

Day Four Notes for Reflection

Effective Vision (Samma Ditthi)

There is Suffering but Life is Not Suffering

Everything that is conditioned is bound to fall apart. Existence itself is conditioned and the elements within existence, by the nature of conditioning, will fall apart as well. Therefore, don't take it so seriously. We're all getting out of this life through the same process. What matters is how well we are able to accept this Reality.

That does not mean life itself is Suffering. If life were Suffering, then why do we smile at the joys that life provides us? Why do we laugh at the happy memories? Why do we even have happy memories? Why then would we smile in the meditation?

There is Suffering, but it is not what is conventionally conceptualized. Life is a series of fragmented moments in Reality. What we make of it allows us to see it in one way that binds us to a mode of Craving, Ignorance and Suffering, or another way in which we don't take things personal and we understand that anything that is acquired in this lifetime will not exist forever, even if such acquisitions seem to outlive us.

There is an end to everything conditioned, including our relationships, assets, and memories.

Say you enjoy a certain food. You relish it while consuming it. The chef says they've prepared the same food in another portion for you to consume. You've had your fill, but the Craving in you says, "let's eat it." So you do. And you enjoy it, but not as much as in the beginning. You've eaten more than your fill. The chef comes back again and gives you another helping. This time you won't eat it. But it's your favorite, the chef insists. What changed now? At first, you did not pay Attention to your body and the senses and allowed Craving to take over and that gave rise to Suffering. In seeing this, you had the wisdom to decline the third helping through understanding what had happened. Perhaps, with that understanding when the chef cooks for you another day, you will know what is your fill and not crave more.

You can smell the flowers, you can lie around on the beach, or you can take a walk in the park and enjoy it. How you see this enjoyment is what matters. You are fulfilled in that moment and Craving will not arise. If you identify with the senses aroused through the situation, then Craving takes over and you lose sense of what is correct and effective and in the end there will be Suffering from one consequence or another. If you enjoy something in that moment with the understanding that this too shall pass, and that it's only this, whether good or bad, and that it's not personal but came about through a series of causes and conditions, then after having gone through it, you move on.

Look at every **moment** as an opportunity, as a choice.

You can see what arises as something to be taken personal, affecting some sense of self which is not there, and that it will last and always satisfy or be a danger to that sense of “you.” Or you can see it as having come about through choices that were conditioned by prior choices that led you to that moment but in it there was no permanent self and that whatever arises now will change, good or bad, and it won’t be forever or be wholly satisfying on every level.

A Mindset coming to alignment with Effective Vision understands life as an impersonal series of choices and situations. And in that impersonal series, one knows to let go of the notion of control or any sense of self. Doing so, wisdom will arise and mind will know the reason why one lets go – doing so helps on a deeper level in one’s meditation where it comes naturally to the mind to let go of hindrances and Craving and the need to push or control. Thus, one is able to easily stay with one’s object.

How Suffering Comes to Be

The root of Suffering is Craving. Craving is the reaction of taking personal any stimuli that is felt through Contact. However, if wisdom and Effective Observation replaces Craving, there will be no Suffering. Wisdom arises through the realization of Effective Vision, through the eradication of Ignorance of the Four Noble Truths.

This Ignorance conditions one’s perspective, one’s Reality, and Craving is the automated response to all Feeling that arise, upon which one establishes the falsehood of all that occurs is “mine.”

Conceit is the fetter that corrupts the Formations through the Projection of Being. This Projection gives rise to the accumulation of tendencies through Clinging to a false sense of self, which then turns into Being, which is an amalgam of those accumulated tendencies. This is the sense “I am.”

Hence, these Projections – of Ignorance, Being, and Craving – are to be uprooted through the practice of the Eightfold Path. Through the momentum of underlying tendencies, which have been accumulated and conditioned over time, the Projections push forth and fetter the Formations that then condition the rest of the links of Dependent Origination.

Dependent Origination

Ignorance – Not comprehending the Four Noble Truths. Rooted within the Projections. Feeds the Projections and is fed by the Projections – they are interdependent.

Formations – Karmic impulses that influence Intentions and are in turn influenced by choices made in every present moment. Brought on through accumulated tendencies, which fuel the momentum of their rising, having first been conditioned by Ignorance. They can also be activated via the process of Contact in any given moment.

Consciousness – Cognition, the bare collection of information. Established through the framework of Mentality Materiality and measured by and measures experiences of the senses. Without these factors, Cognition remains unlinked and cannot be sustained.

Mentality Materiality – Mentality comprises of the neurological faculties for Feeling, Perception, Intention, Contact, and Attention. Materiality is the physical body and the conceptualization of the physical world.

Six Sense Bases – The sense receptors, nerves and neurons that receive input from external and internal stimuli.

Contact – The process of stimuli interacting with the receptors.

Feeling – When the receptors, nerves and neurons are stimulated. This includes interoception, which is sensing the internal pleasure and pain within mind and body, proprioception, which is sensing movement of the body, and exteroception, which is sensing the stimuli of the five physical senses. Here the Feeling is just the bare Feeling. The noting of whether any bare Feeling is pleasant, painful, or neutral, is the beginning of the process of Perception.

Craving – Taking the impersonal activity of sensory experience as personal and reacting out of a sense of self through Perception and conceptualization. (*I want more of it, I can't take anymore of it, I made it happen. This is my pleasure. This is my pain. This is my neutrality. This hurts me and I want it to stop. This gives me pleasure, so give me more. I wish I didn't have to experience this anymore, I wish I had this instead*)

Clinging – The process of accumulating habits, beliefs, views, and tendencies around and creating the sense of self (*this is me, this is mine, this is who I am because..., this is why I am like this, I used to be like this, I'm going to be this someday, I'll never be good enough,*), sensory experiences (*I like it/don't like it because of..., that hurt me so I don't like it, that aroused me so I'm making it mine*), rituals (*I do this because it will lead me to salvation*), and views in general (*I vote so-and-so party because I believe..., I support this cause because I believe..., I never liked that person because they belong to that group, I'll never be like my...*)

Being – Accumulated beliefs solidify a sense of self, a personality, kamma to be experienced through that person. Bundles of kamma taken to be personal and as a personality with a deeply rooted sense of self. The crystallizing of self into a framework of existence that their choices and kamma (or actions) have brought them into. (*I am the CEO of..., I am a Buddhist, I am a member of this club, I am the head of the household, I built this place with my bare hands, I am a citizen of..., I am a human. I'm all alone. I'm successful. I'm rich. I'm poor. I'm not good enough. I'm the best... in the world. I'm the worse... in the world. I'm neutral I am... .*)

Birth – Taking personal one's actions, Feeling connected to actions and situations as self. Fruition of kamma taken personally. Self is completely cooked through becoming fully established in Being. (*I love myself. I hate myself. I won. I lost. I did this. I didn't do this. I am doing this. I'm buying that phone. I got married. I got a divorce.*)

Ageing, Suffering, Death – The fruition of one's actions taken personally. (*Why did this happen to me? Why does it have to end? I didn't get what I wanted. This isn't how I imagined it. Why did they leave me? Why did they have to die? When will I die? Will I be alone? Who's going to be there for me?*)

Cessation of Suffering

How you consider the Feeling that arises will determine whether or not Craving arises. When Feeling arises, Perception arises. With these two, there is the Consciousness of that Feeling and Perception, the cognizance, the bare knowing intertwined with the Feeling and Perception.

For example, one sees a banana. The seeing of the object, the banana, is the Feeling. When the photons meet the receptors in the eye, then that is Contact. The knowing of this, the awareness of this arises dependent on the Contact, Feeling, and the banana, and that is the cognition, Consciousness. Once the banana is visible, the mind attaches the name “banana” to it and all the concepts (“yellow” “fruit” “sweet” “healthy” “potassium” and so on) attached around that word – this is Perception.

Perception arises out of memory, through recognizing – re-cognizing – meaning one has seen the banana before and through the Formations of having seen it via cognition, one is able to name it accordingly. This Perception is what conceptualizes based on learning and memory through the cognizing tied with Feeling.

If the body feels physical hunger, one may see the “banana” as a means to end that hunger and that will be the end of it. But if one preoccupies the mind with the ideas around the banana and that this yellow fruit will, does, or did satisfy “me” the false sense of self, that is where Craving arises.

This is due to inattention, or not paying Attention rooted in Reality. If one feels, or has a Feeling, there should be a pause – remember, respond, don't react – and in that pause Attention rooted in Reality manifests and one lets go of the idea that the Feeling that has arisen is self or belongs to any sense of self. The Feeling came about through a series of causes and conditions and now one does not put any self to the enjoyment in that Feeling, but remains fulfilled.

One then goes a step further and makes it an exercise to see Feeling with Attention rooted in the Three Symptoms of Reality, seeing that whatever arises is not going to last forever, is not going to keep one satisfied completely or infinitely, and that indeed it's all impersonal. With this seeing, one automatically lets go even before Craving can arise and in this way, one is at peace, letting the Feeling be, having seen with clarity.

This reconditions Formations through Perception that is the Attention rooted in Reality. One weakens the fetters of Craving, Conceit and Ignorance in the Formations that arise. This process uses Effective Application to continuously let go. The more this is done, the easier it is for one to experience letting go on an automatic level in the higher jhanas and finally at an attainment event post-Cessation.

The Four Noble Truths and the 6Rs

When one RECOGNIZES, one has seen that there is Suffering in the form of a hindrance and being distracted in meditation. In daily activities, one RECOGNIZES Craving, Clinging and the links thereafter having arisen. In both instances, this is seen through Attention rooted in Reality. In meditation, one sees one was distracted because breaking a Precept has weakened one's Attention. In daily life, one sees the cause of Craving, which is that one had taken the link of to be personal. Hence, the Noble Truths of Suffering and its Cause are understood through the RECOGNIZE step.

When one RELEASES and RELAXES, one has let go of the Cause of the Suffering and in doing so there is the Cessation of Suffering. In the meditation, one RELEASES one's Attention from the hindrance and RELAXES the tension caused by it, hence the Cessation of the hindrance and Craving arising from it. Likewise, in daily living when Craving arises by taking something personal, one RELEASES from taking the Feeling to be personal and RELAXES the immediate tension that has arisen, hence the Cessation of that Craving.

When one SMILES (or RE-SMILES), one comes back to a wholesome state of mind, and when one RETURNS to their object of meditation, and REPEATS when necessary, one is following the Eightfold Path to Cessation. When doing these steps in the meditation, one is practicing Effective Observation and Effective Collectedness. In daily living, when Craving has been let go and one smiles and returns to an attitude cultivated by the Brahmaviharas and following the Precepts,

and then continues to stay there, one is practicing Effective Vision, Effective Choice, Effective Speech, Effective Behavior, and Effective Living. In both cases, one is practicing Effective Application through the whole 6R process.