

*Foundation Series on Buddhist Tranquil Wisdom Insight Meditation (TWIM)*

*As taught by*

*Ven. Sister Khema*

*and reviewed by*

*Most Ven. Vimalaramsi Maha Thera*

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**Title: 2012-FS-18—What is Purification of Mind?**

**WHAT IS PURIFICATION OF MIND?**

A: Back again, “Q”?

Q: Yes. I have a question?

A: Ah. What’s up?

Q: I was wondering what exactly is Purification of Mind?

A: Well, in respect to the Buddha’s teaching, this means the letting go of craving. It refers to training our minds to shift in the direction of wholesome mind-states which will then become the foundation for future wholesome thoughts, words, and deeds. This, in turn, shifts our personality, reforms our character, and affects the world around us.

Q: How do I begin to look at this?

A: I would begin by defining what the Buddha meant by wholesome and unwholesome mind-states. If we do not understand this, then, we can’t explain how to shift their mind into another direction.

Q: I thought the Buddha said that we cannot control our mind?

A: This is true. We can’t. However, we do have volition in Buddhism and, certainly we can learn how to incline our minds in a wholesome direction.

Q: What does Volition mean?

A: Let’s look it up.

Ah. Here it is. Volition means 1) the act of exercising the will, 2) the faculty of choice, decision, and intention.

I got curious one time about what is meant by will and then found out that will means 1) the act or instance of asserting a choice, 2) determined intention.

And choice means 1) the act or instance of choosing or selecting, 2) the opportunity of power of choosing.

Q: OK. Choosing what?

A: How about “To crave and cling or not to crave and cling. That is the question?”

Q: <grins> And we are going to use these words for what exactly?

A: To get a clear picture of how there is a choice in Buddhism.

Q: What is it about the personal side in all of this? You keep mentioning ‘personal’ and ‘impersonal.’

A: We have to remember that there is no “I”, no “me”, no “my” self meaning somebody is making life happen. That would lead us to a personal belief in a self. This also can lead us to believe that the entire world is coming down on our heads and everything that is happening is an emergency and our fault!

Q: So how does the Buddha use these pronouns you mentioned?

A: The most important thing is to realize the consequence of taking things personally and how this will always result in the desire to take control of my practice and attempt to make my mind do this or that, which, as the Buddha said, could not be done and would only exhaust the meditator.

Q: So how do we explain volition within the context of our meditation?

A: Although we cannot control mind forcefully in one way, we CAN purify mind by training it in another way to lean in a direction that leads us to happiness and contentment in life. This would be the opposite of falling directly into craving and clinging whatever comes up during our practice and in life.

Q: Oh. I think I get it. You mean we gently urge mind to lean in the direction of wholesome states?

A: Yes, and this always means letting go of craving. This was the experiment the Buddha was encouraging his monks to try. He wanted them to watch how he did this and to work with it until they understood it for themselves.

Q: What kind of investigation did he do to determine understand how to accomplish this?

A: The Buddha followed an investigation based on the Four Noble Truths. He asked what was wholesome and unwholesome; what was the cause of these two mind-states; and how could you get to the cessation of unwholesome mind-states?

Q: But first we have to define clearly what is the nature of wholesome mind-states and unwholesome mind-states, right?

A: Yes. That's right "Q". If we don't know this, then we can't identify very clearly the root symptom of CRAVING. If we can't identify CRAVING, then we do not have any way of letting go of the unwholesome states.

So we should begin by finding what the Buddha said concerning these two states and what he kind of instructions he left for us to direct to work on this same issue.

Q: Well, in MN- 21, "The Simile of the Saw", he told us the desired outcome of this meditation.

A: Yes. But in MN-19, "Two Kinds of Thoughts", he gave us a good picture of his first experiment.

He described two kinds of thoughts and how he experimented with shifting from unwholesome thoughts over to wholesome thoughts

He encouraged us always to not accept anything we discovered without seeing it for ourselves. Remember how he called this Knowledge and Vision?

Q: I do remember that. And in the Anguttara Nikaya he gave us that message clearly in the Kalama Sutta when he talked to the people about how to choose the right path and the right teacher to follow so their outcome would be wholesome thoughts that lead to happiness in life.

A: Good. You remembered that!

Q: In MN-62 the Buddha taught his son, Rahula, the value of practicing Metta and Karuna for meditation. I remember that. He advised him to embrace the wholesome nature.

A: That's right, and, in many other texts he spoke to his monks about the value of

following the precepts so that life would run smoothly and assist these wholesome states to come up more often in life.

The Buddha's goal was to help people realize that your thoughts and proliferations were the seed of your verbal and physical actions in life. He cared greatly how we treated each other and so he took us back to the basic solution by teaching us to practice Right Effort.

Q: And it all comes back to Mind?

A: That's right "Q", it starts there.

All of his examples show us how the teaching led people to notice when an unwholesome state of mind is present, to release that unwholesome mind-state, to bring up a wholesome mind-state, and to keep that mind-state going.

This four-step practice leads us in the direction of wholesome loving kindness, compassion, and the result is a natural greater patience in life.

In truth, the Buddha's meditation practice does not try to control mind, in the sense of making things happen forcefully. This is not possible, just as he said, thoughts just arise and you would get very tired trying to control them.

Q: Did he come up with a solution to develop this training?

A: Yes, he did. We use volition as we train mind to lean in a particular direction. We can help mind lean towards wholesome mind-states until it goes there naturally by itself. The Buddha came up with a very simple meditation system to help us.

But before we look at the description of the practice he left, I think we should discuss a little about why he chose this retraining program.

You see, he SAW the root of suffering, realized it has a very precise symptom as it is arising, and then he prescribed the solution for us.

So first, we will first answer the question, "Can you see suffering as it is happening?"

Q: Sounds like a good plan. I'm ready.

A: OK then. I will see you in a bit.

First draft End.

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