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STUDY ON CONTEMPLATION OF MENTAL OBJECTS IN THERAVADA BUDDHISM


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ABSTRACT

Everybody wants to be free from the sufferings. To be free from suffering, the first step is to study how to practice. The second step is to do practicing in accordance with the instruction systematically. The most important thing we notice is “without practice, no perfect.

In Buddhism, the *Buddha* clearly addressed giving warranty: *vipassanā* meditation is one way for the purification of beings, for the overcoming of sorrow and distress for the disappearance of pain and sadness, for the gaining of the highest path, for the realization of *Nibbanain the MahasatipaṭṭhanaSutta*. *Vipassana* (insight) meditation is linked to the “Four Foundations of Mindfulness Meditation. The mindfulness

meditation provides seven benefits in this very life as well as future existence to those who is not only Buddhist but every religious person practices it. Without practicing mindfulness meditation nobody can attain the status of freedom from suffering. Therefore, everybody should study the way of four foundations of mindfulness meditation and practice.

KEYWORDS : hindrance, aggregate, senses, enlightenment, meditation and Nibbāna.

INTRODUCTION

The practice of mindfulness proceeds to the contemplation on mental objects (*Dhammānupassana*) by combining mentality and materiality. It is the last kind of mindfulness meditation object taught by the Buddha in the *SatipaṭṭhanaSutta*. It concerns with five set of mental qualities; the five hindrances, the five aggregates of clinging, the six internal and the six external sense-bases, the seven factors of enlightenment, and the four noble truths. The Buddha said in the following Sutta,

'Idhabhikkavebhikkhudhammesudhammanupassiviharatipañcasuupadanakkhandhesu'.

Here, the term “Dhamma” refers to the fivefold contemplation of mental objects, things in spiritual and material. The commentary on the *SatipaṭṭhanaSutta*, it says that the laying hold of pure corporeality or materiality was taught by the Buddha in the instruction of contemplation on the body, and in the instruction of contemplation on feeling and consciousness, the laying hold of the purely spirituality. On the other hand, an agent with contemplation on the body refers to the aggregate of materiality, with the contemplation on feeling refers to the aggregate of feeling, with the contemplation on mind refers to the aggregate of consciousness, and the contemplation on the Dhamma, refers to the aggregates of perception and formations.

The Five Hindrances

We will now study the first subsection of the Contemplation on the Dhammas that is, “five hindrances.” Obstacles that you will encounter on whatever you are doing are defined as hindrances. Hindrances are negative factors to meditation. They hinder or obstruct the gaining of concentration. With regards to the hindrances, the Buddha said,

Herein, *Bhikkhus*, a *Bhikkhu* dwells contemplation the *Dhammain the dhammas* in the five hindrances.

To understand above statement, firstly, we need to be familiar with five hindrances as follows;

1. Sense-desire - *Kamacchanda*.
2. Ill-will - *Vyapada*.
3. Sloth and torpor – *Thina-Middha*.
4. Restlessness and remorse – *Uddhacca-Kukkucca*.
5. Doubt – *Vicikiccha*

The Five Aggregates of Clinging

The second sub-section on the Contemplation on the *Dhammas* is the “five aggregates of clinging.”

Different from of Teaching

When the *Buddha* described the world, the animate as well as the inanimate one, he described it sometimes in term of the “five aggregates,” sometimes in terms of the “twelve sense-bases,” sometimes in terms of the “twenty-two faculties,” and sometimes in term of the four noble truths. He did so according to needs and degree of understanding of His listeners.

Some had the disposition of preferring the five aggregates, while other preferred the twelve sense-bases. When the *Buddha* described the world in terms of the five aggregates, He spoke about the five aggregates of clinging. Therefore, you have to understand two words “aggregates”- *khandha* and “clinging”-*upadana*.

“Clinging” here means intense craving, intense desire. There are two levels of desire. The milder form of desire is called attachment and craving.” The more intense level is called “clinging or grasping.” Clinging or grasping is the translation of the *Paliword* “*upadana*,” which means “taking hold firmly.” It has to be understood as a figure of speech because no physical grasping is meant.

What is meant is mental grasping, mentally clinging to different objects. You see a certain object and it appears to you to be desirable. It is beautiful. You like it, and you become attached to it. You want

to have it. Then you will mentally cling to this object because you are attached to it, because you crave it, because you desire it.

Sometimes, you may have wrong views about things. The *Buddha* said, “All things are impermanent and subject to suffering.” Sometimes, you see things as being permanent; think they are good enough to be owned, and so on. So, through wrong views, you cling to different things and you grasp the different things with which you come into contact. Therefore, when you use the terminology of the *Buddha’s* Teachings, clinging and grasping are said to be two mental factors.

The word, aggregate means a “group or heap,” there are five aggregates:

- the aggregates of matter or corporeality- *Rupakkhandha*;
- the aggregates of feeling – *Vedanakkhandha*;
- the aggregates of perception -*Saññakkhandha*;
- the aggregates of mental formations – *Saṭṭkhara-kkhandha*;
- the aggregates of consciousness – *Viññāṭṭakkhandha*.

The whole world is composed of these five aggregates. This includes all physical and mental phenomena. Aggregate further means “something that is divided into past, present, and future, internal and external, gross and subtle”; and so on. When a thing can be seen as being in the past, present, or future, internal or external, etc., it is seen as an aggregate.

The Six Internal and the Six External Sense Bases

This sub-section is called sense-base, in *Pali*, *Āyatana*, because they are the abode of other things, the place where other things are. Here, they are the place of consciousness and of some mental factors. There are six internal and six external sense-bases.

The six internal sense-bases are the eyes, the ears, the nose, the tongue, the body, and the mind. They are called “internal” because they are most beneficial to beings. They are the innermost bases of the body.

The six external sense-bases are visible objects, sounds, smells, tastes, tangible objects, and the *dhammas*. *Dhammas* here means the “mental factors,” subtle forms of matter, and *Nibbana*. As noted before, the word *Dhammas* has different meanings at different places and in different contexts. The six internal sense-bases correspond to the six external sense-bases or the six external sense-sense-bases correspond to the six internal sense-bases.

The seven factors of enlightenment (*Bojjhaṅga*)

Seven awakening factors form a basic result of meditation practice before one comes to realize the four noble truth, and it proceeds in a way similar to the con-tem-pla-tion on the hindrances: first awareness turns to the presence or absence of the respec-tive men-tal quality, followed by investigating the condi-tions for its presence or absence. Why they are termed “awakening factors”, (*Bojjhaṭṭga*) just as a river inclines and flows towards the ocean, awakening factors (*Bojjhaṭṭga*) incline towards the liberation.

Here, the *Pali* word *Sambojjhaṭṭgais* a combination of two words *Sambodhi* and *aṭṭga*. *Sambodhi* normally means “enlightenment”, the realization of truth, but, in this Sutta, it also means the thorough knowledge of *Dhammas*, the through knowledge of the objects of meditation, which are mind and matter, or mentality and materiality (*Nama* and *rupa*). The *Pali* word *Aṭṭga* means “limb” or

component or part, which is translated as “factor”. So, the factors of enlightenment mean limb or components or parts or member of the thorough knowledge of Dhammas or mind and matter. Sambodhi also means one who knows from the stage of discerning the rising and passing away of phenomena. In this case, the word *Aṭṭhaka* means cause. So, *Sambojjhaṭṭha* means, “cause of the person who know” (*Bujjanakassapuggalassa aṭṭhakaṃ gati vabojjaṭṭhaṃ, pasaddho sundharova bojjhaṭṭhaṃ gotis amojjaṭṭhaṃ*).

There are seven kinds of *Bojjhaṭṭha* what the Buddha taught in the *Bojjhaṭṭha Sutta* of *Saṅgītiyā Nikāya*; the enlightenment factor of mindfulness (*Sati-sambojjhaṭṭha*), the enlightenment factor of the investigation of Dhammas (*Dhammavicaya-sambojjhaṭṭha*), the enlightenment factor of energy (*Viriya-sambojjhaṭṭha*), the enlightenment factor of joy (*Pīti-sambojjhaṭṭha*), the enlightenment factor of tranquility (*Passaddhi-sambojjhaṭṭha*), the enlightenment factor of concentration (*Samādhisambojjhaṭṭha*), and the enlightenment factor of equanimity (*Upekkhasambojjhaṭṭha*).

The Four Noble Truths

1. The Noble truth of Suffering.
2. The Noble Truth of the Origin of Suffering.
3. The Noble Truth of the Cessation of suffering, and
4. The Noble truth of the Path that leads to the cessation of Suffering.

The Four Noble Truths are based on human suffering. They are also the basis of all Buddhist efforts to explain the nature of existence, the structure of the psycho-cosmic reality of life, the suffering that pervades these structures and the ultimate good of absolute freedom. The alleviation of human suffering is similar to the physician to his patient. He first diagnoses the malady, then seeks the cause of the malady, next finds out whether a suitable way of treatment is possible. Finally he prescribes the medicine. Likewise, the four Noble truths correspond to the four steps of this diagnostic-curative procedure. The first noble truth is to be comprehended, the second is to be abandoned, the third is to be realized, and the fourth is to be developed. The full realization of the third noble truth paves the way for the direct penetration of Nibbana, the transcendent freedom that stands as the final goal of all the Buddhist teachings.

CONCLUSION

We have come to the end of the last kind of mindfulness meditation practice, ‘Contemplations on the mental objects’ (*Dhammanu passana*) in five sets of mental qualities, which are of particular importance for the development of insight. They are 1-the five hindrances, 2-the five aggregates, 3-the six senses, with their respective objects and the mental fetters, which arise in consequence, 4-the seven factors of enlightenment, and 5-the four noble truths.

Among these five groups, the first and the fourth of these categories belong to the contemplation of mental states, but they are nevertheless included in this last section of the discourse because the practice goes beyond pure mindful observation and involves deliberate mental activity to eliminate those factors which hinder insight and to promote those which are favorable to its development.

The second and fifth groups belong entirely to the category of mental objects proper, representing different aspects of the Buddhist analysis of reality, always with the specific purpose of developing and perfecting insight. The third group has a dual aspect: on the one hand, it shares the

analytical approach in that it deals with the mechanism of sense perception through which we receive and interpret the data of what we call 'reality': on the other hand, it involves both observing and dealing with mental states, in that it also refers to the consequences of perception in the human psyche which flow from the operation of the perceptual mechanisms.

In brief, what absolutely essential, as in all *Satipaṭṭhana* practice, is to proceed without attachment, dispassionately, without either desiring or rejecting, remaining always aware of the fact that what is being inspected are configurations of changing phenomena, always arising and passing away.

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