

SK's TRAINING NOTE # 6 – September 24- 2010

by Rev. Sister Khema

MN-37- ONE OUTLINE OF DHAMMA STUDY left for us by the Buddha.

Dhamma Greetings everyone.

This sutta is rich in it's support for the practice you are now learning in the Foundation training.

Although this recipe is usually used for the description of an Arahant, it can be applied in this way to show you how the practice should bring about results too.

This sutta was about what the Buddha told Sakka when he asked him to explain what he teaches people.

An interesting thing about this sutta is that it gives you some guidelines for what the practice should be doing for you as an end result. This is good.

It answered a lot of questions for me when I first began to practice. Hope you enjoy it.

Where should you be going with this practice of meditation?

This practice should be helping you to see deeply how things work.

This sutta supports the idea of personal 'knowledge and vision', which means 'knowing by seeing', as being the way to learn this.

It turns out that it is the truth of this knowledge that helps mind calm down and rest.

With the support of the universe, Knowledge and Vision is what sets you free.

Here are some questions you may want to discover answers to:

What is your potential if you become fearless?

What could you accomplish if you were set free from worries of the past, the future and able to lovingly accept the present just as it is?

Would life become more peaceful if you never again took anything personally?

Would you be able to co-exist with people more peacefully?

Would you be more inclined to help your neighbor?

Would you live differently without so much tension and stress on you all the time?

These are things worth thinking a little bit about in these times of economic challenge we live in. It is good to have a cool head that is grounded. We can better help ourselves and others.

This sutta gives us the guidelines of what can happen when we just "DO THE PRACTICE and keep it going!" .

I hope you have fun with this little Dhamma exercise of investigation.

Metta and smiles.

Rev. Sister Khema

The following is taken out of MN- 37-The Shorter Discourse on the Destruction of Craving (Culatanhasankaya Sutta) page 344 in the translation of the Majjhima Nikaya by Venerable Nanamoli and Bhikkhu Bodhi from Wisdom Publications. Available at www.amazon.com. If purchasing this book, please go to Amazon through www.dhammasukha.org to help build the study center.

MN-37:2

.....Then Sakka, ruler of the gods, [He was Ruler of the Heaven of the 33 which is one of the Realms you can be reborn into....] **Then Sakka, ruler of the gods, went to the Blessed One, and after paying homage to him he asked him :**

“Venerable sir, how in brief is a monk liberated in the destruction of craving, one who has reached the ultimate end, the ultimate security from bondage, the ultimate holy life, the ultimate goal, one who is foremost among gods and humans?

[This was the main question Sakka put to the Buddha]

The following is taken out of MN- 37-The Shorter Discourse on the Destruction of Craving (Culatanhasankaya Sutta) page 344 in the translation of the Majjhima Nikaya by Venerable Bhikkhu Bodhi; Wisdom Publications.

3. "Here, Sakka, a monk has heard that nothing is worth adhering to. When a monk has heard that nothing is worth adhering to, he directly knows everything; having directly known everything, he fully understands everything; having fully understood everything, whatever feeling he feels, whether pleasant or painful or neither-painful-nor-pleasant, he abides contemplating impermanence in those feelings, contemplating fading away, contemplating cessation, contemplating relinquishment. Contemplating thus, he is not agitated. When he is not agitated, he personally attains Nibbana. He understands:

'Birth is destroyed, the holy life has been lived, what had to be done has been done, there is no more coming into any state of being.

In brief, it is in this way that a monk is liberated in the destruction of craving, one who has reached the ultimate end, the ultimate security from bondage, the ultimate holy life, the ultimate goal, one who is foremost among Gods and humans.'

Now let's investigate together how this little section correlates with the training you are now receiving. As we do when we do research of the texts in the center, let's break it down piece by piece to see if aligns with the training as we are learning to do.

3. *"Here, Sakka, a monk has heard that nothing is worth adhering to*

SK: Nothing is worth holding onto beyond the present moment !

When a monk has heard that nothing is worth adhering to, he directly knows everything;

SK: How can we know everything at this point?

Because the sum total of the teaching is to LET GO and see what is left. When the meditator hears there is nothing worth holding onto past the moment when it happens, then the meditator begins to directly see this for themselves in the meditation practice.

This is 'Knowledge and Vision' which means 'knowing by seeing'.

having directly known everything, he fully understands everything;

Q: Is that clear vision?

SK: Yes. Full understanding is clear vision.

Having seen it for themselves through Knowledge and Vision, they completely understand the true nature of it.

having fully understood everything, whatever feeling he feels, whether pleasant or painful or neither-painful-nor-pleasant, he abides contemplating impermanence in those feelings,

Q: Does this mean the meditator comes to know the nature of Impermanence too?

SK: Yes. Coming to this clear understanding, when a feeling arises, no matter what it is, they now abide in meditation noticing the impermanent nature of these feelings without a mind that is disturbed and they no longer 're-act' to them.

contemplating fading away,

SK: This is noticing the impermanence of ALL feelings which arise, how they fade away in the same impersonal way. They do not arise and remain. This affirms impermanence.

contemplating cessation,

SK: If practicing the 6R's, each time the meditator RELEASES and RELAXES, they reach the state of cessation and observe how it also arises and fades away.

They realize the benefit of Right Striving/Right Effort.

This tells us that the Buddha's practice made it possible for you to witness pure mind or cessation of feeling....while you were meditating.

contemplating relinquishment.

SK: This means the meditator is taught to investigate the letting go (releasing) of any arising feeling by noticing it without attention placed onto the feeling itself, but rather, they begin to notice HOW this happens.

Contemplating thus, he is not agitated.

When he is not agitated, he personally attains Nibbana.

SK: Once the meditator sees this for themselves, mind no longer gets disturbed, upset, agitated about something arising anymore. Mind becomes imperturbable. It cannot be disturbed.

Once we see the truth of how things work, fear vanishes. We are no longer afraid.

There are no longer any more surprises and we can accept the present moment just as it is.

The Truth is now beginning to set us free!

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He understands:

*'Birth is destroyed,
the holy life has been lived,
what had to be done has been done,
there is no more coming into any state of being.*

SK: This means when the meditator sees clearly how everything is working, having seen fully the process of Dependent Origination like a slow movie film, frame by frame, they wake up about how the Impersonal this process of cognition is working.

The meditator has reached full anatta perspective and no longer takes anything personally.

Rather they now see HOW things actually are happening.

They begin to see how the Craving link tension and tightness in mind and in body which makes suffering happen.

They see how this tension and tightness is driving the wheel of samsara forward so that they were caught in a cycle of reactions in life and that this movement pushes the wheel of life around !

Understanding is revealed about how this Birth of action can be destroyed by RELEASING the craving and clinging and the wheel can be stopped from moving forward into more lifetimes by letting go and relaxing.

This is very significant. In such a relaxed state of tranquility there is no more energy to push the wheel around!

We cannot enter a doorway to peaceful co-existence in this world if we are caught in a reactionary cycle. This is not possible.

Reactions will only drive us into further war in this world.

If we do not fully understand the working structure of War and how it begins, how can we ever develop peace in the world?

I am speaking of the War between two people, towns, cities, nations or any situation you face in life with conflict out of control.

in brief, it is in this way that a monk is liberated in the destruction of craving,

SK: We must remember how Craving arises.

CRAVING always shows up first as Tension and tightness in Mind and in Body.

If a monk is liberated by the destruction of craving, this means they have developed awareness of this tension and tightness as it arises and they know how to retrain and purify mind by letting go of it.

They know what to do before it reaches serious clinging and develops into reactionary behavior.

By letting go, they are ending craving!

At some point, they no longer have any thoughts of “I” like this, ‘I want that, OR, ‘I don’t like this, and ‘I don’t want that anymore. There is no more reaction. There is only response.

Now, they release, let go, relinquishing any kind of control while observing clearly how things really work.

They become free to intelligently develop new and creative responses to critical situations because of this relinquishment.

one who has reached the ultimate end,

SK: The ultimate end is when one naturally sees in this way, by letting go in this way and there is no more to see; no more struggle to understand... one naturally ‘lives in this impersonal perspective’ through everything and life gets easier.

the ultimate security from bondage,

SK: ‘Bondage’ means that a person is trapped in reliving their reactions all the time. but now they are set free to respond in the present moment as needed.

Without a re-trained mind, one is not really ‘alive’ but rather, they are caught in this way of repeating reactions over and over again in life.

When you see the truth of how things work, you then can RECOGNIZE and RELEASE the Craving as it is arising.

Then you can RELAX any left over tension or tightness in mind or body.

You will feel inclined to SMILE in the next step which will lighten up your mind and sharpen awareness as you RETURN mind’s attention over to your object of meditation (the breath or sending out loving kindness) without as much tension as before.

This cycle literally purifies mind a little more each time it runs.

As the meditator practices, they are experiencing a stillness that is the CESSATION of suffering in brief.

CESSATION is a point of NO CRAVING. Mind likes this position.

Mind is happy to retrain itself in this wholesome direction.

What is really happening here is that the meditator is ending an old habitual tendency of attachment.

They are developing a new tendency in the wholesome direction of Relinquishment of all tension and tightness.

the ultimate holy life,

SK: ‘The ultimate holy life’ is ‘the time in your life where this retraining work is fully practiced and accomplished to reach purely wholesome states of living.’

The meditator has taken the time, become curious and persistent enough to understand the 4 Noble Truths.

They have inquired within the texts and investigated to see what suffering is, what causes it, what the cessation of it is like and how to reach cessation of suffering.

They have listened to the guiding teacher, followed the instructions, run their investigation in the meditation and discovered the truth of how things work.

As a result, they let go of their own suffering with the remainderless fading away and cessation of it.

the ultimate goal,

SK: the ultimate goal is not to Crave or Cling to anything that arises.

This means you choose to impersonally observe things as they essentially are. Mind remains calm and undisturbed.

You learn the difference between a completely balanced mind and body versus an un-trained mind and body.

You give up tension, concepts and opinions and stop holding onto the story about things.

You give up demanding that things be as you want them to be.

This is letting go of the unessential! You begin to ‘be here now’!

That person who Craves and Clings suffers a lot from the tension and tightness that causes dis-ease in their mind and in body.

one who is foremost among Gods and humans.'

SK: Both Gods and humans suffer.

The being who endeavors to succeed at this practice is to be cherished because they have developed the ability to compassionately help other people to learn this too.

Because they let go and are acting more impersonally, their inclination will tend towards loving kindness and compassion for all beings.

With an open heart, they will open the doorway for others and help them to discover peaceful non-violent co-existence.

They will become capable of clear communication and be able to accomplish great things for human beings and the planet once they achieve this level of understanding.

This is why it's good and fun to keep the 6R's going and why it's worth it too.

They can transport you through the doorway to Peace.

To review the practice one more time.... They 6R's are:

RECOGNIZE whenever mind's attention is being pulled away from what you are doing in life, OR your object of meditation;

RELEASE any attention on what has arisen. Just let it be there. No need to identify it. No need to understand anything about it through thinking about it even for a second;

RELAX any tension or tightness that is left over in mind of body; briefly notice the relief.

RE-SMILE and **RETURN** to the object of meditation OR what task you were doing when mind's attention was pulled away.

Remember that lightly smiling and having fun with this investigation helps you progress very much. SO STAY LIGHT, SMILE, and keep it going. Remember to SMILE. It's a Powerful tool. Watch what it does for people in the world. See how it opens up doors for you everywhere and shifts happiness back into your own life.

REPEAT this cycle as needed.

Following these 6 steps is actually keeping the practice of RIGHT EFFORT towards reaching a very wholesome goal all the time.

Q: What is Right Effort precisely?

A: Right effort is described in the texts in many suttas in the Majjhima Nikaya:

1. Recognizing an unwholesome is in mind;
2. Release the unwholesome, let it be, without thinking about it;
3. Bring up a wholesome into mind. The MOST wholesome thing you can bring up is the object of mediation
[such as the breath or sending out Loving Kindness to your loved ones and the universe.]
4. Keep that wholesome going..... [STAY on the object of meditation; keep the meditation going]

You can see that if you keep Right Effort going, the 6 steps can help carry you through to the end of your journey.

They ground you and help bring you back to basics.

The best advice is to follow the precise instructions the Buddha gave, very closely, and you will eventually reach complete clarity about life and tranquility and peace of mind. The ancients called this state nibbana.

Patience leads to Nibbana. This is an ultimate state of wholesomeness and purity of mind.

May you reach Nibbana quickly and easily in this very lifetime!

Metta and smiles to you all.

Rev. Sister Khema