

Day Three Notes for Reflection

Effective Collectedness (Samma Samadhi)

Attention Rooted in Reality (*Yoniso Manasikara*)

Reality is more than the present moment. The present moment is just a concept. If one only adheres one's Attention to the present moment, then one has missed the point of Effective Collectedness, which is to understand and see Reality as it is, rooted in Effective Vision.

There is the flowing, steady, and open Attention rooted in Reality, which is the fuel for the Seven Factors of Awakening and leads one to Release.

Then there is the Attention that is haphazard, distracted, and while it may seem to be rooted in the present moment without thought, it is closed and tense, rooted in the delusion of open presence. This is because as one tries to stay in the moment, one begins to attach a sense of self and there is delineation between what Reality is as it is and what one perceives through the idea of the present moment, conditioned by previous moments and interactions and reactions to those moments. As one meditator puts it, "One is always too late when one tries to be in the present moment. The harder you try, the more you move downward in the flow of Dependent Origination, while to see Reality as it is, one needs to move 'up', i.e. let go of craving."

Every time one tries to do something, one has already missed the point. Instead of this, one pulls back the focus, relaxes it, and just watches. This is seeing Reality unfold. This is one aspect of such Attention. In Effective Observation, with Attention rooted in Reality, one saw the present moment of the Four Aspects of Conditioned Existence, and using Investigation, one saw if any of the three delusions – taking each aspect to be personal, taking it to be permanent, and taking it to be deeply and eternally satisfying – were present in mind upon the seeing.

In doing this, one then, through Effective Application, could root out such unwholesome qualities and come to intellectual understanding of the Three Symptoms of Reality – impermanence of causes and conditions, their unsatisfactoriness, and the impersonal nature of all phenomena, including Nibbana.

The next step is how one responds to that Reality. This determines whether one allows the link of Craving to bind one further down or if one sees through with wisdom and understanding, lets go if that Craving arises, and continues to see the Three Symptoms of Reality of each situation.

Fruition of Attention Rooted in Reality

This then is Attention rooted in the Three Symptoms of Reality. This is Attention rooted in Effective Vision. It first comes through intellectual knowledge and Effective Observation and Effective Collectedness, but then when that Effective Vision is experienced, namely seeing firsthand the Four Noble Truths, through which the Three Symptoms of Reality of Existence are always attended to without personalized intellectualization, striving or analysis and rather is automatic and informed by Effective Vision, then such Attention continually flows from wisdom.

Being in the present moment is just the beginning of Attention rooted in Reality. It is not forced. It is relaxed into and then it is open, nurturing, loving, and accepting of Reality. It sees what hindrances may arise, but rather than trying to stop them upon that seeing, the 6Rs are implemented and one has practiced Effective Application in order to bring up the Seven Factors of Awakening.

Effective Collectedness is when the Seven Factors are present. In other words, in jhana, mind is rooted in Observation, Investigation, Effective Application, Joy, Tranquility, Collectedness and Equanimity.

These factors start to balance themselves with flowing Attention that is rooted in Reality when one gets deeper through the jhanas and the higher planes of perception.

Here then, with such Attention, one is naturally in the present moment, and more importantly, one is open and allowing the mind to unravel itself so that insights arise without force. The nature of insights is that they are not forced or contemplated. They arise in a flash when the conditions are right. The work at first in Effective Collectedness is to nurture the ground in which insights can arise through the nutriment of Attention rooted in Reality.

In short, intellectual understanding through analysis and reflection first gives one conviction, which informs Attention. Such conviction, if fully cultivated, developed and realized, can destroy the fetter of Doubt altogether, and such Attention, when open and accepting in Effective Observation, then activates the Seven Factors, where one is then practicing Effective Collectedness. Finally, these Factors blossom into Effective Release when Effective Insight is realized. That is when the work is complete.

Unified Mindset (Citta-Ekaggata)

When you are in the form jhanas especially, there will be sounds, smells, wind or breeze if meditating outside, and perhaps insects that will make contact with the body. All Five Aggregates and the Four Aspects of Conditioned Existence remain active in jhana. In the planes of perception beyond the fourth, the contact with the physical body becomes less and less pronounced to the point of imperceptibility. One may still perceive contact, but as mind enters deeper and subtler levels of Perception in the higher jhanas, it is almost non-existent. One begins to fine-tune

one's Attention to the contact that arises within the mind, in the form of thoughts, but if those thoughts do not keep one from watching their object, those thoughts will fall apart due to insufficient nutriment, i.e. Attention.

One-pointed focus is not the objective or a component of this practice. In one-pointed focus, one utilizes maximum concentration upon the object to the point that all contact ceases without understanding the causes and conditions prior to and after such ineffective Cessation. This suppresses the mind's ability to relax and observe and respond. Suppression of mind does not release the hindrances but leads to the hindrances arising back with full force when one comes out of this form of meditation and it may manifest through the senses and Perception, creating wrong views, intensifying Craving and deepening Ignorance and Conceit.

It's like forcing a ball underwater. What happens? As soon as you let go, the ball jumps out of the water due to the suppressive pressure.

In Sariputta's experience of each jhana, there are other factors and phenomena he observes all the way up to the dimension of nothingness. Depending upon the jhana, he experiences and perceives the factors tied to a particular jhana, which differentiates the quality of each jhana. What is common in all jhanas up to the dimension of Nothingness is the presence of Mentality and its functions – that is the faculties and processes of Contact, Feeling, Perception, Intention, and Attention rooted in Reality. The awareness of Materiality is present up until the fourth jhana, after which it becomes less perceptible. The other factors common to every jhana that are also present up to Nothingness are Unified Mindset, Application, Observation and Equanimity. Further commonalities also include each of the Seven Factors in varying degrees.

Beyond Nothingness, when he enters the dimension of Neither Perception nor Non-Perception (NPNNP), he does not report seeing anything, in which the factors and phenomena have almost ceased – Perceptions in the form of Formations may arise, but when one sees them, one is not in that dimension of NPNNP anymore. Mind 6Rs automatically and mind rests in the quietness of this dimension once again for quite some time until another small, subtle disturbance might arise at which time mind releases it yet again. In this dimension, there may be Formations and Perceptions that mind may not quite be able to understand at the time of sitting meditation.

Rather, the experience within this dimension is one that you can only understand after emerging from it with Observation and Investigation of what had occurred within it. It is like a state in which one is in lucid deep sleep. If one emerges out of this dimension without attaining Cessation, then one is to reflect on what arose and 6R anything that might arise. This cultivates the retrospective mind that arises post-Cessation.

With Cessation, however, one cannot even report back what occurred in that state at all. One is only able to recollect what occurred prior to and after Cessation. Whatever that experience is that arises after Cessation, it must be reported to the teacher for further discussion.

The key point to take away is that if one were to practice with one-pointed focus, one would not even be able to look back with vivid clarity at the phenomena that may have arisen even in the coarser jhanas where physical contact can still be felt, let alone the dimension of NPNNP. Moreover, one's Attention would no longer be rooted in Reality, but suppressed by the force of concentration. At that point, Attention would no longer even be present.

It is not one-pointed focus that is required nor is one-pointed focus a factor of the more coarsely perceptible jhanas, i.e. the first to fourth jhanas and up to the dimension of Nothingness. Rather what it is in its place is the extension, the flowering, and the effect of an Attention rooted in Reality that has been refined beyond Collectedness. In other words once Attention fuels the factors, it is refined and transformed through each factor until it becomes not one-pointed focus, but rather Unified Mindset. All of these wholesome factors deepen with every jhana attained.

*While Collectedness is where Attention is comfortably on the object without attaching to it with identification and Craving, Unified Mindset is where Attention no longer is scattered or diffused. In other words, when sensory experiences arise, they are felt but Attention does not get scattered by Feeling. Instead, it rests comfortably within the realm of its object. It is unified **around** its object, not with it. This is because Unified Mindset remains open to what arises in the way of phenomena, however such a Mindset does not break apart or become distracted in jhana.*

The practical experience of this is emphasized here again – when any thoughts or any other Feeling seems to be in the background while observing and they do not distract mind from its object, one does not need to 6R as those wisps of Feeling will dissipate with no fuel of Attention nourishing them. Such Attention remains undisturbed. It is Unified Mindset because while the Attention is rooted in the Reality of what arises, it does not react to it and mind continues to stay observing the object, undisturbed. It understands what has arisen is there but one's Attention has not been distracted, only aware of what is arising, while through Collectedness it continues to observe the object of meditation. Of course, when these factors fade away due to a hindrance arising and thus distracting the mind, Effective Application through the 6Rs is to be used.

Watch, Don't Get Involved

A Unified Mindset begins with and is a fruition of a wholesome intention when the Seven Factors and Effective Observation, Effective Application and Effective Collectedness are practiced.

One's meditation begins with an intention to bring up the object. That intention is carried forward by Attention rooted in Reality and Effective Observation. When that Attention is steady, the Seven Factors come into being. When those Factors are brought up, one is in Effective Collectedness. When one is here, one is in jhana and the Unified Mindset has naturally come to be through this process and remains a factor of the jhanas up until the dimension of neither Perception nor non-Perception. In this whole process, mind watches without getting involved. When mind is relaxed, it has the ability to watch through a Unified Mindset, but as soon as it gets involved through focus, hindrances will arise, Craving has arisen, and one is no longer in a jhana.

Just watch the mind as if you are seeing a new show that you've wanted to for the first time. You are allowing everything, the characters, the storyline, the themes, the dialogue, the music, the emotions, to arise but your Attention does not get transfixed to one aspect at the expense of losing out on the other qualities of the show. You're watching with interest but you don't get lost in your own thoughts about it. It is fresh in every moment because you are experiencing something new all the time for the duration of that show.

In the same way, with an attitude that every sitting will be different, you can keep your mind alert but unhindered, interested but not attached, attentive but not one-pointed, and open to new phenomena that arises but unaffected by them through not taking them personal, Craving or pushing them away. Just think, "let's see what comes up today," let go of the expectations, and dive in with the tools of Effective Observation, Effective Application, Effective Collectedness, Attention rooted in Reality, and watch as the Seven Factors arise with a Unified Mindset as you 6R. The Factors or the hindrances may arise in one way in one sitting and in another way in another sitting. Every sitting, every meditation during walking or yoga practice or eating will be different. That's what makes it interesting.