly, he saw it in himself, he saw it in others – and this according his understanding of dependent origination.

The Buddhist traditions agree to what the Buddha actually experienced, even though we explain it in different ways. What the Buddha actually experienced was dependent origination. So, because of dependent origination, Buddhism is different from other religions.

If we are real Buddhists, we use relative truth, worldly truth, to understand that we cannot mistake higher truth for anything else. If we don't understand our worldly experience, we also cannot understand (according to the truth, abhuta) we cannot understand the super-mundane – which is, the experiences of the world. In all Indian traditions of yoga, the super-mundane Samadhi (in Buddhist, Jain or other such traditions too, whichever way we choose to explain it, the Vedanta, the Samkhya) is the conduit of liberation.

So, going into liberation is going into Samadhi. In Buddhist traditions it is *saññā-vedayita-nirodha samapatti*, going into the Samadhi which is beyond perception, beyond feelings. If we are liberated, there we go. Where we go, nobody knows. No *Mara* can see, and, as long as we have clinging, we are the victims of *Mara*. So, this is the sequence. First, we have to purify our Samadhi. That's what the Buddha did, under the Bodhi tree. Then we see clearly, the light and the forms. When we see these, the inner and the outer, they become clear. Since it depends on the power, according to the explanation of the *apidhamma*, of the commentaries, according to the power of our *paramis*, the *paramis* of Buddha is unlimited. We can extend the forms and the light of our Samadhi to innumerable worlds. This is the privilege of the Buddha. Even the *arahants* cannot do it, because they have not attained the perfections, the *paramis*. Because of his *paramis*, he could extend his experience to all beings. That's why this experience is called *anuttara samyak sambodhi*. *Anuttara* is the incomparable, and *samyak* means 'with all beings'. I impart this understanding of forms, to all beings.

It is incredible indeed – we just can't understand it. No matter how much we think about it, we cannot understand it. We have to believe in it, and the guide for us is this faith in the greatness of Buddha's Samadhi. So this is the first question.

Let us repeat the second question for the benefit of all.

“Uh, second question is, venerable, when you were leading the meditation, there were four stages, the incoming, the retention of breath, the outgoing and the suspension of breath. So basically, four stages. Now, the original text, the ana pana sati, talks only about the incoming and the outgoing of breath. The retention and the suspension, which is Kumbhaka in Yoga, which is the sutra or the tradition from where this has really originated?”

So the tradition is *Sarvāstivāda* tradition. You will find – starting with the *Abhidharmakośa* by Vasubandhu, you will find a distinction which you will don't find in southern Buddhism. You will find a distinction between the subtle breath (the sukshma) and the gross breath. This is the breath which enters the body through our nostrils, and when it is very gross, our mouth – so this breathing tube through the abdomen, and from the abdomen it goes back to the nostrils, and the mouth. The Vasubandhu course, the gross breath. He also speaks of the subtle breath. The subtle breath appears in every pore of the skin, in modern language, in every cell. He calls it 'homa kupa', but what he actually means is - The whole body is participating in this subtle breath.

When we breathe in and we breathe out, we are not quite aware of the subtle breath. But when we pay attention to these in-between breaths – in the Indian yoga tradition it is called 'Antarakumbhaka, Bahyakumbhaka'. When we pay attention to that, we will have the direct

experience – that not only are we breathing through the nose and the mouth, we are actually breathing with our entire body.

This is very scientific. Nowadays, even so, our minds are shrinking – I'm unhappy to say this, but our friend Sumati was talking about our intellectual capacity to see our body, mind and the world as one whole is shrinking. Yet, our knowledge is growing. This is a big contradiction and a big problem. Impossible to use it. So, we are stuck. In the days of old, they had such deep insight because they could use different aspects – medicine – Buddha had a wonderful knowledge of medicine also. Medicine, astrology, all these things they could use for seeing that our own experiences represent the whole.

Actually, this experience of our whole body – breathing is very important. Yesterday, there was a lot of talk about Gandhiji. So, to quote Gandhiji – “Even in the deepest depths of the ocean, in this world, we don't find any peace.” Impossible to find any peace. Even when we are sitting in meditation, our body is moving. We are the movement. We spoke about Rinpoche's film – when we have samskara, we are moving. What the Buddha discovered under the Bodhi tree – he said, “My samskaras are broken.” So, instead of the five aggregates of grasping, he has five aggregates of liberation. That is why he taught liberation through the discipline, through Samadhi, through pure knowledge, undefined knowledge.

The attention, and I have emphasized this yesterday – attention is the key to our understanding and the tradition of yogachara, the asanga explains four of the different kinds of meditation which we learn. When attention is diverted to this subtle breath, we get a better knowledge of the whole. Of the so-called being the bodily samskara – what puts our body together. When we are breathing, that is what puts our body together – and put together by the mind, too. A sign of our body being together with the mind is our breath.

It is held (not mentioned in the *ana pana sati*) which says, ana is in-breath, apana is out-breath and sati is the logical extension of this awareness.

“Hello, I wanted to ask you a question regarding what you said this morning about the breath and the courses. I had been sitting deep in meditation when you were talking about it, and I had this feeling that you were saying that if we divide it into four – So the incoming breath – there are four aspects of the breath. I was wondering if it is the intention when you sit down to meditate for those to become equal, in – so you observe the breath, do they have to become equal portions of breath – or, what shall I say – do you, go with the energy?”

Okay, I understand. Go with the energy! Okay, the answer is: I have just mentioned attention. We translate, in European languages – in Czech also – we translate *manasikara* as ‘attention’. But, *manasikara* literally means (in Chinese, they have a literal translation – it is much better) ‘making in the mind’. ‘*Manasi*’ is the locative case of ‘*manas*’ and ‘*kara*’ is ‘making’. In Chinese, ‘*Zhoi*’ – so, it's a clear object. Now, I have already mentioned Vasubandu's *Abhidharmakośa* – he says that this meditation on the breath is a peculiarity of the Buddhists. The others, they non-Buddhists, they don't have it. Why?

Because, they want to force this *kumbhakato* expand. You, being a Buddhist, don't do it because by paying attention naturally to the in-between breath, it becomes obtuse. Attention-making in the mind is what makes the object clear. If the object becomes clear, the mind will stay there. According to Buddhism (Vasubandhu too, since I have been quoting him – usually start by learning the *Abhidharmakośa* since it is a very good base for studying Buddhism.) – Attention, *manasikara*, is what articulates the object very clearly in the mind. This is the function of *manasikara*. It articulates the object clearly in the mind. When the object is articulated clearly in the mind, the mind stays there. If the object is not clearly articulated in the mind, the mind will run elsewhere! Suppose, if I don't pay attention to what I'm saying now, or if you are not paying attention to what I'm talking about now, you will start listening to the sounds around and you will lose the meaning of my words. Right, or not? Even so now, you are paying attention to the meaning of my words. You are clearly aware that there are people around, that they are talking, but you don't get distracted. Right? So, when you pay attention – attention and mindfulness, they come together. When we use mindfulness with attention, the mind articulates the object clearly. Because the mind articulates the object, it stays there. Because it stays there, it remembers. The literal meaning of 'sati' is 'remembering.' It does not mean just remembering the past, it means remembering what is going on now. Where our attention is, where our feeling is, where our body is.

When these are clearly remembered, then we can master the mental object. If they are not clearly remembered, the mental object will master us. The meditation I have mentioned is a symphony, of many, many arts – instruments – when we make progress in meditation, these instruments start playing harmoniously. When they play harmoniously, we go into deeper meditation. Mindfulness and attention, these two must go together.

“Hello, thank you venerable. Please advise me as to what to do, the next time I meditate. This is what happened this time. I am aware, that my breath, my body, breathing – I am aware, I'm steady. Then I'm aware, that a fly lands on my arm.”

You are aware of?

“A fly. So I bring my attention to my breathing. Then I feel the fly crawling through the hairs on my arm. Then I bring my attention back to my body, my breathing. Then the fly does something, and I react, and I move my arm and then I realize that I've broken the meditation. Next time, how would you advise me in dealing with this situation?”

Yes, it is a very good question. I hope this will illumine the meditation for most of us. For understanding meditation, these teachings of what I've been studying have been very useful.

In Abhidharma there is a very beautiful comparison. Now imagine, you have 5 black stones. And you have a drum. Now these stones are lying on the surface of the drum. If our mind is not collected, one stone will jump and the mind will run to the stone that has jumped more. Even when the stone has jumped, all the other stones are jumping. These 5 stones are our five senses. Eyes, ears, the nose, the tongue and the body. These senses have jumped – what happens? The mind will run to the sense that has jumped more. IF you pay attention to the fly – that is why we have talked about attention – *manasikara*, making in the mind. If you make the fly in the mind, and the sensation of the fly in the mind, the mind, because it is not

gathered, it will stay with the fly. After sometime, you say 'What am I doing? I'm meditating'. Then you go back to the breath.

Otherwise, it may be something else. You have a pain in the knee, so the mind goes to the knee. Then, there may be some prominent sound – the mind goes to the sound. Then it goes back – it means that the mind is not collected. So the stones are jumping. This is the agitated mind.

When you practice meditation on the breath, you want to gather the mind inside. When you contemplate the in-breath and the out-breath, you are gathering the mind inside. Even so, you are aware of the fly – your mind does not go to the fly. Even if you are aware of the sounds – your mind does not go to the sound. Even if you are aware of people sitting next to you, your mind does not go there. You go deep into meditation. If you lose this mind collected inside, **what happens? It will go here and there. SO this is called, the 'monkey mind.'** The Buddha has taught – **To get into meditation, first, you must subdue the 'monkey mind'.**

He compared it to the wild elephant. Our mind is like a wild elephant. When it is caught, and you try catching it by paying attention to the breath – it keeps running around – and when the skilful farmer uses a very tight rope to tie it to a tree – the elephant will go all around the tree **until it is tired, and it will settle down. That's why** the Buddha mentioned that the first step to meditation is counting the breath. You make the discursive, outward-orientated mind tired.

In the beginning, meditation is difficult. Beginners in meditation get easily tired. We are used to our mind running around. So, Vasubandu – we mention Vasubandu again! – says that the condition for meditation is *kayaviveka* and the *chitaviveka*. *Kayavivka* means isolation of the **body, which means that you don't pay attention to the five senses, you collect the mind inside. Then chitaviveka means you don't think about what you are going to do tomorrow, after tomorrow – what do you have to do, what you are going to do on the holiday, what you have enjoyed yesterday, one year ago – stay attentive on your meditation object.** If it is the breath, you use counting first to stay with it. When the counting becomes effective, what happens? It means, when the mind stays with the object, it becomes a happy mind. When the mind wanders around, it becomes a frustrated mind. When we have a happy mind, it becomes easy to concentrate. Then, we get the benefits of meditation, and they work.