

BEYOND FORM

SEEING THINGS AS THEY REALLY ARE

BUDDHIST PHILOSOPHY AS ILLUMINATED BY

VENERABLE MANKADAWALA SUDASSANA THERO

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PREFACE

When the Buddha was residing at Gaya Shirsha, he addressed the monks one day, Monks, all is aflame. What is that I mean by all?¹

The eye is aflame, the matter is aflame, the eye consciousness is aflame, eye contact that arise due to above three and resultant sensations whether it's pleasant, unpleasant or neutral, they all are aflame he said. All these are burning due to lust, hatred and delusion and they are burning with birth, decay, death, grief, despair, sorrow and lamentation, added the blessed one.

Those who are within the fire do not know that they are burning and one need to move out of the fire to realise that he was on fire. Buddha the enlightened one did move out of the fire through self-realisation and called upon the worldly beings to follow his Dhamma to be free from burning.

As worldly beings our lives revolve around experiencing through our sense doors in seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting, touching and thinking.

As we do not see the form (*Rupa*) as it is we do not see what goes on behind the process of seeing such as eye contact and conditions that causes contact, hence, we tend to believe that what we see exists out there. In contrary, the teachings reveal that what we see in form of Name-Matter (Nama Rupa) is different to what is out there and we don't see the reality of things due to our ignorance. *Avidya* in Pali, translated as Ignorance, has the literal meaning of nescience or not knowing the reality as it is² and it is said that *Vidya* or science arose in Buddha, about things not heard before, with his Enlightenment.

It is further said that what is seen (by the eye) is different to what we behold. The eye receives visual stimuli which are transformed into forms according to the way we interpret the information received. We contemplate on what is formed and how we behold is determined by our contemplation which in fact is driven by craving.

If one can see the form as it is he will begin to see things as they really are and thus be disillusioned. Once disillusioned he will detach from desires and thereby liberate himself from the worldly existences, eventually reaching the state of enlightenment.

Most Venerable Sudassana Thero relates to two people who are trapped in a fire, one person stays still without any attempt to free himself from burning while the other jumps up and down, moves from side to side trying to avoid flames. None of the two survive in the end as both make no attempt to escape from fire. Similarly, says the Venerable, "Beings who are trapped in the worldly existences, those who make an effort to overcome suffering as well as those who stay put with no effort, both are subject to suffering as they do not attempt to move out of the misery they are in due to ignorance."

1 Adittapariyaya Sutta

2 Not having Yatha Bhuta Nana

This book draws together information from several sermons delivered by Venerable Sudassana Thero on the subject of Form and Buddhist Meditation for the benefit of those who have embarked on their journey to free themselves from everything that is aflame.

May the merits gained, be bestowed upon all venerable monks, for their efforts and compassion in presenting the precious teachings of Buddha to us, the devoted followers of dhamma who provide access to such rare dhamma sermons to the world and once again to my friend Dhammika for readily undertaking the task of printing this book.

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SEEING BEYOND FORM: INSIGHT TO REALITY

Albert Einstein one day asked his friend, the Danish scientist Neils Bohr, *'Do you really think the moon isn't there if you don't look at it?'* Bohr's response was, *"Can you prove to me the opposite, that the moon is there when we don't look? it is not possible."*

Paradoxes of quantum physics baffled even Einstein.

Reality and Modern Science

Since early last century Quantum Physicists began to focus on emerging theories on the reality of physical matter in their attempts to explain how quantum mechanics inform our understanding of nature. Some argued that physical objects appear only when we look at them and disappear when we look away, perhaps they do not exist at all in physical form.

Stephen Hawking in his program called Grand Design, discusses the notion of reality as explained by models of Physics, he questions if a coffee table in the middle of a room is still there when the observer leaves the room.

'How do you know the table still exist if you go out of the room? Can it pack up and disappear out of the window? Could even pay a visit to the international space station; perhaps even fly to the moon, before it returns to the exact same spot instantly before you re enter the room? This seems like an unlikely scenario, says Hawkins, 'but one, that we can't rule out!' ¹

'It is easier to assume that the table stays put when you are not there, that is our best fit model of reality. This is what we do in science; we create best fit models of how we believe the universe actually work', adds Hawking.

Reality is a best fit model as our mind can perceive and not probably what is out there.

These scientists have been experimenting on formation of matter for number of years and yet were unable to determine the true nature of the reality as they continue to seek answers from the external. Quantum physicists have been able to make predictions of the composition of the sub atomic particles of matter. In 1960s they predicted the existence of tiny particles called Quarks, proposed to be the building blocks of sub atomic particles, protons. However, this model also applied that there is no way that one can ever see a single isolated quark. If they cannot be seen can we say they exist?

Theoretical Physicist, Lenny Susskind proposed the holographic principle in his attempt to find where information that is fundamental to reality is stored. He went on to say that if reality is holographic our three dimensional world is an illusion projected from information stored in the outer universe.²

¹ Stephen Hawking's Grand Design : Discovery Channel, 2012

² 'What is Reality ',BBC Horizon, 2011

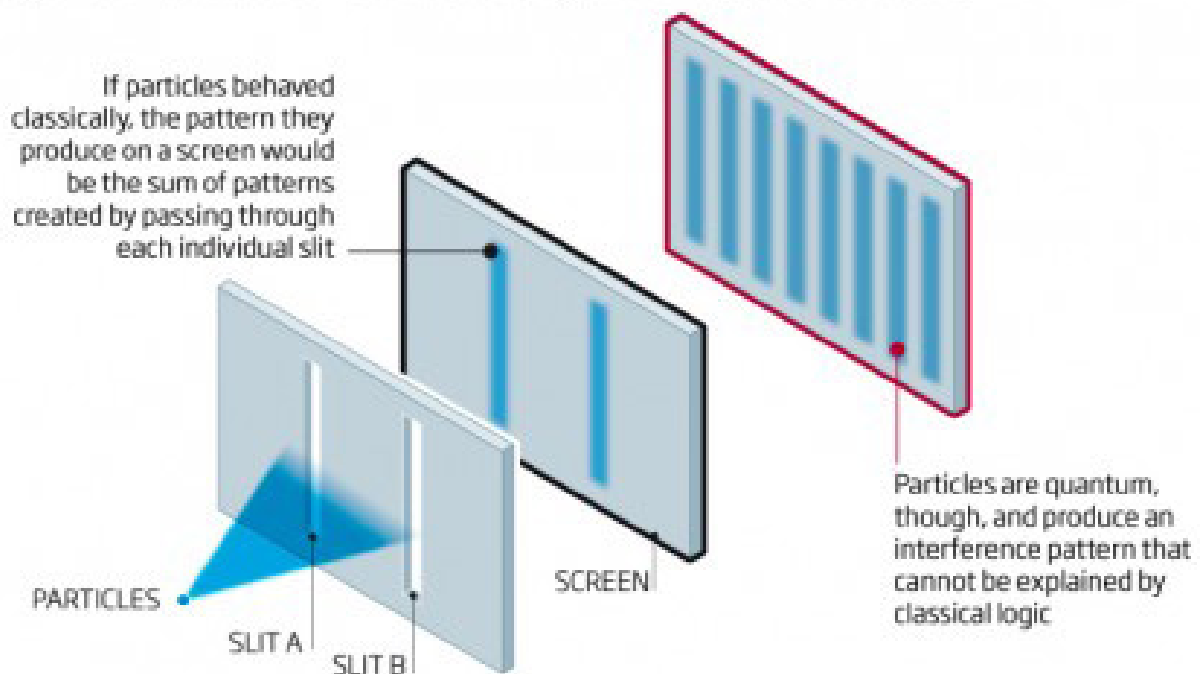
Physicists such as Anton Zeilinger used the double slit experiment to demonstrate that atoms and molecules (particles) behave strangely and not as we assume them to be. It made them to believe that tiny particles can be at different places at the same time. However, to the astonishment of the researchers conducting this experiment, particles did behave as they expected initially when they are being observed. That made the scientists to agree that **we can change how reality behaves just by looking at it.**

Cosmologist Max Tegmark suggested the existence of a parallel universe in trying to explain how particles can be at different places at the same time. Later, he attempted to explain the reality through mathematics and proposed that everything around us can be explained through mathematical formulas and that the entire universe is a giant mathematical structure.

The famous double slit experiment

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This experiment illustrates the difference between quantum and classical mathematics



Double Slit Experiment: When single photon particles were fired, one at a time, the projection on the screen which expected to create two lines, created 3 or more. But when detectors were placed in front of the slits only two lines were displayed.

Source: New Scientist

Notwithstanding, the scientists seem to agree that though they know how to use and even to make predictions of quantum mechanics no one understood it fully. **There are fundamental limits to what we can know**, says Stephen Hawking.

What appears to be the principle error in these observations is that the scientists examine the products formed by our senses rather than directing their attention to the conditions that cause formation.

Once we accept the form as we perceive, with designations, the error has been made and any study that follows will be not to avail, In other words it is closing the stable after the horse has bolted.

The Buddhist Perspective

According to Buddhist teachings we do not see things as they are, in other words, all objects sensed through our sense bases are identified only as how we interpret them to be. Formation occur as a mental fabrication which takes place in accordance with how we perceive information sensed through the six sense bases as matter, sound, smell, taste, touch and dhamma. The one gripped with form believes that things that we see exist and remain even when we are not looking. This is what we are made to believe, due to ignorance, but we need to change this view in order to see beyond the form.

Shapes or forms do not belong to objects or the particles that it constitutes of. We don't note particles in forms neither do we see atoms in objects. The eye derives relevant aspects of object particles (colours etc.) to create shapes and forms. For instance, when we look at stars from far away we see shapes formed in the sky. In ceremonial parades, when a number of parade participants wearing different colours are grouped in a particular order, interesting colour patterns and shapes are displayed, e.g. Olympic parade formations. Similarly, colourful formations of light can be seen during night time in a busy town centre when seen from far. In these instances colour components of modules (Stars, human figures and lights) placed far apart are gathered closer, together by the eye to create different forms, patterns and shapes.¹

This occurrence in the eye is a form of distortion of view resulting from what is known in Buddhist teachings as Densities or Crowding (Ghana) which in this instance is noted as Density of Whole (Samuha Ghana).²

Density of Whole is the notion of wholeness of a body whereas it consists of parts and units such as when one imagine a chariot as one whole body though it consist of many parts.³ Chariot example is referred to in the commentary with regard to corporeal, as a shape formed due to combination of several components such as hair, skin, nails, teeth & flesh etc.

In the parade formation example the patterns usually change momentarily as the participants changes positions and make different body movements so that the spectators see a pattern in motion for eg. a waving Flag. In the night city view example cars in motion with lights turned on, create interesting patterns when viewed from a distance. This aspect of Crowding is called the Density of Continuity (*Santati Ghana*), an occurrence comparable to seeing a single ring of light when a torch is whirled.

1 Dhamma sermon by Venerable Mankadawala Sudassana Thero

2 The Densities or crowding (Ghana) are of continuity, of whole, of function and of Object which give rise to illusions or distortions (Vipallasa) by three functions of the mind i.e. by perception (sanna), by thought (citta), and by view (ditti) as to create four false notions of Permanence, Wholesomeness, Happiness and Self in what are essentially Impermanent, Unwholesome, Unsatisfactory and without Self.

3 Jayasuriya, W.F, 1988, Psychology and Philosophy of Buddhism.



Thousands of participants rehearse a formation on Tiananmen Square in Beijing

Source: Telegraph Media Group Limited



City by Night: Lights and colour patterns highlight building forms

Another example for Density of Whole is seeing a heap of sand when in real terms it's a pile of sand particles grouped together.

Heap of Sand Example

Our belief is that the heap of sand exists and remains even when we are not looking at it. That's the perception of the world. The teachings guide us to examine this with insight through a vision beyond how worldly beings perceive.

Renowned Dhamma teacher, Venerable Mankadawala Sudassana thero, proposes a simple experiment, "Let's assume that we ask thousands of people to remove sand from the heap, the rule is that one person can only remove one particle. We see that when all particles have been removed the heap is gone too! Where is it now? No one removed the heap? Now, let's assume that everyone brings back the particle they removed and place as it was before. We see the heap again. Furthermore we also note that when we touch we only touch the sand particles, not a heap. "The shape of the pile of sand or 'Heap' is a formation of the eye which appears when the eye consciousness arises and ceases when we look away, without leaving any trace.



Heap of Sand

The notion of 'Heap' forms within the mind and hence belongs to the mind and not to the external space or sand particles.

Similar to sand particles which are piled up in space, the four great elements¹ are grouped in different ways in space and when sighted we see a shape & colour, for e.g. round or rectangular, red or blue as formed by the eye. We can't touch these 'forms' or feel them to experience any sensations for e.g. as pleasant or unpleasant or as cold or hot, since they do not exist externally. When we touch we feel the element of solidness as a form of touch, which is unrelated to the visual form. Note here that the eye consciousness that arises when the eye meets the object (visual stimuli) is different to body consciousness resulting from touch (i.e. tactile stimuli).

The four Elements or *Mahabhutha* do not pose as they are but appear in disguise hence are called '*Bhutha*', meaning 'spirit'. What is seen by the eye is described in the script as '*Upadaya Rupa*' meaning, a shape formed by the Four Great elements in conjunction with other factors.

The Venerable goes on to explain this Buddhist theory of 'Form' (*Rupa*) with reference to an image (or reflection) falling on water when one looks into a pond. We cannot interact with this image by touching or smelling and it appears when we look into the water and disappears when we move away. If we reach to touch it we will feel the water but not the image.

He further relates the state of perceiving form to a wall painting (mural). We see people, buildings and flowers in it with real surroundings though it is just a series of paint brush strokes on the wall, if we attempt to feel a flower for instance, we will touch the wall. The reality identified in the mural is framed entirely in our mind. The Enlightened one pointed out that there is no substance in the form that we sense and compared it to a lump of foam. We add substance to form with defilements and fermentations² we have accumulated, grasping them as people and things.

There is no difference in the experiences mentioned above, it is said, to what we experience in our day to day encounters with external objects. We sense mere shapes and colours but our defilements and fermentations come to the fore and make them real.

1 Four Great Elements are identified as Patavi (Earth Element), Apo (Water Element) Tejo (Fire Element) and Vayo (Wind Element) being the most basic or primary elements of matter.

2 *Klesha* or *keles* and *asrava* or *asava*



Reflection in Water

Not only we create the world around us consisting of things and people that are formed in our mind, we continue to believe that they exist out there regardless of us looking at them or not.

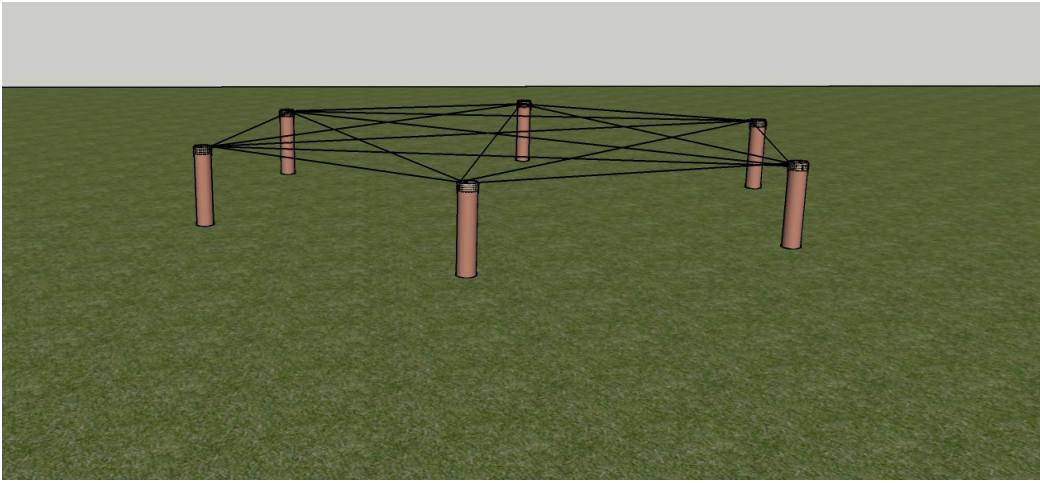
Moreover, the dilemma is that we tend to tie our sense experiences, for instance, a visual experience to an experience from another sense door, such as smell, taste, touch etc., which in reality occur in isolation of each other.

Identifying individual sense experiences in isolation is the key to see form as it is which is called in teachings as being skilful in Sense Bases¹. As soon as eye contact ceases the act of seeing ceases and nothing remains, however, we attempt to connect say, a hearing experience that may follow to what has just been seen. We often integrate what is sensed through mind consciousness as something that we saw or heard before whereas it is only a thought arisen by the mind in contact with a mental object. Our defilements grow upon things we retain as seen, heard, smelled etc. integrated at mind consciousness level and we continue to believe that they exist out there.

Venerable Sudassana relates to an experiment to explain how we form a 'net of craving' by connecting sense experiences. Post six pegs on ground in a circle, say at equal distance, and each one with a rope tied to its top end. If the other end of the rope belonging to each peg is tied to another peg in the circle a net will be created automatically connecting all pegs. The six pegs represent our six sense bases and the ropes tied to them denote relevant sense experiences. Similarly as we tie our sense experiences to experiences from other senses, creation of a net of craving is inevitable. Instead, if we tie each rope around the peg that it belongs to, the net will disappear, hence, the Venerable stresses, unbraid the 'net of craving' that entraps you in samsara by refraining from integrating sense experiences.

One should not be able to go in search, looking for an object, with reference to another sense experience say, something heard, smelt or tasted. In simple terms we should not go in search of an elephant after hearing a trumpet.

¹ *Ayatana Kusala*



Net of Craving

This may sound bizarre in the worldly sense as the expectation is completely the opposite; however, the teachings focus on deliverance from the world in absolute terms.

The Buddha revealed how we misinterpret sense experiences by tying experience from one sense base to another constructing the sense of an entity in the process as an experience. The integrations, he has said, takes place at mind consciousness state creating an illusory self in mind, which results in formation of ego and conceit. On the other hand, by tying one experience to the others we compose a person or a thing in our mind as one that continue to exist out there and hence we come back in search of that person/thing to experience or re-cognise - forming Re-link consciousness¹.

The blessed one identified this fundamental error and urged to refrain from tying experience from one sense door to another. In his discourse to Bahiya Darucheeli, the ascetic wearing trees bark. The Buddha preached,

“Then, Bāhiya, you should train yourself thus: In reference to the seen, there will be only the seen. In reference to the heard, only the heard. In reference to the sensed, only the sensed. In reference to the cognized, only the cognized. That is how you should train yourself.

When for you there will be only the seen in reference to the seen, only the heard in reference to the heard, only the sensed in reference to the sensed, only the cognized in reference to the cognized, then, Bāhiya, there is no you in connection with that.

*When there is no you in connection with that, there is no you there. When there is no you there, you are neither here nor yonder nor between the two. This, just this, is the end of suffering.”*² added the blessed one.

It is said that Bhahiya Darucheeli became an Arhat having listened to this sermon.

¹ *prathisandhi vinnana*

² “Bāhiya Sutta: Bāhiya” (Ud 1.10), translated from the Pali by Thanissaro Bhikkhu. Access to Insight (Legacy Edition), 3 September 2012.

The functioning of the mind in its attempt to integrate sense experiences has been demonstrated in an experiment by scientists recently. *“By staging an experiment that manipulates the senses, we can explore how the brain draws – and redraws- the contours of where our selves reside.”* (New Scientist 23 February 2013)

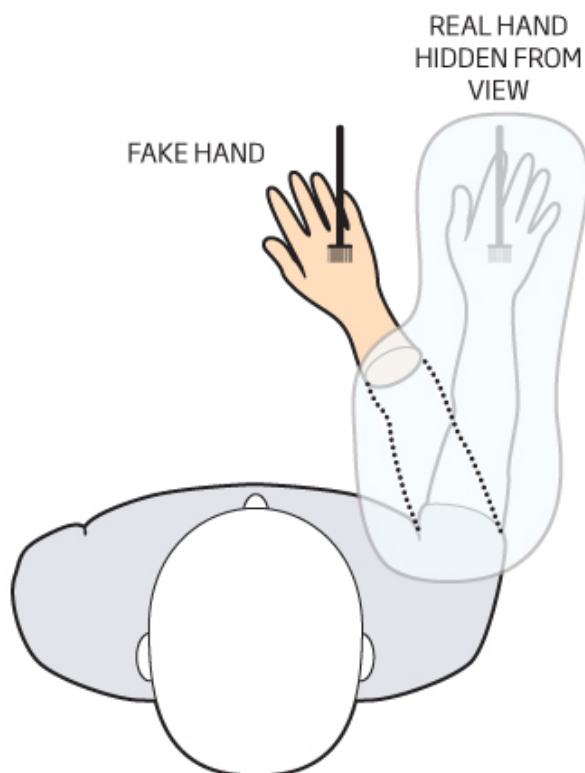
In its article titled “Where are You” the writer, Anil Ananthaswamy, explains the experiment,

“One of the simplest ways to see this is in action is via an experiment that’s now part of neuroscience folklore, the rubber hand illusion. The setup is simple: a person’s hand is hidden from their view by a screen while a rubber hand is placed on the table in front of them. By stroking their hand while they see the rubber hand being stroked, you can make them feel that the fake hand is theirs (see diagram).”

Get out of hand

©NewScientist

Stroke someone’s hand while they watch a rubber hand being stroked in the same way, and the contours of their self shift to include the fake hand instead



Source: New Scientist

It is evident here that the person experiencing the stroking (touch) is attempting to integrate the tactile stimuli to visual stimuli and in the process to redefine the boundaries of self.

Anil goes on to say, “The mind integrates various senses to create aspects of our bodily self, in the rubber hand illusion; the mind is processing touch, vision and proprioception¹ - the internal sense of the relative location of our body parts. Given the conflicting information the brain resolves it by taking ownership of the rubber hand. “

We believe that we are born to a world that exists consisting of things and people including ourselves as experiencers. The Buddha preached otherwise, having realised the reality of the world as it is he called upon the worldly beings to see the reality by themselves and to realise from within than looking for answers from outside.

The Eye is the Ruler

The Eye cannot be seen and it is known by its function only, the faculty of the ‘eye’. The eye arises when it meets an object formed by the four great elements, and ceases when there is no more contact. When the two are in the presence of each other the eye cognition occurs. What we identify as eye being part of our body is yet another object that is external seen by eye faculty. Here; we combine the function of the eye with an external form in the process of forming ‘my eye’.

Similarly ear or nose can’t be known in isolation of their function, hence they are called senses. Only the external objects can be seen.

The role of the eye is to compose forms depicting colour and shape. Say, there is a coloured sticker on our external window, anything that comes in front of the window, say a white car, will be seen in colour through the window. The sticker determines what we see. If a child, from his birth, sees outside through a coloured glass window he would think that everything outside is of the colour of that glass. He won’t see what really exist out there until such time he walks out of the house one day.

The Eye is called *indriya* for its role as a ruler; it governs the act of seeing by composing groups of particles into form. What we see is conditioned by the eye, like the glass in the above example. If we don’t see the eye as it is with insight, we will continue to see **forms** that exist externally.

The two examples, the heap of sand and the reflection in water, discussed above conforms to the Buddhist theory of impermanence of conditioned phenomena, being non-existent things arise due to conditions and cease when the conditions cease.²

Venerable Sudassana relates to the Buddha’s word when he states, “associate forms but be free from it.” He further reminds, “*You associate with your image in the mirror to comb you hair and so on, but you do not ‘leave’ the image behind when you move away.* “

¹ “one’s own”, “individual” and perception, is the *sense* of the relative position of neighbouring parts of the body and strength of effort being employed in movement’

² ‘*Yan kinci samudaya dammam sabbattam nirodha dhammam*’

The realisation of the act of 'seeing' as a mental process (with insight), identifying what is seen is not an object that exist externally but an image formed in the mind by the great elements that are present out there, develops the Right View which is paramount in breaking the cycle of re-birth.

Seeing beyond form

The Buddha advised to see beyond the form, as a name-matter composition formed due to combination of factors, a product of the cause and effect phenomenon. He pointed to the causality & momentary nature of form and stressed the importance of observing the arising and ceasing phenomenon to recognise its impermanent nature. By pursuing in this manner through insight meditation, he has said, one can realise that things do not exist before or after the occurrence of 'seeing' but arise to the occasion when conditions are present and cease thereafter when conditions cease to exist.

With regard to the question that baffled Scientists, it can now be stated that **the moon, round in shape and luminous, is not there unless we look at it.**

Though we can contemplate on the form and the eye as discussed we still can't see their momentary nature through our senses due to hindrances¹ and our defilements and fermentations. We cannot witness it ourselves as personality get in the way; however, when hindrances are removed things begin to appear as they really are.

The Buddha declared that the one who sees beyond form with insight reach the state of a non-returner (*anagami*), the fourth state of enlightenment, and will not be born again in the sensual realm.

Meditation, through Tranquillity (*Samatha*) and insight (*vidarshana*) methods are recommended as essential in this regard, the former to settle the mind and the latter to see the reality of existence with insight. One need not give up the lay life completely to practice such meditation but can do it while leading a normal life. Adherence to moral conduct while restraining the senses helps with cultivating concentration that enables insight to see things as they are, the right view, which is inevitable to see beyond the form. The one who reaches this state proceed on the Noble Eight Fold Path, detached from worldly perceptions & formations, to be free from craving and consequently, future becoming.

He, who is liberated from six levels of worldly perception, sees beyond form and thus the world, hence, is not called a man, a god or a brahmin but an Awakened one.

¹ Five Hindrances are Sense Desires, Ill will, Slope & Toper, Restlessness and Doubt

BUDDHIST MEDITATION: PATH TO ENLIGHTENMENT



Buddha Statue in Samadhi posture: Gal Vihara, Polonnaruwa, Sri Lanka

We are attached to the world through Craving and Ignorance. It is said that craving is predominant in our noting as sentient beings or persons which is the cause for suffering¹. The objective in meditation is to separate Name and Matter from Name-Matter forms (of objects) that we erroneously grasp as persons and things due to defilements. Though one may be able to see name matter separately through contemplation, his defilements and fermentations prevent him from realising it as a fact. It requires extensive dedication and effort to remove the habits caused by fermentations and these can't simply be removed but need to be spent or wasted away.

To understand how we form defilements and how fermentations come into play, consider your foot being trampled by a rock, you will bear the pain and deal with it not worrying about the rock, however, if it was a person who trampled your leg you will react with anger instantly, finding fault with that person. If we see beyond form and refrain from grasping as person there won't be any difference in our reaction in both instances noted above.

Tathagata identified Dhamma that has to be removed by seeing and those that have to be removed by meditation. In relation to the ten fetters he disclosed, the first three, Identity View, Doubt and Ritual Attachment which are considered as wrong views (*Ditti*) are to be removed by seeing i.e. with right view. The remaining fetters, Sensual Desires, Ill Will, Lust to Material Existence, Lust to Immaterial Existence, Restlessness, Conceit and Ignorance are noted as those which need to be removed through meditation.

Tranquillity (*Samatha*) meditation aims to suppress objects and to subdue formation of aggregates thereby removing fetters such as Sense Desires, Ill Will, Lust to Material and Immaterial Existences and to an extent, Conceit. Insight (*Vipassana* or *Vipassana*) Meditation aims to purify mind from defilements totally, by removing remaining conceit and Ignorance.

Mind (*sitha* or *citta*) and mindfulness (*sati*) are two different things. One can be mindful while the mind can still wonder about. You may be engaging in some activity while

1 Birth, decay, death, grief, despair, sorrow and lamentation

the mind can drift away taking many objects. These two states of mind are known as conscious and subconscious mind in the West.

Mindfulness or *Satipatthana* draws our attention to a fixed point on our face such as the tip of the nose or lips and requires us to focus on that so that our attention is restrained from being distracted. It further requires us to adopt a technique such as in and out breathing (*Anapanasati*), loving kindness, disposition of the body (*Iriapatha*) or foulness meditation (*Asubha*) which are different forms of tranquillity meditation techniques to restrain the (inner) mind from drifting away. *Anapanasati* helps to subdue contemplation directly while with the other techniques such as foulness meditation one subdues unwholesome contemplation by contemplating on another wholesome object. Practicing in this manner one is expected to reach one-pointedness (*ekaggata*), an advanced state of the mind that restrains thoughts of greed, ill will and delusion.

The literal meaning of *Satipatthana* is fixing (or stationing) the mindfulness, and is integral to *Satipatthana* meditation. The purpose is to settle or tranquil the mind so that hindrances are subdued and concentration is developed. Stillness in the body and the mind can be related to stillness in water which enables one to see its depth.

Comparing Tranquillity to still and clear water, the nature of Five Hindrances are explained in the commentary through the simile of a water body. It emphasises the effect of the five forms of hindrances to concentration in relation to different states of the water as follows.

Sense desire is related to coloured water, ill will to boiling water, sloth and torpor to mouldy water, restlessness to disturbed water and doubt to muddy water and so on. Clarity in water is not found in any of the above states and hence one can't see its depth.

If the mind can be purified, it can see insights similar to the ability to see the depth in a clear and still water body. Tranquillity Meditation helps to calm and settle the mind by removing hindrances.

Different Tranquillity meditation techniques are recommended in accordance with the type of hindrance that is prevalent over the others, say for instance in terms of Sense Desires, one can practice Foulness Meditation, for Ill will, Loving Kindness and for Restlessness, *Anapanasati* and so on.

The practitioner of Tranquillity Meditation will experience symptoms such as relief from stress, lightness, seeing light flashes and feeling of emptiness as he advances in the process; however, it is not to be mistaken as deliverance of mind (*ceto vimukti*)

The purpose of Tranquillity Meditation is to tranquil the mind with the ultimate aim of achieving one-pointedness. It is often noted as reaching a state of emptiness and hence deliverance, however, is not considered as the absolute emancipation that one achieves by removing defilements but a state of dispassion (*Raga viraga ceto vimukti*).

When a practitioner notes that his lustful objects have diminished and he can remain calm for longer periods of time with no aggression, he would tend to believe that he has overcome defilements. However, it is clarified that these are symptoms of one-pointedness but not due to achieving any of the four stages of enlightenment (*marga pala*). It is said that the defilements are only suppressed in this instance which one may retain for long periods of time, even extending up to eons. However it is also said, that mental concentration achieved in this manner is not sustainable and hence fades away gradually, also it is said that one can lose such state of mental concentration at any moment if met with unfavourable conditions.

Insight meditation is entirely different. It is built upon the right view and aims to remove defilements totally. Once the hindrances are curtailed with Tranquillity Meditation, the ability to see things as they are improves and one will begin to see differently to how a worldly being see.

The feeling of emptiness achieved through Insight meditation is called *Avidya viraga panna vimukti* where ignorance is removed and wisdom gained, by discarding desires.

The Four foundations of Mindfulness (*sathara satipattana*) is the meditation which Buddha recommended as the practice that directs one towards the goal of final emancipation. The teachings outline how both the Tranquillity and Insight meditation has to be practiced alternatively in this regard. The former helps with gaining necessary concentration which is essential for insight meditation & Wise Attention (*Yoniso Manasikara*).

The four foundations preached by the Buddha are known as Contemplation on the Body, Contemplation on Sensations, Contemplation on Thoughts and Contemplation on Dhammas². Practice of the former two states releases one from attachment to corporeal, being the matter part of the name matter composition. The latter two states address the Name component of the said composition.

Buddha has referred to two types of characters in terms of pursuing the four states of this meditation, firstly, the one with Craving character (*Tanha Caritha*) who begins with Contemplation on the Body and Contemplation on Sensations and secondly, the one having the character of View (*Ditti Carita*) who can pursue Contemplation on Thoughts and Contemplation on Dhammas directly. It is clarified that the one with Craving character has to exert more effort to release from his attachments in the sensual world hence has to seek release from body and sensations first, to be free from craving on form. The others with the character of View are usually free from bodily attachments and only need to seek release from Name (*Nama*), through Contemplation on Thoughts and Contemplation on Dhammas to remove ignorance. Craving is said to be the cause for Matter and ignorance for Name.

The sutra begins with describing prerequisites such as appropriate environment and required conditioning to meditate, firstly, choosing a conducive and serene environment free from disruptions³. One should sit upright, cross legged and focus on the tip of the nose or lips and be aware of the breath whether it is inhalation or exhalation, a long breath or short breath and so on; however it is strictly advised, not to follow the breath but to be aware of it, though it has been interpreted that way by many teachers. The former helps to hold the mindfulness in place and the latter, having awareness of the breath, helps to prevent the (inner) mind from drifting away. If more attention is drawn to the breath the mindfulness could get slipped away. It has been explained through an example of a carpenter working on a piece of timber. Here, the carpenter focuses on a spot on the timber he has to plane while being fully aware of the movement of the planer, moving back and forth past that spot. He never takes his eyes off the spot but wouldn't lose the awareness of the movements of the planer either.

The sutra further says, 'tame defilements to be free from thoughts of greed and ill will through mindfulness with clear comprehension'⁴. Once the mind is tranquil, Buddha instructs, one must concentrate on internal as well as external forms⁵, analysing both, your own body and of the others, as a formation of aggregates or four elements and dependent on edible foods. The mind inhabits the body and makes it conscious while being responsible for its movements.

One needs to meditate in this manner for some time and switch to *Anapanasati* again when he feels that concentration is sluggish. After few minutes of practice when he feels the concentration has improved, he should return to insight meditation and continue this process switching between the two techniques as long as the notion of 'body is me' fades away. The Buddha used the analogy of a blacksmith forging a knife to explain the process. The blacksmith first heats the piece of steel until it glows before he flatten it on the anvil, repeating the sequence over and over again; switching between forging and shaping, until he is satisfied with the final product, a knife. Here, the act of heating the steel to required temperature is compared to settling the mind through a tranquillity technique to achieve required level of concentration and shaping of the knife to insight meditation.

The practitioner should also concentrate on external forms in the same way, for e.g. when a thought comes to his mind about a friend or relative. It is said the more you practice in this manner your attachment to body fades away bringing a feeling of lightness and one may even feel like a floating feather.

The exercise of cultivating the mind through tranquillity technique is ably supported by Moral conduct (*Sila*) as it helps to restrain speech and action. Moral conduct helps concentration (*Samadi*) which in turn helps to see things as they are (*Panna*).

3 Aranna gatova, rukkha mula gatova, sunnagara gatova

4 Atapi Sampajano, Vineyya loke abhijja domanassa

5 Ajjattamva Bahiddava

As the hindrances are completely removed it will bring about pleasantness that will culminate to a state of joy or rapture followed by relaxation & tranquillity developing ultimate concentration. (*Bojjanga dharma*)

One who is free from hindrances is compared to being cured from a deadly disease, freed from prison or to finding an oasis when stranded in the desert searching for water.

When one reaches such level of concentration he begins to see things as they really are, i.e., the arising and ceasing nature of conditioned phenomena or *Yatha Buttha Nana*. Reaching this state of the Right View will remove ignorance and he will be released from the notions of permanence and wholesomeness and hence will see nothing that he can grasp as me mine and myself. Being disillusioned he will gradually detach from things that he used to grasp and when detached no more craving and he is said to be free from suffering.

Furthermore, constant practice is highly recommended in the teachings in our day to day activities as it helps with instant sighting of the true nature of objects, which is the arising ceasing nature by subduing the ability of defilements & fermentations taking control. The hindered mind can only see the state of arising and the cessation is concealed. What occurs here is that the mental consciousness fills in at the state of cessation and let us experience continuity. While in the state of profound concentration this does not occur and hence one is able to see cessation.

It is to be noted that impermanence (in Noble sense) cannot be seen from a personality point of view. It's something that appears as an insight. The vision is only perfected when the phenomenon of "being non-existent it arises due to conditions and ceases when the conditions cease to exist", is realised through concentration. This cannot be beheld but needs to be sighted, it is said.

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