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May You Be Well And Happy

Summary

This article summarizes a Dhamma talk given by Venerable Piyadassi Maha Thera of Vajiraranaya, Sri Lanka during his visit to Australia in 1981. The main theme of the talk is the importance of meditation – the exercise of mind; and the states of mind during meditation.

The Venerable also teaches the cultivation of "Brahma Viharas" - the four sublime states (loving kindness, compassion, appreciative or altruistic joy and equanimity), mindfulness and metta practices.

Venerable Piyadassi Maha Thera of Vajiraranaya, Colombo, Sri Lanka Australian Visit 1981

The Ven. Piyadassi Maha Thera is a native of Sri Lanka. He was educated at Nalanda College and the University of Sri Lanka. At the age of twenty he entered the Buddhist Order, under the tutorship of the Venerable Vajiranana, Sanka Nayaka. He was one time a research student at the Centre for the Study of World Religions at Harvard University, U.S.A. He has represented Sri Lanka at several international religious and cultural conferences.

As author of "The Buddha's Ancient Path" (1964) his combination of Western thought and Buddhist canonical lore sets out accurately the Buddha's Teaching as it is found in the Pali Canon, the Tipitaka and the Theravada tradition. The Ancient Path (purana maggam) are the very words used by the Buddha in reference to the Eightfold Path.

SUMMARY OF TALK GIVEN BY VEN. PIYADASSI MAHA THERA OF SRI LANKA 31 MARCH 1981 AT THE BUDDHIST DISCUSSION CENTRE (UPWEY).

I asked the Ven. Shanti Bhadra, my friend, about this group, and he told me this is a group which is very devotional in doing meditation, and when I asked him on what I should speak, he said "better touch on meditation". When people hear the word "meditation", they think, well, this is for the forest dwellers, for the monks, for the yogis, getting away from society. They do not know what they are talking about. Meditation is something to do with our minds, our consciousness, with our whole being. We must do a little meditation because we are human beings.

People today talk so much about pollution; what of mind pollution? They don't care about it. Buddhist monasteries, where they walk doing the walking meditation is kept very clean, and the Buddha says if you have kept a place clean, then it is easier to get your concentration. Meditation is something that we all must do. We need not run away from society, unless of course we went to some retreat for about a week or ten days. I have had

meditation retreats for people in different parts of the world, and they want intense meditation. For that we can go, otherwise we can do a little meditation.

When we do meditation it's like behaving like a hen on her eggs. The hen on her eggs is seemingly very inactive, but you know that creature is doing something very important compared with a squirrel in a revolving cage. It is good to be doing nothing rather than to be very busy doing nothing. People are very busy doing nothing. In meditation you are doing something very important.

Today people talk so much about physical exercise; good, but what of our hearts, our minds? We need mental discipline, mental exercise, mental training. The Buddha does not ignore or neglect the body, but he gives pride of place to the human mind. Here you have the five aggregates or groups. Only one is material, the other four are something to do with the mind. This is matter - rupa, and this is mind - Vinnanam consciousness; the other three are - vedana, sanna, sankara are the contents of the mind. You say everywhere you see things material. When you see matter your eyes come into contact with perceivable objects. All those objects that we see are things material. So, the world means just the sense objects. Right? When you go deeper you see here there's colour, and those colours give a shape. And we get sounds. When two things come together, we get a sound. So, two materials come together, and you get a sound. Smell. Certain pollens come to your nostrils and you get it. Then here again, your tongue. You get something material. And touch. So, the entire world is the world of matter. Then we have the world within; this mind and its contents. See the difference. Today, man with a brain weighing only 3 lbs. has done marvelous things. He has brought under control air, space, gone to the moon - not gods, not Brahmas, but just this one fathom long body with a brain and consciousness.

The more man tries to control the external world, the more difficult he finds it to control himself - that is the problem today. The Buddha asks "Man may conquer hundreds and thousands of people in the battlefield. What a waste to conquer thousands and thousands of people if you cannot conquer yourself."

What a waste to bring about a change in the environment without a change inside us. So, meditation brings about a change inside us. That is the aim of meditation, to look within.

It is not easy to understand ourselves. When two persons come together there are really six persons, although it sounds rather paradoxical. Each man as he sees himself, each man as the other man as the other may see him, each man as he really is. Each man thinking "I am so and so, I am so and so" depending on his ego, his so called "I". You may live together, eat together, work together, sleep together, do everything together, but still you may not understand the other man. So, in meditation we are trying to find out the real man. So, when you sit down to meditation, am I a man or a woman? These are only concepts. These disappear; the man - woman

business. You find there is a body flux. It is not something stationary something stable and fixed. All the time it is changing. You cannot knock in the same place again, scientifically speaking, because the particles of matter there, the particles of matter here, the environment, all are changing in vibration. If you learn physics it is very easy to understand the Buddha's flux theory through physics.

So everywhere is changing. When you sit down, all this concept disappears. We just see here a conflux of mind and body. A body flux and a mind flux. So, it's a conflux flowing together. So, what is this matter and mind? Just this body is matter and mind. Scientifically speaking matter is something tangible or perceptible. But not mind. Say a thought now comes, a thought of love. You cannot touch it. It is not something material. But there is a way of seeing the thought. The mind. A thought sees a thought. In meditation you see. Now there comes a thought of love; pure love. Metta... Who sees it? A thought sees a thought. Now it disappears, now it reappears. You become aware of all these things in meditation. All concept disappears. When you are in meditation, you may entertain an ugly thought, an unpleasant and unwholesome thought. You need not get upset; it is very natural. So, in meditation, when thoughts come you don't struggle with them. Just bare awareness, bare attention. Don't be a judge, don't praise or condemn the thought. Just the thought, the thought, the thought - come back here. Bare awareness, bare awareness.

People don't know how to see a sunset. The best way to see a sunset is just to be there, bare attention. That's the best way to see the sunset. So, when you start thinking about the colours and all that, so you see you are distracted, you're distracted, not seeing the sunset.

When we do the meditation - breathing meditation - then it's not so easy, you know. When you try to concentrate, your mind will wander and wander. I know of great meditators. Sometimes they think that sometimes they find it difficult to keep their concentration. Just for five minutes. That is the nature of mind, but you get used to it, and then keep away the other thoughts and go on with meditation. Then the meditation that the Buddha emphasized again and again, is mindfulness. You know about this discourse on mindfulness. Be mindful of everything. Be mindful. Practice it, then you get used to it. Then you see the advantages. People today, because they don't have mindfulness, must create trouble for themselves unnecessarily. Because of this lacking mindfulness they get all sorts of troubles. You can run mindfully without tension. You go driving your car. You come to traffic lights. Most people, you know, when they see green turning to amber, they get agitated. "Oh, it is red." Impatient. It is red. So, the best thing to do, the sensible thing is when you see red, to not get agitated. There's a little rest for you. Leave the wheel, take a deep breath, you see and patiently wait for the green. No tension. So, there are little things that we have to cultivate mindfully. Also, when we talk about meditation, there is what we call the "Brahma Viharas" - the four sublime states. Loving kindness, compassion, appreciative or altruistic joy and equanimity. These four sublime states, I call the art of noble living. This is some meditation that we all must cultivate. People do not know how to love. Their love is so selfish, so that is

not love. "I" and the "My" and the "Mine" that is selfish. Let your good thoughts go to all.

May all beings be well and happy, may all beings be well and happy. No bond no attachment with others. Now parents love their children. There are hundreds and thousands of children. But when her child is in trouble, she feels so much agony, mental agony. That is why when you are separated you feel sad. The Buddha says to be separated from the loved is dukkha, suffering. This is not pessimism. Realistic view of life. People say the Buddha speaking about dukkha, suffering, is a pessimist. They don't know what they are talking about. So, it is very important to do a little meditation. "May I be well and happy; may I be well and happy. May no harm come to me"? This is auto-suggestion. Much better than saying, "I am getting weaker and weaker, I am getting weaker and weaker."

In the walking meditation, it is all mindfully. That you can do in a retreat. You are doing only that, so when you walk, you walk mindfully. You see that everything is done mindfully. You stretch the legs, the feet and then lower, touching. You become aware of everything. When you stand, "I am standing, standing, standing. Then "turning, turning, turning," mindfully walking, walking". Then other thoughts come, again you say goodbye to them and come back here. So, the practice is mindful. On retreats, we have these private interviews where each individual comes and will tell me about their difficulties in meditation.

One lady came to me. You know what she said? "Oh sir, I sat down for meditation, breathing meditation, but", she said, "I hate all these people. I hate all these meditators". That is her experience. I told her "that's alright, don't be upset. But this hatred that you get, it's not that you started it here when you sat down for meditation. It was there in you in the deepest recesses of your heart, waiting for an opportunity. You were busy, occupied, busy occupied, now you come, you are cut off from all other activities. You sit down for meditation and it is time to play havoc inside you. You see, time to grip your heart, grip your mind, so you give up for the moment this breathing business. Sit down and do metta (loving kindness) - "May I be well and happy; may I be well and happy". When you say that, one may ask, isn't it selfish to start with yourself? No. If you hate yourself you can't send love to others. I like to be well and happy, so you can compare it to others, so let others also be well and happy, Thoughts are all important you see?" So, I told her. So, she went and did the meditation as a start, you see, and then she came back the following day and said, "I am alright."

Metta is for people whose temperament is hatred. You cannot have the same minds, if your mind is different, my mind is different. A thousand people, a thousand minds are different. But in a way this is reduced to just six temperaments in the path of purification. There are others who are lustful or there is stupidity, and there are the discourteous. And the other one is devotional. Another one intellectual. These are the characters. So, for the person with hatred, metta is the meditation to use. For lustful temperament, to see the loathsomeness of things. When you go to look at it, beauty is skin deep. So, we send love, loving kindness, and there are no compromising

limitations in metta. It is very difficult term to translate - metta; friendliness, universal love, benevolence, loving kindness; love; all these things feel good. In all religions you find this concept. Non-violence is the highest Dharma. In Hindu they speak about it. In Islam they speak of brotherhood. In Christianity, love thy neighbour. Also, in the Torah. But I find in these religions there are comprising limitations. But when you speak about metta, no compromising limitations. Love is love.

Compassion is another very important quality of the heart. You always show your compassion to those who are in distress. You send your thoughts of love to all. May all beings be well and happy. If someone falls ill, straight away your compassion goes to him. You help, try all your best to comfort him. That's the difference between metta and karuna; loving kindness and compassion. Compassion always to those who are in trouble. You sympathize. Mudita. Best way to understand this quality of mind is to find the opposite of it. Jealousy is the opposite. So mudita means happy state of joy, gladness at another's happiness. The opposite of jealousy, there is mudita. If there is hatred, there is love. If there is violence there is compassion. Let come blame, let come praise. Let come good repute, let come ill repute. Pleasure or pain gain or loss. Keep the balance, not so easy. The Buddhas, the Arahants, they are never shaken. Their minds are never shaken when they are confronted with these vicissitudes of life. They come in pairs; we all like the bright side. "There is someone praising, why should I get elated? There are others who blame me" The Buddhas, their minds are unshaken like the solid rock. The wind cannot move it. It is very solid. So, we are not Arahants, we are not Buddhas, but we can try.

There was a man, he had a horse; suddenly the horse disappeared. Then the neighbours came and said "Oh, you have lost your horse". And they were sympathizing with him. And this man said, "Yes, I had a horse, the horse disappeared." After some time, this horse came with another horse. Now two horses. Again, these neighbours came in and said, "Oh you are a lucky man, you are getting two horses now". "Yes, there are two horses". Now he had a son, the only son. He was very enthusiastic to go on horseback, to learn to go on horseback, because there were now two horses. This son, trying to go on horseback, to learn to go on it, he fell and broke his leg. Disabled for life. Again, the neighbours came. "Oh, what's the use of your horses, man? See what has happened to your son? Disabled for life". "Yes, this fellow's leg is broken. Let him be there". After some time, there was a war. You know when a war comes, all the young people are taken to the battlefield. This I knew when I was in Saigon in Vietnam, just before this crisis came. All the males I don't see in Saigon. Very few. Old people, not young people. And they said, "Oh sir, all the students, sixteen and seventeen years of age have been sent to the battle". And this boy's leg is broken. He is at home. All the young people have gone to the battlefield. So, this father can at least look at his face and be happy. See how the vicissitudes come. So, he was not moved and finally he was consoled. His son is at home. This is life.