

2020-11-25 Eightfold Path-Right Mindfulness (5 of 6)

Wed, 11/25 7:15AM • 14:07

SUMMARY KEYWORDS

mind, deep, mindfulness, exalted, expansive, freedom, feels, states, greed, distinction, liberation, quality, buddha, delusion, feelings, knowing, liberated, part, settled, foundation

SPEAKERS

Gil Fronsdal

So in continuing these talks on the Four Foundations of Mindfulness, the topic for today is the third Foundation. The mindfulness of mind, or mindfulness of mind states. What's interesting about the second Foundation, the mindfulness of feelings, and mindfulness of mind, both of them make a distinction that is quite useful for the deepening or the filling out of the path to liberation. To really to move towards more and more freedom from suffering. And this distinction is, in my language, is that distinction between that which is surface material and that which is deep down, deep within. And kind of deep within our very quality of being of who we are. Not who we are, but a quality of being, the deeper quality of heart in which we live. Something like that. So, what is shallow and what is deep within us.

So in the feelings, what I didn't talk about yesterday, whereas there's three kind of common denominators of all feelings. And those denominators are pleasant, unpleasant, and neither pleasant or unpleasant. There's also the distinction that's made between those feelings that have those three common denominators, which are of the flesh. We might say in modern English, of skin deep in a sense. And those which are not of the flesh. Those which are deep inside. And so some feelings, like if you eat something nice and tasty, that would be of the flesh, only skin deep. It only has to do with a taste for the most part. Or if you touch some very nice, smooth, wonderful surface, maybe velvet or something. It feels so nice and pleasure there. It's very nice not to diminish the niceness of it, but it's much more skin deep. It's more like the senses have been stimulated, that's which is deeper, doesn't belong to the senses that are kind of on the surface of things, the skin, the eyes, the ears. But some deeper quality, almost something at wells up from within. It's a kind of a way in which the inner life gets organized or gets opened or gets into harmony. And that also can be pleasant, unpleasant, and neither pleasant or unpleasant. And mostly the Buddha for the path of liberation, when he talks about this not of the flesh, the deep feelings, he's talking about those which are pleasant, that open up to deeper and deeper states. There are some difficult ones that come in. Difficult, unpleasant feelings that come from this also. That's part of the practice and probably any spiritual practice involves great challenges. And if it didn't, it wouldn't be a spiritual path. But the Buddha emphasizes that this deep practice goes deeper, that the spiritual feelings, the inner feelings, those not of the flesh, kind of open up more and more.

Now, in the in the third foundation, there's also a distinction between what's shallow, in a sense in my language, and that which is deeper, or that which is just visitors. And that's what really characterizes our state of being. So the first, the more shallow ones, it's greed, hatred, and delusion. And these are kind of states the Buddha refers to as just visitors to the mind. And in fact in the instructions for mindfulness of greed, hate and delusion, the Buddha says, recognize that this is a mind with greed, a mind with hatred or aversion, in mind with delusion. And as soon as you say with it means it's not the whole thing. It's not a mind that's greedy. It's a mind that has some greed in it. And the reason why this is important, is has to do with mindfulness becoming strong. To be able to kind of be mindful, to observe, to see clearly greed operating. The part of the mind that sees it, that knows it, is not greedy. It's just knowing it. And because that is there, you can't say the whole mind is greedy. It's just a mind with greed. It might predominate, but it's not the whole thing. And this kind of cracks open the possibility of further freedom. The mindfulness itself is a kind of freedom. In this case, like freedom from greed, and that's beginning to appreciate movement towards greater and greater freedom. And in fact this instructions is not only to know a mind that is with greed, but also know a mind that is without greed. There's something about recognizing again, the freedom, the absence, the freedom from afflictive emotions, which keeps opening the door of freedom for us. And it's that opening up freedom, which is such a big part of the Eightfold Path. For those who have a taste of freedom, it's just a matter of expanding and expanding it. And the Eightfold Path is a description for how to do that. For those who haven't had a taste of freedom, getting a little bit of it here, if the mindfulness is strong. Mind without greed, to recognize that. So without hatred, and without delusion.

And then the second one that which is deep, or that has to do with qualities of our deepest being, or how we are in some deep way, the quality of our heart. The word with is not used anymore. Here, we're recognizing that there's a mind which is recognizing if the mind is expansive or not. Or the mind is concentrated or not. Or if the mind is exalted or not. Or if the mind is liberated or not. And here, because there's no with, the whole quality, the whole state of being, mind, heart is characterized by being expansive, by being concentrated. Actually I like the word unified for Samadhi. It's not exactly the word Samadhi. But that's a footnote. I won't go into. And then there's the exalted mind. And then there's a liberated mind. As we get settled anyways, in following the path of practice, as we get concentrated, and really being settled in the present moment, the quality of the mind starts becoming unconstructed, uncontracted. It's no longer so narrow or tight and caught up with its preoccupations. And the mind which is not caught in its preoccupations, begins feeling like it has space around it. Or is the space that's around us. Sometimes it's called big mind, expansive mind, or spacious mind. And it's possible to feel like there's lots of room in the mind. And then we get caught up in some good concern, like good greed, hatred, and delusion. And it all kind of gets collapses, and we get tight and narrow and small.

And so this is a sense of the expansive mind, the open mind, that's kind of almost coterminous with space, the space around us. And to feel that mind expand outwards, into that space around us is this big mind. The concentrated mind, the unified mind or the really settled mind, stable mind, depending how this word is translated, is again, also a wonderful feeling of just being really whole. Whole and settled. And it's not something that's with us, it becomes us. And now we can say these things that more the whole state. We don't say it a mind with, because when we're mindful of these states, it feels

like mindfulness itself has that quality of being expansive. Mindfulness itself has the quality of being settled or unified. And mindfulness itself has feelings of being exalted. And exalted is a little bit my own translation of this term. But this idea that there's a really wonderfully sublime, wonderfully pleasant, and not just pleasant, but exalted, really special, that comes from deeper and deeper concentration. Deeper and deeper, letting go. And the mind has these different states of mind that are exquisite. Exquisite in their simplicity, exquisite in their equanimity and the joy and the happiness that that just feels like it's almost better than almost anything. Very much a feeling of being at peace and being at home and being whole. And can very deep contentment and deep satisfaction, deep sense of health in this exalted states that are possible.

But that's not the point of Buddhist practice. The point of Buddhist practice is liberation. And so it's possible to also know a mind that's liberated or not. We can know that it's not yet liberated. And knowing that is part of this depth of our life, Oh, okay. There is a depth here, it's not quite free yet. And but this is where I'm opening these doors. I'm opening up to this more and more. And so a mind that's liberated. And here also, it's not mind with liberation. As I said, mindfulness itself partakes in this quality of liberation. Mindfulness, the knowing of it all, is part and parcel of this unrestricted, unlimited, unhindered, uncontracted state of mind. A quality of being. And it's possible to know this, and touch into, ah, it just feels like it's suffuses my being.

And so in the second foundation, to begin appreciating that we have an inner life. And the inner life is really the way to tune into that and become aware of that. Not just what's skin, deep, flesh deep, of the flesh. But really the inner life in a deep way is a way that we keep opening to freedom. That's where freedom is really felt. It's not free to do like in the world, whatever we want. It's this inner quality of heart, of being. And in the third foundation, this same distinction is made. And so this distinction perhaps helps us to realize there's much better things in this world than what we can experience through our greed. Much better things we can experience, then we can experience through hatred or ill will. And much better things than delusion. And we are the caretakers of our own inner life. And then we start tuning into his inner life. And if it's not expansive, we lovingly just, oh, today's not expansive. This is what not expansive is like. But that knowing is part of the movement towards becoming expansive. We know I'm not concentrated, I'm not settled. And knowing that is the beginning of tuning into that place that can begin relax and open. It's not exalted. And rather than having greed or hatred for not having an exalted mind, just knowing that. There's something freeing and opening and to being moves in that direction.

And then liberated mind. And sometimes the mind is not liberated. And we can know that. And there's something about knowing the mind is not liberated, knowing we're caught in something. That knowing is itself partaking in liberation. Or can partake in liberation. And so let your mindfulness, learn mindfulness, learn the quality of awareness that is aware of things. Learn how that can be found and be done so there's a freedom in the knowing, in the awareness. And that's your crack and your that's the door that we want to open so that our inner life can sing, can be free, can be happy in a profound way.

So thank you very much. And now we'll continue with the fourth foundation tomorrow.