

## Vipassana Discourse Day 8

*The law of multiplication and its reverse, the law of eradication-- equanimity is the greatest welfare-- equanimity enables one to live a life of real action--by remaining equanimous, one ensures a happy future for oneself.*

Eight days are over; you have two more left to work. In the remaining days, see that you understand the technique properly, so that you may practice it properly here and also make use of it in your daily life. Understand what Dhamma is: nature, truth, universal law

On one hand there is a process of constant multiplication. On the other hand, there is a process of eradication. This was well explained in a few words:

*Impermanent truly are conditioned things,  
by nature arising and passing away.  
If they arise and are extinguished,  
their eradication brings true happiness.*

Every *saṅkhāra*, every mental conditioning is impermanent, having the nature of arising and passing away. It passes away, but next moment it arises again, and again; this is how the *saṅkhāra* multiplies. If one develops wisdom and starts observing objectively, the process of multiplication stops and the process of eradication begins. A *saṅkhāra* arises, but the meditator remains equanimous; it loses all its strength and is eradicated. Layer after layer, the old *saṅkhāra* will arise and be eradicated, provided one remains equanimous. As much as the *saṅkhāra* are eradicated, that much happiness one enjoys, the happiness of

freedom from misery. If all the past *saṅkhāra* are eradicated, one enjoys the limitless happiness of full liberation.

The old habit of the mind is to react, and to multiply reactions. Something unwanted happens, and one generates a *saṅkhārā* of aversion. As the *saṅkhārā* arises in the mind, it is accompanied by an unpleasant physical sensation. Next moment, because of the old habit of reaction, once again generates aversion, which is actually directed towards the unpleasant bodily sensation. The external stimulus of the anger is secondary; the reaction is in fact to the sensation within oneself. The unpleasant sensation causes one to react with aversion, which generates another unpleasant sensation, which again causes one to react. In this way, the process of multiplication begins. If one does not react to the sensation but instead smiles and understands its impermanent nature, then one does not generate a new *saṅkhārā*, and the *saṅkhārā* that has already arisen will pass away without multiplying. Next moment, another *saṅkhārā* of the same type will arise from the depths of the mind; one remains equanimous, and it will pass away. Next moment another arises; one remains equanimous, and it passes away. The process of eradication has started.

The processes that one observes within oneself also occur throughout the universe. For example, someone sows the seed of a banyan tree. From that tiny seed a huge tree develops, which bears innumerable fruit year after year, as long as it lives. And even after the tree dies, the process continues, because every fruit that the tree bears contains a seed or a number of seeds, which have the same quality as the original seed from which the tree grew. Whenever one of these seeds falls on fertile soil it sprouts and grows into another tree which again produces thousands of fruits,

all containing seeds. Fruit and seeds, seeds and fruit; an endless process of multiplication. In the same way, out of ignorance one sows the seed of a *saṅkhārā*, which sooner or later gives a fruit, also called *saṅkhārā*, and also containing a seed of exactly the same type. If one gives fertile soil to the seed it sprouts into a new *saṅkhārā*, and one's misery multiplies. However, if one throws the seeds on rocky soil, they cannot sprout; nothing will develop from them. The process of multiplication stops, and automatically the reverse process begins, the process of eradication.

Understand how this process works. It was explained that some input is needed for the flow of life, of mind and matter, to continue. The input for the body is the food one eats, as well as the atmosphere in which one lives. If one day one does not eat, the flow of matter does not stop at once. It continues by consuming the old stocks of energy contained within the body. When all the stored energy is consumed, only then the flow stops, the body dies. The body needs food only two or three times a day, but the flow of the mind requires an input every moment. The mental input is *saṅkhārā*. Every moment the *saṅkhārā* that one generates is responsible for sustaining the flow of consciousness. The mind that arises in the next moment is a product of this *saṅkhārā*. Every moment one gives the input of *saṅkhārā*, and the flow of consciousness continues. If at any moment one does not generate a new *saṅkhārā* the flow does not stop at once; instead, it draws on the stock of old *saṅkhārā*. An old *saṅkhārā* will be forced to give its fruit, that is, to come to the surface of the mind in order to sustain the flow; and it will manifest as a physical sensation. If one reacts to the sensation, again one starts making new *saṅkhārā*, planting new seeds of misery. But if one observes the sensation with equanimity, the *saṅkhārā* loses its strength and is eradicated. Next moment another old *saṅkhārā* must come up to sustain the mental

flow. Again, one does not react, and again it is eradicated. So long as one remains aware and equanimous, layer after layer of old *saṅkhārā* will come to the surface and be eradicated; this is the law of nature.

One has to experience the process oneself, by practicing the technique. When one sees that one's old habit patterns, old sufferings have been eliminated, then one knows that the process of eradication works.

An analogous technique exists in modern metallurgy. To super-refine certain metals; to make them ultra-pure, it is necessary to remove even one foreign molecule in a billion. This is done by casting the metal in the shape of a rod, and then making a ring of the same metal that has already been refined to the required purity. The ring is passed over the rod, and generates a magnetism that automatically drives out any impurities to the extremities of the rod. At the same time, all the molecules in the rod of metal become aligned; it becomes flexible, malleable, capable of being worked. In the same way, the technique of Vipassana can be regarded as the passing of a ring of pure awareness over the physical structure, driving out any impurities, with similar benefits.

Awareness and equanimity will lead to purification of mind. Whatever one experiences on the way, whether pleasant or unpleasant, is unimportant. The important point is not to react with craving or aversion, since both will create nothing but misery. The only yardstick to measure one's progress on the path is the equanimity that one has developed. And the equanimity must be at the level of bodily sensations if one is to go to the depth of the mind and to eradicate the impurities. If one learns to be aware of

sensations and to remain equanimous towards them, it becomes easy to keep one's balance in external situations as well.

The Buddha was once asked what real welfare is. He replied that the highest welfare is the ability to keep the balance of one's mind in spite of all the vicissitudes, the ups and downs, of life. One may face pleasant or painful situations, victory or defeat, profit or loss, good name or bad name; everyone is bound to encounter all these. But can one smile in every situation, a real smile from the heart? If one has this equanimity at the deepest level within, one has true happiness.

If equanimity is only superficial it will not help in daily life. It is as if each person carries a tank of petrol, of gasoline, within. If one spark comes, one fruit of a past reaction, immediately a great explosion results, producing millions more sparks, more *saṅkhārā*, which will bring more fire, more suffering in future. By the practice of Vipassana, one gradually empties the tank. Sparks will still come because of one's past *saṅkhārā*, but when they come, they will burn only the fuel that they bring with them; no new fuel is given. They burn briefly until they consume the fuel they contain, and then they are extinguished. Later, as one develops further on the path, one naturally starts generating the cool water of love and compassion, and the tank becomes filled with this water. Now, as soon as a spark comes, it is extinguished. It cannot burn even the small amount of fuel it contains.

One may understand this at the intellectual level, and know that one should have a water pump ready in case a fire starts. But when fire actually comes, one turns on the petrol pump and starts a conflagration. Afterwards one realizes the mistake, but still repeats it next time when fire comes, because one's wisdom is only

superficial. If someone has real wisdom in the depths of the mind, when faced with fire such a person will not throw petrol on it, understanding that this would only cause harm. Instead, one throws the cool water of love and compassion, helping others and oneself.

The wisdom must be at the level of sensations. If you train yourself to be aware of sensations in any situation and to remain equanimous towards them, nothing can overpower you. Perhaps for just a few moments you observe without reacting. Then, with this balanced mind, you decide what action to take. It is bound to be right action, positive, helpful to others, because it is performed with a balanced mind.

Sometimes in life it is necessary to take strong action. One has tried to explain to someone politely, gently, with a smile, but the person can understand only hard words, hard actions. Therefore, one takes hard vocal or physical action. But before doing so, one must examine oneself to see whether the mind is balanced, and whether one has only love and compassion for the person. If so, the action will be helpful; if not, it will not help anyone. One takes strong action to help the erring person. With this base of love and compassion one cannot go wrong.

In a case of aggression, a Vipassana meditator will work to separate the aggressor and the victim, having compassion not only for the victim but also for the aggressor. One realizes that the aggressor does not know how he is harming himself. Understanding this, one tries to help the person by preventing him from performing deeds that will cause him misery in the future.

However, you must be careful not to justify your actions only after the event. You must examine the mind before acting. If the mind is full of defilements, one cannot help anyone. First one must rectify the faults in oneself before one can rectify the faults in others. First you must purify your own mind by observing yourself. Then you will be able to help many.

The Buddha said that there are four types of people in the world: those who are running from darkness towards darkness, those who are running from brightness towards darkness, those who are running from darkness towards brightness, and those who are running from brightness towards brightness.

For a person in the first group, all around there is unhappiness, darkness, but his greatest misfortune is that he also has no wisdom. Every time he encounters any misery he develops more anger, more hatred, more aversion, and blames others for his suffering. All those *saṅkhārā* of anger and hatred will bring him only more darkness, more suffering in the future.

A person in the second group has what is called brightness in the world: money, position, power, but he too has no wisdom. Out of ignorance he develops egotism, without understanding that the tensions of egotism will bring him only darkness in future.

A person in the third group is in the same position as one in the first, surrounded by darkness; but he has wisdom, and understands the situation. Recognizing that he is ultimately responsible for his own suffering, he calmly and peacefully does what he can to change the situation, but without any anger or hatred towards others; instead he has only love and compassion for those who are harming him. All he creates for the future is brightness.

Finally a person in the fourth group, just as one in the second, enjoys money, position, and power, but unlike one in the second group, he is also full of wisdom. He makes use of what he has in order to maintain himself and those dependent on him, but whatever remains he uses for the good of others, with love and compassion. Brightness now and for the future too.

One cannot choose whether one faces darkness now or brightness; that is determined by one's past *saṅkhārā*. The past cannot be changed, but one can take control of the present by becoming master of oneself. The future is merely the past plus what is added in the present. Vipassana teaches how to become master of oneself by developing awareness and equanimity towards sensations. If one develops this mastery in the present moment, the future will automatically be bright.

Make use of the remaining two days to learn how to become master of the present moment, master of yourself. Keep growing in Dhamma, to come out of all misery, and to enjoy real happiness here and now.

*May all beings be happy!*