

MN 152 The Development of the Faculties - Indriyabhāvanā Sutta
DSMC 07-Oct-06

MN:

1. THUS HAVE I HEARD On one occasion the Blessed One was living at Kajangalā in a grove of muklhelu trees.

BV: I wonder what kind of tree that is.

MN:

2. Then the brahmin student Uttara, a pupil of the brahmin Pārāsariya, went to the Blessed One and exchanged greetings with him. When this courteous and amiable talk was finished, he sat down at one side. The Blessed One then asked him: "Uttara, does the brahmin Pārāsariya teach his disciples the development of the faculties?"

"He does, Master Gotama."

"But, Uttara, how does he teach his disciples the development of the faculties?"

"Here, Master Gotama, one does not see forms with the eye, one does not hear sounds with the ear. That is how the brahmin Pārāsariya teaches his disciples the development of the faculties."

"If that is so, Uttara, then a blind man and a deaf man will have developed faculties, according to what the brahmin Pārāsariya says. For a blind man does not see forms with the eye, and a deaf man does not hear sounds with the ear."

When this was said, the brahmin student Uttara, Pārāsariya's pupil, sat silent, dismayed, with shoulders drooping and head down, glum, and without response.

3. Then, knowing this, the Blessed One addressed the venerable Ānanda: "Ānanda, the brahmin Pārāsariya teaches his disciples the

development of the faculties in one way, but in the Noble One's Discipline the supreme development of the faculties is otherwise."

"Now is the time, Blessed One, now is the time, Sublime One, for the Blessed One to teach the supreme development of the faculties in the Noble One's Discipline. Having heard it from the Blessed One, the monks will remember it."

"Then listen, Ananda, and attend closely to what I shall say."

"Yes, venerable sir," he replied. The Blessed One said this:

4. "Now, Ananda, how is there the supreme development of the faculties in the Noble One's Discipline? Here, Ananda, when a monk sees a form with the eye, there arises in him what is agreeable, there arises what is disagreeable, there arises what is both agreeable and disagreeable.¹³⁵³

BV: I got to look at the footnote on that, thirteen, fifty-three. I

In the commentary by Buddhaghosa he says that:

FN 1353: MA explains that when a desirable form comes into range of the eye, an agreeable state (*manapa*) arises; when an undesirable form appears, a disagreeable state (*amanāpa*) arises; and when an indifferent form appears, a state that is both agreeable and disagreeable arises.

BV: Now, indifference, yeah, that's what I said. How do you have an agreeable and a disagreeable arise at the same time? What kind of a form is that, that you would see?

FN 1353: It should be noted that though these three terms are ordinarily used to qualify the sense objects, here they also seem to signify subtle states of liking, aversion, and dull indifference {...}

BV: Now the Thika, which was the sub commentary. It says:

FN 1353: MT identifies "the agreeable" with wholesome and unwholesome states of mind associated with joy, "the disagreeable" with unwholesome states of mind associated with grief (displeasure), and "the agreeable and disagreeable" with states of mind associated with equanimous feeling.

S: ~

BV: That's right.

S: ~

BV: That's right. Isn't that interesting.

So, The agreeable can be both, either wholesome or unwholesome, depending on the clinging, and all of that stuff, how much you identify with it. The disagreeable is never wholesome. It's always an unwholesome. "Boy, it's really beautiful. I love that. I want it."

S: That's an unwholesome joy.

BV: That's an unwholesome kind of joy.

Ok, so that was, kind of interesting.

MN:

He understands thus:

'There has arisen in me what is agreeable, there has arisen what is disagreeable, there has arisen what is both agreeable and disagreeable.

BV: I don't really much like this agreeable and disagreeable, put together, as the other translation of neither pleasant nor painful, seems to be, closer to it.

MN:

But that is conditioned, gross, dependently arisen; this is peaceful,

this is sublime, that is, equanimity.' The agreeable that arose, the disagreeable that arose, and the both agreeable and disagreeable that arose cease in him and equanimity is established. Just as a man with good sight, having opened his eyes might shut them or having shut his eyes might open them, so too concerning anything at all, the agreeable that arose, the disagreeable that arose, and the both agreeable and disagreeable that arose cease just as quickly, just as rapidly, just as easily, and equanimity is established. This is called in the Noble One's Discipline the supreme development of the faculties regarding forms cognizable by the eye.

BV: So, there is still going to be agreeable and disagreeable things that arise, but the trick is, to see them for what they are. I mean you go out, walk in the forest, and you see a dead animal that's rotting; it's not an agreeable sight, but it's just a sight. And as you, allow it to be, your mind gets into the balance, and then you see it for what it is. This is a lesson in impermanence, and suffering, and all of the other things. So you don't get so caught up in, your, clinging and habitual tendency, because you've developed equanimity. So when the eye hits the color and form, and the contact arises, and then the feeling arises, agreeable, disagreeable, neither, nor, then, as you let that be right then, you're seeing it for what it actually is, instead of, getting carried away, with all kinds of, thoughts and opinions, and ideas, and concepts and: "Oh, this is good. This is bad. This is terrible. This is great." You're not getting caught up in that anymore. You're just seeing it for what it is, and your mind reaches a state of balance, so there's no need for a reaction. The response, is, balance. Got it?

Ok-

MN:

5. "Again, Ananda, when a monk hears a sound with the ear, there arises in him what is agreeable, there arises what is disagreeable, there arises what is both agreeable and disagreeable.

BV: **I** really don't like that much.

MN:

He understands thus: ... and equanimity is established.

BV: So it doesn't matter what sound it is, whether it's a beautiful sound, or Michael chopping up, weeds. It's only a sound. It's really not good or bad, it's just a sound. And as you allow the sound to be, you develop the equanimity, and then it doesn't really bother you. But there's a subtle thing that happens with sound, because it is a vibration, and your body feels it, so there's a very, very subtle: "I don't like" that happens with that, and that's how that the sound, kind of gets... You have to notice your body's reaction to sound, and there are slight tensions that arise, and you feel that it gets into your bones, and I notice that a lot, when I was in Burma, and they decided they were going to drill a well right outside the meditation hall. They come seven thirty in the morning 'til six o'clock at night they had a motor running, and it was loud. And you know, it put this thing to shame. It was really loud. And it wasn't that I had aversion to the sound anymore; I really didn't. But always, when they turn that motor off, there was a feeling of relief in my body. Now that was the subtle, dislike of the sound that I didn't recognize at that time. Your body... The muscles would tighten up a little bit because of the vibration of the sound. And that's where it takes the relaxing and being more aware of how you're body's being affected by the vibrations.

Ok-

MN:

Just as a strong man might easily snap his fingers, so too concerning anything at all, the agreeable that arose, the disagreeable that arose, and the both agreeable and disagreeable that arose cease just as quickly, just as rapidly, just as easily, and equanimity is established. This is called in the Noble One's Discipline the supreme development of the faculties regarding sounds cognizable by the ear.

6. "Again, Ananda, when a monk smells an odor with the nose, there arises in him what is agreeable, there arises what is disagreeable, there arises what is both agreeable and disagreeable. He understands thus:...and equanimity is established. Just as raindrops

on a slightly sloping lotus leaf roll off and do not remain there, so too concerning anything at all, the agreeable that arose, the disagreeable that arose, and the both agreeable and disagreeable that arose cease just as quickly, just as rapidly, just as easily, and equanimity is established. This is called in the Noble One's Discipline the supreme development of the faculties regarding odors cognizable by the nose.

7. "Again, Ananda, when a monk tastes a flavor with the tongue, there arises in him what is agreeable, there arises what is disagreeable,

BV: Bitter gourd. (Laughs) Ahhhh.

MN:

there arises what is both agreeable and disagreeable. He understands thus:.. and equanimity is established. Just as a strong man might easily spit out a ball of spittle collected on the tip of his tongue, so too concerning anything at all, the agreeable that arose, the disagreeable that arose, and the both agreeable and disagreeable that arose cease just as quickly, just as rapidly, just as easily, and equanimity is established. This is called in the Noble One's Discipline the supreme development of the faculties regarding flavours cognizable by the tongue.

8. "Again, Ananda, when a monk touches a tangible with the body, there arises in him what is agreeable, there arises what is disagreeable, there arises what is both agreeable and disagreeable. He understands thus:... and equanimity is established. Just as a strong man might extend his flexed arm or flex his extended arm, so too concerning anything at all,

BV: That's a major statement there, concerning ANYTHING at all.

MN:

the agreeable that arose, the disagreeable that arose, and the both agreeable and disagreeable that arose cease just as quickly, just as rapidly, just as easily, and equanimity is established. This is called in the Noble One's Discipline the supreme development of the faculties regarding tangibles cognizable by the body.

BV: Now let's talk about stubbing your toe. What happens when you stub your toe? When your mindfulness is very good, you will notice that there is a painful feeling, and your mind will say: "That's pain." And then your mind you'll... You'll watch that, tightness happen and you can start getting into all of the thoughts about why do don't like that, but, in order for that to go away just as rapidly, you have to let go of the attachment to it, and the attachment is always: "I am that." The attachment is always, craving, and, there is the clinging that goes along with the concepts, and the ideas, and opinions, and imaginations and the story, and... But, when your awareness is fast enough, you see the pain; you see the dislike of the pain; you see yourself starting to tighten around it, and you can let it go right then and relax, and then, instead of, the thoughts of dissatisfaction because this occurred, what happens is you start sending your metta into that and relaxing into that, and then go about your business, and in a minute or two, you kind of forget about it, and it does go away just as quickly, just as rapidly, as it arose, when you're able to do that. It might stay a little while in between, but it will go away just as rapidly.

MN:

9. "Again, Ananda, when a monk cognizes a mind-object with the mind, there arises in him what is agreeable, there arises what is disagreeable, there arises what is both agreeable and disagreeable. He understands thus:...and equanimity is established. Just as if a man were to let two or three drops of water fall onto an iron plate heated for a whole day, the falling of the drops might be slow but they would quickly vaporize and vanish,' so too concerning anything at all, the agreeable that arose, the disagreeable that arose, and the both agreeable and disagreeable that arose cease just as quickly, just as rapidly, just as easily, and equanimity is established.

BV: So when you have... Once, this one guy, he called up, and he's a... shaves his head, and he called up the monastery, and he starts sort of talking about: "Yeah, how's it going today?" He said: "I'm having a bad hair day." (Laughs) He doesn't have any hair at all. And, I said: "Well, what's the problem here?" He said: "Well, I seem to be ah, walking around with a lot of anger and giving it away." And

I said: "Why?" He said: "There's a lot of painful feeling that's arising from past actions, from past thoughts, from past stuff, and it's coming up right now, and it's affecting me and I am in kind of a rough way. What can I do about it?"

I don't really think that, you get rid of, anger, by indulging in the anger. You don't get rid of lust, by indulging in lust. What you need to do is, if there's lust, then you can let it go, and relax, and that's when thinking of, the repulsiveness of the sexual act. That's when thinking of the repulsiveness of the body, really does come in handy. When you start thinking that everybody, is filled, with blood, and pus, and snot, and spittle, and all kinds of disgusting stuff, that starts to put your mind in balance, so that you can let that be and relax. When dissatisfaction comes up, and there's a want to, go out with it, that's when you have to have your sense of humor. And that's what I told him, and said: "Can you laugh right now?"—"No, I can't laugh. This is really serious, and I don't like it." So I did some things to make him laugh. As soon as he laughed, that put everything into perspective, and with that perspective, came equanimity. So, indulging in...and I know this really goes against the psychologists these days. Indulging in... on a pillow, and go back and remember why you have this problem, and indulge in that, and then you'll be able to let it go. I don't go along with that.

And that was one of the first major lessons that U Silananda gave me. You have to be able to see the unwholesome for what it is. The unwholesome is, when you start to take those feelings and thoughts personally and, control. Try to control. But feelings are one thing, and thoughts are something else, and you can't do it. It just doesn't work. So what we need to be able to do, is, to, change the thoughts, so they're not so heavy. As you start developing your sense of humor, as you start to laugh at how crazy your mind is for getting caught up in this stuff, as you do that over and over, you start to improve with your, awareness, and, then the things that, that are building up the stress, become dissipated very quickly, because it's not you. It's not yours. And you don't have to express it in any way outside just laugh at how crazy your mind is for thinking that it's yours.

So, the more we can really get in to this, seeing how, these things arise... And this is what the meditation... This is what I'm showing you with the meditation when you... the feeling and the craving, how closely they are together, and when you can recognize the feeling and relax, like you were talking about doing today, then the rest of this stuff doesn't come up, and your mind stays peaceful and calm. In other words, you're developing that equanimity. The trick is to be able to do it, with your daily activity, as much as you possibly can. So instead of, holding this in, and then exploding out, it's noticing, developing your sense of humor, and, getting into equanimity, so that leads to a, more peaceful kind of life.

Ahhhhh-

MN:

This is called in the Noble One's Discipline the supreme development of the faculties regarding ideas cognizable by the mind.

"That is how there is the supreme development of the faculties in the Noble One's Discipline.

10. "And how, Ānanda, is one a disciple in higher training, one who has entered upon the way? Here, Ānanda, when a monk sees a form with the eye... hears a sound with the ear...smells an odor with the nose...tastes a flavor with the tongue...touches a tangible with the body...cognizes a mind-object with the mind, there arises in him what is agreeable, there arises what is disagreeable, there arises what is both agreeable and disagreeable; he is ashamed, humiliated and disgusted by the agreeable that arose, by the disagreeable that arose, and by the both agreeable and disagreeable that arose. That is how one is a disciple in higher training, one who has entered upon the way.

11-16. "And how, Ānanda, is one a noble one with developed faculties? Here, Ānanda, when a monk sees a form with the eye...hears a sound with the ear...smells an odor with the nose...tastes a flavor with the tongue...touches a tangible with the body...cognizes a mind-object with the mind, there arises in him

what is agreeable, there arises what is disagreeable, there arises what is both agreeable and disagreeable. If he should wish: 'May I abide perceiving the unrepulsive in the repulsive,' he abides perceiving the unrepulsive in the repulsive.

BV: So you see something that's really repulsive, you have that equanimity.

MN:

If he should wish: 'May I abide perceiving the repulsive in the unrepulsive,' he abides perceiving the repulsive in the unrepulsive. If he should wish: 'May I abide perceiving the unrepulsive in the repulsive and the unrepulsive,' he abides perceiving the unrepulsive in that. If he should wish: 'May I abide perceiving the repulsive in the unrepulsive and the repulsive,' he abides perceiving the repulsive in that. If he should wish: 'May I, avoiding both the repulsive and unrepulsive, abide in equanimity, mindful and fully aware,' he abides in equanimity towards that, mindful and fully aware. That is how one is a noble one with developed faculties.

BV: In other words, was the training part is: in the agreeable, see the repulsive; and the disagreeable, you can see the repulsive in that too, but, you don't attach to it. You don't identify with it. You just see it as, this is how Dependent Origination works, there's the contact, there's the feeling, now we relax and let it go, then you don't have to get into the rest of that stuff. Then your mind has a sense of balance. This is why it's so important to recognize feeling when it arises.

MN:

17. "So, Ānanda, the supreme development of the faculties in the Noble One's Discipline has been taught by me, the disciple in higher training who has entered upon the way has been taught by me, and the noble one with developed faculties has been taught by me.

18. "What should be done for his disciples out of compassion by a Teacher who seeks their welfare and has compassion for them, that I have done for you, Ānanda. There are these roots of trees, these

empty huts. Meditate, Ānanda, do not delay, or else you will regret it later. This is our instruction to you."

That is what the Blessed One said. The venerable Ānanda was satisfied and delighted in the Blessed One's words.

BV: Interesting sutta, it really is, because it gets right down to the nitty-gritty, of what are you supposed to do when, the eye faculty arises. You're supposed to be blind, that's what one of the teachers said. Well, the truth is, you're not blind, so you are going to see. And when a sound happens, as long as your ears are in good working order, you're going to hear. You can't ignore it, but you have to see it for what it is, and how, it makes, the feeling, arise, whether it's a pleasant, unpleasant, or, neutral feeling. Most of the time, it's neutral feeling. But the emotional time, is when there is, the pleasant, or, the painful. That's when our mind really grabs onto it. When there's neither painful nor pleasant, or agreeable and disagreeable, our mind tends to dull out, and not pay attention. So, the equanimity, is not indifference.

The equanimity is seeing everything in a state of balance, and seeing it clearly, but not re-acting. You see a pleasant sight, your mind grabs onto that with: "Oh, that's good. I like that." And then you start thinking about other things and you're completely lost. What we were describing... you were talking about in the forest, of being able to see the beauty of the forest, but not being attached to it at all, so you're seeing it for the way it really is. You're starting to see colorings the way they really are, and it's incredibly beautiful, because there's no, underlying, tightness, or subtle thought. So you become more alive.

A lot of people are really afraid of, the nothingness, idea. They're afraid that: "Well, that means that there's a void, and there's nothing in the void, so what's the... I don't want to do that." But actually, it doesn't have anything to do with, the kind of void they're talking about. The kind of void the Buddha was talking about, was the void of, identification with the thoughts and feelings as they arose, the craving and the clinging and the habitual tendency whenever it came

up. So it's real interesting, the, how the faculties, are the kick off point, for, our old habitual tendencies to grab on. And the more we can notice that habitual tendencies and let go of our old way of acting when this occurs, and start placing equanimity into there, then the emotional roller coasters start becoming less and less and less, and then before long it's just a little wobble, like that.

That's what the meditation will teach, when, people are ready for it. But it does take some time to be able to, to see how you cause your own pain. It takes some time to be able to recognize that. You heard me tell the story many times about the lady that came to Malaysia that came to me that was so angry at her husband, and how her awareness became faster and faster, over time. So, she was developing equanimity over time; it doesn't happen right away.

S: ~

BV: Over five years.

S: Why did it take her so long?

BV: Because she was so attached to the way she was. She really had a lot of concepts and ideas of the way things were supposed to be in a marriage, and they didn't meet those, expectations, and it made her, incredibly frustrated. After a while, she started seeing that, and it was probably the first two years, where she really started to, catch it much faster, and then she started doing the meditation, but she could only meditate about twenty minutes a day; she had three kids, and she devoted her life completely to their happiness and well being, which means she was doing everything for them, and she had no time for herself, because even at night, they would come home. She would work with them with their school work and make sure they all understand how to do everything. So she was doing a great job, in the situation which she was in, but she didn't have a whole lot of time to see subtler parts of her mind.

But eventually, even though she was only sitting for about twenty minutes a day, she got into jhāna, and that helped her

immeasurably, with seeing her awareness. So, her mindfulness training was the practical every day kind of mindfulness training. And she had frustration, I mean she had a teenage daughter, and if ever there was going to be frustration arising, that's the time. (Laughs) And she had to go through all of that, and she started to see that the same frustration that arose with her husband, was arising with her daughter, and her reactions were the same, and she started seeing now's it's time to start letting that go.

She really put a lot of effort, into watching her habitual tendencies, as I was, showing her how to watch her habitual tendencies, and so, you acted that way, you re-acted that way, because that's the way you always act when, she got obstinate, or her husband got obstinate. So, look at how much pain you caused yourself, by that. Look at how, she would say things that were very hurtful, not only to other people around her, but to herself, and she started reflecting on the things that she said, she was aghast, that she would use that kind of language and say those kind of things, and before long, she started noting that and she would bite her lip, and gain equanimity, by, developing her sense of humor.

Now the Chinese are not into their sense of humor very much. They're incredibly funny at times, but when they have an emotion come up there, they just grab onto it, and they really, they wrestle with it, and they really, they can be unhappy for a lot. She was unhappy for two weeks at a pop they said, at the start, and, my hardest task, with her, was to get her, to stop beating herself up, and I finally got her convinced that it was ok, to laugh at how crazy your mind becomes, but it took a long time, because the attachment was so strong, and that's just, ok, sometimes it's going to take longer than others, you know, that's just the way that it is. But as, she started to get it, as she started to chuckle just a little bit, and saw the balance that happened with mind, then she started really getting the idea of, of course I was teaching her metta, that she needed to practice metta wherever she went, whenever she went, and that helped her a lot, to see, when, when her mind was in equanimity, and when it wasn't.

So, when you hear me give a talk about doing the daily activities, it's not a: "Yeah, yeah, yeah", this stuff really works, and it really works. So, the more we can practice that, the easier, the meditation becomes. I mean that's what David Johnson is finding out right now, because he's practicing his daily activities, he's learning how to develop the equanimity when somebody's yelling at him at work, or yelling at somebody else. He's developing that ability, to have that balance of mind, and this is just a wonderful news. He's got it. He understands it.

So the old habitual tendencies are, the ones that we still identify with, the ones that we still say: "This is me, and I don't like this, and I'm going to make it something other than it is or I'm going to give my anger away to somebody else." Well, that's good for starting wars, but it's not good for peaceful living.

As you keep watching how you cause yourself, pain by indulging in the anger... I mean, just feel your body after anger is there, I mean you feel, horrible, and there's so much of energy lost, and actually your mind starts to dull out after a while, after there's an angry thing that happened, and then you kind of forget it or try to push it away, and then you try to go back to doing something, you're not there. Your mind is dulled out because it took so much energy.

So the Buddha's basically saying in this particular sutta: "Don't do that." It'll go away as quickly as it arose, as long as you don't attach to it, and it doesn't matter which one of the sense doors, even though I can remember somebody in this room that got the idea that they wanted some cheese cake one time, and I could see their tongue just pulling them. Oh, drove two or three miles to get that piece of cheese cake. (Laughs)

M: It was good.

BV: And the whole thing with doing the practice is, as you do that over and over, you naturally are going to get better and better at recognizing that. Practice makes perfect, eventually. So, the thing is, to keep it in mind, I mean that's what mindfulness is all about,

keeping that, that observation in mind so it doesn't, grab on and, bring on another trip, because you know what that road's like.

Ok, I like this sutta. I think it's very good.

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