

Dharmette: Qualities of the Dharma (3 of 5) Inviting Inspection

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So, the characteristics of the Dharma. On Monday, I talked about *sandiṭṭhiko*, that the Dharma is visible with what is visible. *San* means, usually, “with,” and so *diṭṭhi* is to see or to view. It is also kind of meant to be what is immediately seen here and now, this lived world. So, the Dharma is found in or with what is visible and perceivable right now, immediately. There is something about the immediacy of it. It does not take time. It is not a slow process. There is something we can see here and now.

And now, today, the next of the five characteristics of the Dharma is a colloquial expression in the ancient language that kind of says, “Look here, see here.” *Ehipassiko*. *Passiko* is the same *passa* as in *vipassanā*. So, it means to see, and *ehi* can mean a number of things. It can mean here, hey, come, come here, come, come look, come see. And this is where it starts getting very interesting.

There are sense experiences that we have. There is awareness of sense experiences, and in between, there is something dynamic that goes on. The example that occurs to me is that if you are riding a bicycle—say it is a safe place and there is no traffic—and you are going somewhat, maybe a little bit fast, maybe because you are coasting downhill a little bit, and you go into a curve, then you do not just turn the handlebar. You turn the handlebar, and the tendency is to lean into the curve. And how far do you lean? Do you get a calculator out to consider exactly the right angle to turn?

No, there are sensations deep in the body, balance sensations. All kinds of sensations come into play, where we kind of know almost exactly how far to lean over to stay balanced, to stay in that midpoint of balance, so that we do not tip too far or not far enough. But that is not a calculation. It is not a thought. It is not a planned event. We are feeling our way.

There are the sensations, and there is the awareness of them, and between them, there is an understanding. And not only is there understanding, but there is a pull: stay right here, feel this, feel the balance, feel the degree, and feel very carefully what is too much, what is too little, when it is important to adjust and straighten out. It is almost as if, as we are bicycling, there is a call. There is an inner pull to pay attention to the sensations of the body, which are giving us the information. Something needs to happen so that we know how to be.

Now, sometimes that can be second nature. Sometimes it happens; the body takes care of that itself. But that is because the body is aware of the sensations and can process them and can direct the show a little bit. Now go this way. Now lift up, back and forth. There is an intelligence there that knows what to do when you are riding a bicycle.

Now, this is true for many sports, many arts, many playing of musical instruments, many activities we do. We do not track every little movement that we do, and how much pressure and how much looseness, just how we are. There is a deep knowing in the body that knows how to be, knows how to make adjustments, and there is a pull, an invitation. There is, “Hey, we are riding the bicycle. Hey, here, pay attention to the pull of gravity, the balance, the angle. Pay attention to all these different things.” Something knows to follow that.

It knows it does not occur to it that what you should follow are the sensations in your elbow. The elbow can take care of itself generally, but it knows that, in order to ride the bicycle well, follow the pull, follow the invitation. Here, here, this is where the attention should be.

When we sit to meditate, it can operate the same way. There, sit down to meditate and say, “Where does the attention go? What wants attention now?” When you first sit down, it might be the ways we are uncomfortable. We are not quite sitting right. And there is a pull: “Oh, here, there is a pull. This is saying, pay attention here. Come into balance here. Adjust this.”

And there are little, small adjustments that go on, and they do not have to necessarily be something we think about. It is just kind of inherent in having a body and taking a posture that, if you are deeply sensitive, there is a pull. There is a call: “Here, pay attention here. This needs your attention. Adjust this.” Sometimes, of course, the body screams at us when it is in pain, or it says, “Hey, I have a message for you. Please listen to this message.” But sometimes it is very subtle.

And so, as we practice, it is in that zone between a sensation and our awareness of the sensation. The more we can be aware of the sensation, it is like we are giving it breathing room, so that sensation is saying, “Here.” Our sense body is saying, “Here, this is what needs atten-

tion.” And in the course of meditation, there might be different parts of the body that call attention. Or it might be that the breathing shifts and changes where the center of breathing is, the center of sensations, and we follow it.

It might be where the breathing is tense, where there is a contraction, or the breathing is not full; it is tight. And it says, “Here, here is where the sensations are. Here is where you should have your attention.” So, this fascinating idea: that the Dharma is not found by a willful, calculated idea of where our attention should be. But as we get more and more sensitive, more and more mindful and present, things will call our attention: “Here, this is where we pay attention. Pay attention here. Pay attention to this.”

And it tends to be very simple. It tends to be little movements of tension, little movements of release of tension; little movements of tightness, release of tightness; little movements of discomfort; little movements of, “This does not feel good. This feels off. Something is off here. And here, this is something on.” There are a whole bunch of very simple sensations that we have that do not require a complicated analysis. They do not require a whole story and background of why they are there.

But just like on a bicycle, there are all kinds of little sensations that pull our attention to help us ride the bicycle well. It does not need a big story. It does not have to go back into all the different ways that you have ridden a bicycle before. But it is really saying to now, to what is going on, what is happening.

So, this third characteristic of Dharma, called *ehipassiko*, “come and see,” is the grammar of it. It is like someone inviting you, “Come here, come here, come and see for yourself.” And so, the question is: What is it that is calling your attention? What sensations? What inner direct experience is saying, “Here, now, here is where your attention should be”?

And this, I find, is very significant because it is not the same thing as having a technique of meditation that overrides your wisdom or your deeper sensitivity, or overrides what your natural system is calling us to pay attention to. With mindfulness practice, one of the ways we practice is we pay careful attention to what is calling for attention. What is predominant? And there is a deep wisdom inside that knows: now, now it is time to pay attention to this in the world of sensations, direct sensations.

And it can seem—maybe I have said this before—that that is a very simplistic way of living a life, very limited, to just be with the sensations. And in a certain way, it is, of course. And it does not mean we forget the more complicated world of thoughts and ideas and stories and things we have to figure out. It is just that if we want to connect to the Dharma deeply, then

we want to be able to go deeply into this world of sensations, to garner, to learn how to pick up the wisdom, the teachings, the learning, the onward-leading nature of how we can get freer, how we can get wiser, how we can track this deep inner source of information that the body can provide.

And then have that inform how we live in the more complicated world, the more sophisticated world that we want to live in. So, this Dharma is something marvelous, something that is in us, but we cannot claim it is us. That is why the word Dharma is quite nice—the inner Dharma, the inner intelligence that is of us, but is not us.

So, may you discover something about this deep inner knowing by paying attention to what calls your attention in your body. What is that that really wants to be known? And if you are quiet and sensitive, it might not be the loudest thing. Sometimes it is the quieter things that give the indication: “Oh, here, this is what is needed.” So, thank you all very much, and I hope that you find this evokes your curiosity to look into this for yourself. Thank you.