

Day Six Notes for Reflection

Consciousness and Rebirth

Evolving Consciousness

Evolving Consciousness is not permanent. It is not a soul. It is not a Being in so far as Being is conceptualized in most minds. Evolving Consciousness is what is activated through Formations. That Consciousness links with the Mentality Materiality and is understood, i.e. experienced, through the modalities of Mentality Materiality, but once that is experienced, it dissipates, and the cycle of a new Consciousness arising and ceasing repeats based on the choices and views one has built up for a sense of self. Those choices and views either continue to fetter the next set of Formations with Craving, Conceit and Ignorance, or they grind away at them, reducing the burden further and further with the arising of the next Consciousness after the previous one ceased.

When one continues to 6R at the point of the process of Contact, Feeling and Perception, and one understands that there is nothing in any of the links of Dependent Origination, and nothing in any of the Five Aggregates worth holding on to, one completely lets go. At the time of breaking up of the body, no Craving arises that grasps on to the Intentions conditioned by the Formations and thus the Evolving Consciousness is not present since no fettered Intentions carry it forward. In this way Consciousness dissipates and is unestablished, making Rebirth impossible.

Rebirth and Cessation of Rebirth

Within one lifetime, as one has seen, there are multiple rebirths occurring in every microsecond, based on karmic impulses. If the Formations are tainted by the Projections of Craving, Being and Ignorance, they will continue to bring Suffering through a state of new Being in every flow of Dependent Origination.

On a macro level, when the body breaks apart and vitality is no longer present in the body and the heart has stopped pumping blood, there is still activity within the mind. Just as one's heart rate, blood pressure, and breathing become diminished in higher jhanas but the mind is still active, so to at the point of what is conventionally called death, there is an active mind. Although in the latter case the other vitality factors have ceased at the body's termination. Some cellular metabolism will continue to occur as effects of bodily Formations but the signs of life otherwise are not present. Beings who have reported NDEs sometimes say they experienced their lives flash before them, or a light, or otherworldly beings – these experiences are the mental perceptions that were brought on by the Formations in the active mind.

In the active mind of a dead corpse, when there is Craving, Being, and Ignorance still rooted in the Formations, these Formations are grasped with Craving through

Intention. That means whatever mental Feeling may arise in the form of one's life flashing before one's eyes, or whatever one's thoughts were predominantly influenced by certain Formations, are taken to be self or pertaining to a self. This allows for a new Consciousness to arise through an Intention fettered by Craving and hindered by Ignorance.

This Consciousness then spontaneously becomes established into a new Mentality Materiality at the point of conception for a new rebirth to occur. Let us assume for example that it is a human rebirth that is occurring. As the fetus grows and based on the experiences within the womb, new iterations of Consciousness arise and cease, through the Formations that were carried via the Consciousness first established at the point of conception. These iterations arise based on the way the fetus responds to various inputs from outside the womb, the mother's emotional, physical, and hormonal states, as well as the food it receives, creating new Formations to arise and cease within the fetus. Nowhere in this process is there a continuous, singular self, only the illusion of it. Instead, the sense of self arises and ceases with every passing Consciousness and every response of the fetus within the womb.

This entire process, therefore, has been brought about by the causes and conditions most conducive for such a Rebirth to occur.

As the Formations of previous lives and of the new fetus continue to iterate through a new Consciousness in every passing microsecond, they also build up the faculties of the fetus, through which it experiences Contact, Feeling, Perception, Intention and Attention in the womb. The sense of self continues to develop through these iterations during the formative months prior to the Birth of the new Being. After the physical Birth of the new Being, both sets of old Formations from previous lives and the Formations built up in the womb continue to arise and cease, cultivate and take root through the synapses and signals of neurons that then continue to grow in clusters in the first few years of infancy. As the life matures, the Formations are strengthened or pruned away based on choices made – to hold on to Feeling as personal or to let Feeling go with wisdom rooted in Effective Vision, which is using the 6R process or Effective Application with Effective Observation. And thus the whole cycle repeats until it is broken through Effective Insight and Effective Release.

If Formations and the Intentions in a Being prior to mind shutting down in the corpse were rooted in certain Mindsets, then that Being's Formations will activate a Consciousness that will spontaneously arise in a Mentality or a Mentality Materiality that is best suited for those Formations and Intentions to come to fruition. Using a human birth as an example, such a Mentality Materiality would match based on many factors, including but not limited to the genetic makeup contributed by the mother and father of the incoming life form.

In broad terms, if such a Being was ethical, moral, and of an unrealized Effective Vision, the Formations and Intentions of such a Being may activate a Consciousness

that propels them into a Mentality Materiality of better circumstances, i.e. in a higher realm, a better human birth, etc. Likewise, one may extrapolate the sort of Births and planes of Existence a Being would incur based on Formations and Intentions that were predominantly leaning towards unethical, depraved, animalistic, or evil actions and processes.

This is not to say that the Formations and Intentions rooted from ethical actions won't come to fruition in a negative birth or that those Formations and Intentions rooted from unethical actions won't come to fruition in a positive birth.

Such fruition of Kamma is interwoven with components of biological, societal, psychological, and ecological scenarios and circumstances and their interaction with the faculties for Mentality Materiality.

Some fruition of Formations will immediately arise in the next life based on their strength, including the projection of a new Consciousness that gets established into a new Mentality Materiality, and some fruition of Formations arise much later, even lifetimes later, unless one stops the flow of the Projections of Craving, Being and Ignorance altogether. In that case, there is no more grasping onto any Formations and no Intentions would arise that could activate a new Consciousness whatsoever and thus no new Kamma would be produced, to be experienced at a later time. Then, there is the Cessation of Craving, the Cessation of Being, the Cessation of Ignorance, and Cessation of Rebirth. There is Nibbana.

Be in the Jhana, Don't Become the Jhana

In whatever jhana one is practicing, it is important to remain detached.

Identifying with any of the factors of the jhana, the process of going into jhana or the process of coming out of jhana causes Clinging through taking any of that personal and relating it to a self.

As one enters the higher levels of perception especially, it's crucial to see what is arising in terms of whether one is becoming addicted to that level. In other words, is one attaching a sense of self to the jhana or its factors, thereby not only becoming distracted by from one's object, but also feeding Craving? Or, is one seeing through the factors, understanding nothing is worth holding on to? This happens when one understands that if the factors of jhana arose based on causes and conditions then there is no permanent and abiding self in those factors and that those factors would cease when the causes and conditions for them cease as well.

Whenever you recognize that you are beginning to enjoy the Feeling that arise from any of the jhanas, know that you have strayed from your object of meditation.

With Attention rooted in Reality, you notice that your mind's Attention is now on the Equanimity of the Fourth Jhana more than it is on your original object of meditation, or that it has started to observe the spaciousness of the dimension of Infinite Space more than it has on the Compassion that is the object in this particular sphere of existence. With Attention, one then 6Rs to return to one's original object.

As long as one continues to remain open with Attention rooted in Reality, and doesn't utilize one-pointed focus, one will continue to stay in a jhana without becoming distracted. For example, one knows that in Infinite Consciousness there is now the experience of seeing Consciousness arising and passing away through one of the sense doors, but so long as one's Attention and Observation remain around the Feeling of Empathetic Joy, one's mind will not stray from it and get caught up in the experience of Consciousness arising and passing away and thus crave and cling to it and identify with it.

If one develops the notion set in the mind that there is no state higher than this, then it can happen that if the Formations that were created from the attainment of Infinite Consciousness and strongly fettered by Craving and hindered by Ignorance through one taking the effects and factors within that dimension to pertain to a sense of self, at the dissolution of the body, such Formations could propel a new Consciousness to take Rebirth in a Mentality in the higher realm of Infinite Consciousness. Likewise for one who Craves or identifies with the dimensions of Nothingness and Neither Perception nor Non-Perception.

Don't Mistake Exquisite Peace for Boredom

When one experiences Infinite Consciousness, one's mind starts to tire of the constant arising and passing away of the Consciousness. One sees through the impermanence of Consciousness, penetrates that this tiresomeness is indeed unsatisfactoriness and one sees that the arising and passing away do not have any self in them – they occur based on causes and conditions.

Eventually, as one stays in Infinite Consciousness, all the while using the 6R process to continue to stay with the Empathetic Joy, one's Attention deepens further, the arising and cessations start to slow down, fade away and there is a sense of the mind entering a deeper state where there is quietness. One has traversed through the frames of Consciousness and entered into the Perception of Nothingness. It is Nothingness because one has seen there is nothing worth holding to in terms of a self. In other words, the sense of self has started to erode. There is still some minute sense of self in that as one perceives this Nothingness, one is observing it and therefore there is the sense of an "observer" still there.

In this Nothingness, the Empathetic Joy turns into a deep Equanimity. One has no thoughts of the outside world because Contact and Feeling with the physical senses have diminished greatly on their own, without force or suppression. Here, one starts to access the territory of Formations, but not quite yet – in order to stay here with a

sharp, alert mind, one requires an object and that object is the radiating of Equanimity. But very little movement of mind is required. Softer, gentler, more minute and miniscule movements – one nudges the Intention to radiate Equanimity. Like a pebble dropped into a smooth, unmoved lake, one's Intention drops the pebble of Equanimity and lets the waves of Intention move on their own. One just observes. It may happen that the waves dissipate and one then Intends for the Equanimity again.

At a certain point, mind has unraveled itself to such a point that even that slightest effort of Intention becomes unnecessary. At first, the Intention of sending out Metta activated the first jhana. Then, that activation through verbal intention was dropped at the second jhana. In the third jhana, that Intention of Metta is observed and its changes are observed, at which point the Metta moves from the heart to the head. After some intermediate meditation exercises, one learns to radiate Metta in all directions from the head and this softens into Karuna (Compassion). The radiation is attended to with one's observation and Attention rooted in Reality, and is much coarser compared to the radiating of Equanimity. At this point one is in Infinite Space. Naturally, the Compassion in this dimension softens even further into Mudita (Empathetic Joy) – it is the type of joy a parent has for their child when they are in a playful mood, the type of joy a sibling has when they see their fellow siblings excel and succeed at something. It is quiet and mature – not the coarser joy one feels in the first and second jhanas.

Then, once mind quiets down even further, that Empathetic Joy softens to Upekkha (Equanimity). It is likened to when a grandparent watches their grandchild in a playful mood of mischief. Whereas a parent is concerned or restless and wants to do something about it, the wise grandparent understands that the child is just being a child. They've seen it before in their own children and know nothing bad would come of it. It's only fun and the grandchild will be all right. They observe with quiet Equanimity.

Now when the Intention of radiating Equanimity feels coarse as well, then one stops. Mind had unraveled into itself. It is like the reflection of a mirror in another mirror – pure, peaceful, pristine, and unblemished. Reflections upon reflections – these are the Formations one may then become acquainted with through disconnected thoughts, scenes from past lives, or imagery that is foreign to the present life memory. Regardless, as one navigates through these, staying with Tranquil, Bright, Exquisite Mind as the object, these are let go of, released, and one relaxes into that Mind. Here the 6Rs are barely used, and if at all, they are done so automatically, without effort, without Intention. At this point, the mind wants no more objects because they are all too coarse for the mind. And mind is resting upon mind, knowing it as only mind, intent, fully conscious and present, letting go of tension and distractions.

Here is where the clinging needs to be let go of – if one identifies with this Mind, relaxes and Craves for it to go on, one will not go any further.

Likewise, if “boredom” sets in, one lets it go and returns to Tranquil Mind. This boredom is a reaction of the faculties in Mentality Materiality receiving no stimulation. For countless rebirths, Mentality Materiality has been used to receiving stimulation. At this point, mind becomes restless or lethargic out of this boredom. These are Formations being created almost in real-time and need to be 6R’d as and when they arise, along with activating the appropriate Factors of Awakening.

The Seven Factors Revisited

At this point, ill will, doubt and sensual Craving will not arise in this dimension, but restless and sloth and torpor may arise. Now mind is ultra-sensitive to even the tiniest amount of input. Therefore the input of activating the Seven Factors is just as miniscule in order to keep mind balanced. If mind slips into lethargy or what is the hindrance of sloth and torpor, then one very gently Intends the Factors of silent Joy, Investigation and Effective Application – at this point, one’s mind will know what is required through Observation. The only effort, if at all, is the Intention. Similarly, if mind slips into restlessness, one Intends the Factors of Relaxation, Collectedness and Equanimity. One continues on in this Tranquil Mind, until the final Formations are let go of and all stops. Then, there is Cessation.