

Foundation Series on Buddhist Tranquil Wisdom Insight Meditation (TWIM)
As taught by
Sister Khema and overseen by Most Venerable “Bhante” Vimalaramsi Maha Thera
the Gift of Dhamma is Priceless!

July 14, 2010
 Annapolis, MO

Title: ‘2010-FS-09-10-11 = “Five Aggregates, Six sense doors, Mind- Body-Contact-Feeling”

including how contact happens and how feeling arises.

Dhamma greetings everyone.

Q: What did you say the next part was going to be?

A: I said that I would answer a little more deeply what the Being is made up of and HOW the 5 aggregates interplay so existence can be experienced in this life. We will walk through some of the links of cognition as they happen.

Q: What are you thinking?

A: I was just thinking about when I learned how to sail at camp a number of years ago.

Q: What about it?

A: Well, we really had some good counselors there who wanted us to learn this new skill.

They took the time to have us learn everything we would need in that sailboat by ourselves on a large body of water.

For instance, they taught us about knots. We had to make a small knot board with all the knots on it so we could pass a test.

We had to be able to know the parts of the boat so if something happened, we would understand what to do to repair it or plan a counter action.

Everything had to be learned including the outer hull of the boat, the keel, the rudder, the tiller, the mast, the halyard, the sail, how to trim the sail; all of it. They would take the boat apart and we would have to refit it.

It was only then that they began teaching us how to read the wind, how to set a course, how to tack, to come about, how to pick up the wind, trim our sail and win a race!

All that time they were drilling us, we could think of only one thing.

Q: What?

A: How to get into the boat and GO!

Q: Ah, yes. There is an eagerness to get to the destination; to reach the goal.

A: Right. We didn't want to perfect the skill. We just wanted to own our own boat, jump in and brag about it!

I am thinking that this is a problem for some people who want to do the meditation today too. They want to get there too fast without doing the work. They are in a hurry to get to nibbana without understanding.

One time I met a man who experienced nibbana, but, he didn't know what happened! He had no understanding and therefore he lost that attainment. It seems that this teaching is useless if you just try to do the practice without full understanding. You can spin your wheels for many years and not progress down the path as described by the Buddha.

Q: Now here we are now at the beginning of this new skill in meditation facing the same thing? But we could sink if we don't first learn about the Being before going on a journey down the path.

A: It's true. There are deep forests to go through on this journey and you have to be armed with knowledge and vision to get through them. So I will start at the beginning by examining the foundation of the being.

1. We have a **BODY**. (*kaya*). This body runs from our head to our toes. It is composed of very impersonal parts which show no sign of being personally unique one from another.

In MN-10, the Satipathana sutta : "...a monk or nun reviews this same body up from the soles of the feet and down from the top of the hair, bounded by skin, as full of many kinds of impurity thus: 'In this body there are head-hairs, body-hairs, nails, teeth, skin, flesh, sinews, bones, bone-marrow, kidneys, heart, liver, diaphragm, spleen, lungs, intestines, mesentery, contents of the stomach, feces, bile, phlegm, pus, blood, sweat, fat, tears, grease, spittle, snot, oil of the joints, and urine.'

Just as though there were a bag with an opening at both ends full of many sorts of grain, such as hill rice, red rice, beans, peas, millet, and white rice, and a man with good eyes were to open it and review it thus: 'This is hill rice, this is red rice, these are beans, these are peas, this is millet, this is white rice'; so too, a monk or nun reviews this same body...as full of many kinds of impurity thus: 'In this body there are head-hairs...and urine.'..."

That's it. This is what the body is made up of! Now this description isn't meant to gross us out about the body. It is just meant to give us a better perspective of what is real about the body. Essentially speaking, THIS IS THE BODY, plain and simple; as it is.

Q: WOW!

A: That is just what I said the first time I met this description. It is precise. It leaves nothing out. It presents the body just as you would find it in an autopsy class in medical school. This is Basic Body 101!

2. The second part of the being is **FEELING** (*vedana*).

There are three kinds of feeling we need to essentially know about for good meditation.

1) **There is pleasant feeling.**

- 2) **There is painful feeling.**
- 3) **There is neither-painful-nor-pleasant feeling.**

From the beginning of practice we need to understand that FEELING is just that; a FEELING.

It is not a personal Feeling, but just a feeling which occurs when conditions are right for it to happen.

If we keep this in mind, gradually we will release our personal involvement with the feeling and this eases our suffering.

But first, we must come to understand by experiencing this for ourselves, exactly what a FEELING is.

These three kinds of feeling are all we need to initially develop a good meditation practice. Later, we can divide them into more defined groups for deeper understanding.

Q: OK.

A: Good.

3. The third component of the being is PERCEPTION (san~na). For the development of meditation, the essential part of perception is understanding that this is the mental process that NAMES things and it has memory in it. It perceives.

For instance, let's consider an EYE. This is one of your sense doors by which you experience life or this existence. We would say first you have a working EYE.

Here is how we cognize our experience.

When a WORKIING EYE opens up, it meets with COLOR and FORM and then, EYE-CONSCIOUSNESS arises.

The meeting of these three is EYE-CONTACT. With CONTACT as CONDITION, FEELING arises. The FEELING is always Pleasant, Painful, or Neither Painful-Nor-Pleasant.

During this process, PERCEPTION names the color and form the eye first saw to be "A BLUE GLASS". In order to do this, perception has memory in it from where once before it learned the color BLUE and the object as being a GLASS! This is how it works .

Q: I can see that.

A: We can work through all six of the sense doors using the same formula.

Q: How many sense doors do we have?

A: You have six. The five external sense doors are the EYES, EARS, NOSE, TONGUE, AND BODY or TOUCH. The other door is the internal sense door we call MIND.

Each of these sense doors have corresponding sense door objects which they come in contact with and this is how we experience the world.

Externally, the EYE sees SIGHTS. The EAR hears SOUNDS. The NOSE smells ODORS. The TONGUE tastes FLAVORS and the BODY touches TANGIBLES. Internally, MIND meets a MIND-OBJECT (a thought).

All Contact happens in this same way.

You **MUST** have an

OPERATING SENSE-DOOR + SENSE DOOR OBJECT + SENSE DOOR CONSCIOUSNESS =
CONTACT.

WITH CONTACT AS CONDITION, FEELING ARISES.
FEELING IS EITHER PLEASANT, PAINFUL, OR NEITHER PLEASANT-NOR-PAINFUL.

This is a pretty cut and dry IMPERSONAL PROCESS and you can experience it for yourself once you have all the information you need.

4. The next part of the Being is THOUGHTS (sankhara). Thoughts are mind- objects arising on their own.

In life, the being does not stop doing what they are doing and decide to bring up a thought. This does not happen.

Thoughts arise impersonally.

Suffering arises with the un-satisfactoriness of a painful feeling arising and how the being becomes personally involved with trying to THINK that FEELING away!

But THOUGHTS are one thing and FEELING is another!

Whenever a feeling arises, if we understand what is going on, then at the first sign of arising tension and tightness, we can release that feeling, relax, smile, and return over to the object of meditation or whatever task we were doing in daily life and keep this wholesome mindfulness going.

We do not have to grab onto the feeling, become involved in thinking about it in reference to the past or the future. There is no need to expand it in this way.

After all,

If we look at the past, it's done and gone and it cannot be changed.

The future is not here yet. The Future could become anything depending on what we do here and now with the present moment.

Only the present moment is here now. Only in this present moment are we truly ALIVE!

Understanding this universal truth helps us to practice Right Effort by using the 6Rs!

We can let go of old tendencies to attach ourselves to something from the past or some worry about what might happen in the future.

Then we can respond to what is happening in the present moment with more energy and sensible mindfulness.

Therefore, it helps us to understand that THOUGHTS are one thing and FEELING is another thing. This helps us see what needs to be done.

5. The last part of the Being is CONSCIOUSNESS (vin~n~ana). Consciousness cognizes.

It is the potential for awareness. It's a very interesting thing too because CONSCIOUSNESS, FEELING, and PERCEPTION are concomitant. (Slowly read over MN-43 sections 7-9 and consider this.)

These three cannot operate without each other.

I sat on the back step one day to contemplate this and it just kept me smiling because I could now see that it is impossible to separate these apart.

Q: I'll have to try that.

A: Do it. It's a fun one to see.

Q; how do you figure this out?

A: Well, what I did was slap my hand.

Q: Slap your hap?

A: Yeah.

Q: Then what?

A: Then carefully consider that when you have the body, and you slap the hand a feeling arises.

Q: of course it does.

A: However, YOU can't tell me that this is a painful feeling without MIND being involved, can you?

Q: Well, uh, no.

A: So this is why, BODY, FEELING, and PERCEPTION is part of the BODY FUNCTIONS while FEELING, PERCEPTION, THOUGHTS AND CONSCIOUSNESS are part of the MENTAL FUNCTIONS.

This little investigation should bring up for you the question and answer of the MIND-BODY connection and this is something the BUDDHA managed to put together where others failed to understand. Q?

Q: What?

A: You can stop slapping your hand now. It's getting kind of red!

Q: Oh. Right. Hey this is interesting.

A: Told ya. Stick around.

Q: What's next?

A; I want you to do an exercise and then get ready for more interesting stuff.

Q: OK. Shoot.

A: Alright. Here it is.

EXERCISE:

Please listen to the instructions for the meditation and begin to apply the practice. You will gather what the interconnections are here very shortly.

1. Following this entry, I want you to listen to any of the first night talks on the Dhamma Retreats.

This is where Bhante gave us a clear talk about this. He interwove together the basic operation of the Being, the 6-Sense doors, and how Contact happens.

Please become aware of your sense doors by taking the time to investigate how you see, hear, smell, taste and touch things.

How does Mind get attached to thoughts and get pulled off course while trying to do something in life? Take a look. Do you notice how this is happening?

2. Check out the Mind/ Body connection above that we mentioned in this installment.

Our next entry will take us a little deeper into a discussion about where craving starts and how it works in relationship to suffering.

Believe me when I say all of this gets deeper and clearer as you go along. This is enough to begin with.

I sat on the back step one day to contemplate this and it just kept me smiling because I could see what they said here and that it is impossible to separate them apart.

Q: I'll have to try that.

A: Do it. It's a fun one observe and contemplate.

Q; How do you figure this out?

A: Well, what I did was slap my hand.

Q: Slap your hand?

A: Yeah.

Q: Then what?

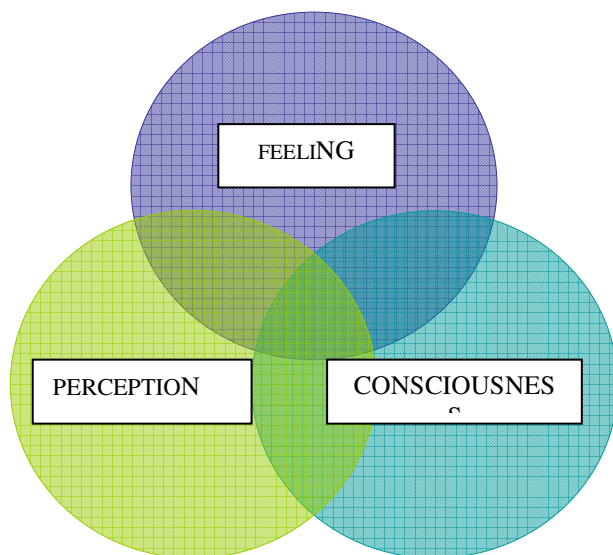
A: Then carefully consider that when you have the body, and you slap the hand, that a feeling arises.

Q: Of course it does.

A: However, YOU can't tell me that this is a painful feeling without MIND being involved, can you?

Q: Well, uh, no.

A: So this is why, BODY, FEELING, and PERCEPTION is part of the BODY FUNCTIONS while FEELING, PERCEPTION, THOUGHTS AND CONSCIOUSNESS are part of the MENTAL FUNCTIONS.



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Q: So what's next?

A: "2010-FS- 12- What is CRAVING?"

Metta and smiles.
Rev. Sister Khema

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