

Morning Meditation: Vipassanā 2. – Developing Insight

Bhante Bodhidhamma · Tips of the Day · 2 min read

So now having developed ‘somewhat’ three of the Seven Factors of Awakening, namely calmness especially of the body; steadiness of attention, sometimes called concentration which I think makes people tighten up, so I prefer this other phrase or steady focus; and equanimity, openness, a passive receptive attitude. Awareness, the controlling Factor, is presumed! Now as it were we raise a question mark in the mind which arises out of a desire to know, to understand. This is wonder, the emotion of the philosopher within us, a curiosity. This curiosity is not looking for something, but looking at something with the attitude of, ‘Am I seeing, feeling, experiencing this as it really is’. This juices up the joy of interest. And it raises effort, another Factor. Effort is already there, of course, supporting the quality of awareness and steadiness of attention, but checked by calmness. When we introduce curiosity, however, one can often feel the energy rising. Should at this point any idea of attaining something, achieving something sneak into the process, it will corrupt. We will find ourselves getting tight; feeling bored since our desire is not being fulfilled; feeling exhausted since the wrong energy does not replenish but keeps drawing on the reserve. So we need to have the Right Attitude, second on the Noble Path. That attitude is to have faith in the ‘Buddha within’, this very intuitive intelligence (panya) which is but the active side of awareness (sati). All we have to do is to watch, feel, experience whatever arises and passes away that draws our attention within the field of awareness. This Right Attitude also includes the intention to investigate the Three Characteristics of Existence. The first, impermanence, is best seen in the breath. Each inbreath, each outbreath arises only to pass away. Seeing impermanence is to undermine our attachment to what we thought was permanent or continuous. Secondly, we explore the role of a desire based on the understanding that this transient world can deliver true happiness. This desire expresses itself in meditation in indulging what it finds pleasant such as when we plan, daydream of love fulfilled and so on. And it also expresses itself in resisting any experience it finds unpleasant such as anxiety and guilt. Here lies the psychological reason for our suffering and feelings of unsatisfactoriness. And thirdly, not-self. This is not a metaphysical proposition. ‘There is no self!’ But a teaching tool. As we experience whatever draws our attention it becomes ‘an object’. The Knowing knows ‘it’. There’s a feeling of distance from the object. Instead of – I’m in pain, we note ‘pain’ - there. There, not here! This separation of the knowing from the known is the beginning of understanding that everything we experience is ‘not me, not mine’. We can prime this curiosity by purposefully seeing one of these characteristics. The Buddha suggests we see the impermanence of the breath. Then we can just watch, just feel, just experience whatever draws our attention. That’s enough! It really is as simple as that. We don’t believe it. We always think we have to do something. Just sit back and watch the show with the curiosity of a child. (See meditation mp3 on

website and related talks and essays for further clarification. Should you have questions about your practice do email me.)

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