

Noble Path - From Not-knowing to Knowing¹
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Part 3: The Method and the Path to Cessation of Suffering

1. The Method - From Not-knowing to Knowing

Good friends, I will now show the difference between the two opposing views and how it affects craving and grasping and ultimately suffering with a simple example. A deer sees a mirage in the desert and thinks it is water. He is very thirsty. He runs after the mirage and the water keeps eluding him. He is exhausted, parched with thirst and suffering. He dies trying to find the non-existing water and takes rebirth, as at the time of death he was grasping at an image of the mirage and thirsting after the water. He suffered in this life and the next because when birth arises, then decay, death, sorrow and lamentation follows. “What is there (a mirage) is not what he saw”. He saw water.

We know that the mirage is not water. So we do not run after it. The moment we know that a mirage is not really water we do not crave for it.

What is the difference between the deer and us? We both looked at the same image but the deer craved the mirage as water and suffered and died because of his wrong view. We knew that it was an image. There was no craving and no suffering. We saw the mirage as it is through knowing.

The deer cannot see or understand that he has a false view. Because of knowledge the right view arose in us. Same eyes, same form, same image (mirage). The only difference between the deer and us is not-knowing and knowing. When there is knowing then there is no craving and suffering.

However, in life, what happened to the deer with respect to the mirage is what has happened to us with respect to objects experienced by the six senses. There is no difference between the deer and us as we are both seeing with false view. We are thirsting after sense pleasures and like the deer we cannot quench our thirst. It does not matter how much gold, silver and wealth we possess. It is not enough. Like the deer we cannot see that what we see is not what is there. We are in the mirage state now. Our thirst for sense pleasures will not cease. In life we are running after the mirage. At every opportunity we will succumb to our sense desire and try and grasp it. See if it will be enough. Surround yourself with sense pleasures and see if it will be enough. Buy more and more gold, accumulate wealth, and indulge your sense desires. Have all the pleasures that you want. Read the story of King Maha Mandudasa. You will see that no matter how

¹ The terms *avijja* and *vijja* are usually translated as ignorance and wisdom. I have used the words not-knowing and knowing because these words arise from the word knowledge and because the word ignorance has a negative judgmental association in the West often associated with stupidity or lack of intelligence. The not-knowing (*avijja*) in this context is common to all beings.

much you have, it is not enough. And yet, we have no craving for water when we saw the mirage. We had no craving, grasping and suffering because in this instance, we had the knowledge. We knew it was just an image a false view.

Awakened beings (Arahanths) will not put their hand out to touch the gold. They see it as it is. We see the gold and are deceived by our false view. We will put our hand out to touch and grab it. But this gold that we cling to is an enemy that will lead us to rebirth decay, death sorrow and lamentation. *Arahanths* have right view. No longer do they grasp at sense pleasures. They see and experience that what you see is not there and what is there you do not see.

I will give you another example. If there is an oil lamp, then little insects attracted to the light and warmth of the flame are drawn to it. A small child drawn to the dancing and flickering flame will touch it. He, like the insect, does not know that it will burn. Five years later the child knows that fire burns. He is older and this knowledge is now with him. He will watch from a safe distance but he will not touch the flame. The same child as a five year old did not have the knowledge that the flickering flame though beautiful to look at was dangerous. At ten years he had the knowledge. He saw the flame which is still dancing and flickering, as undesirable and dangerous. Did he have to do anything to make himself not touch it? No, he has the knowledge. As adults, we too have this knowledge. We will not touch and fondle the flame because we know it burns. When right view arises craving and grasping falls away automatically. Do you have to question and reflect on if you should touch the flame or not? No, you have to question only when you do not have the knowledge and wisdom. The moment not-knowing turns to knowing the craving and grasping are gone.

This Dhamma the Buddha gave is pure gold. What we run after as gold and sense pleasures is a dangerous enemy. But we do not see it as such. Each time we come in contact with the Buddha Dhamma if even a little rubs off on us, then the results will be with us. So far we have not had the good fortunate for even a little to be rubbed off on us. That is why we have traversed in this samsara for so long. But now you have received this knowledge.

Not-knowing and knowing cannot co-exist together just as day and night cannot co-exist. Absence of night is day. Similarly absence of not-knowing, is knowing. When knowing arises not-knowing disappears. You no longer have to work at getting rid of it. The moment day comes night is gone.

Why did we not see this Truth before? We have heard the Dhamma and read so many books. All you have to do is to change the way you see or view things. Let go all views you have. Pretend you know nothing. All you did in the way of practice was in the hope of realizing Nibbana. But you did not know what you really had to do. Now you know what you have to do. So you can let go the rest and do this one thing.

2. The Path (*magga*) - Virtue, Concentration and Wisdom

This is what you have to do. First you have to make the enemy (not-knowing) weak. Then you have to cultivate the friend (knowing). The friend cannot rise until the enemy is weak. The enemy is too powerful at present for the friend to raise its head.

We have traversed in this *samsaric* journey for a very long time cultivating the enemy (not-knowing) as a friend (knowing). As such this is a strong bond that we now have to break. The enemy is very powerful. We have to make him weak. The Buddha could not see a time when beings were traversing this *samsaric* journey without ignorance. Can we then in one birth reverse what we have done for so long? It can be done because now you know what you have to do. However, it requires great effort because the enemy is very powerful.

The Buddha gave the tools to weaken the enemy and strengthen the friend. He gave us the foundation of virtue and concentration (*sila, samadhi*) to weaken the enemy. And he gave us wisdom (*panna*) to cultivate the friend. He gave us the path of virtue, concentration and wisdom to overthrow the enemy and cultivate the friend.

First you need a strong foundation of virtue. Then on this strong foundation of virtue you have to begin calming the mind. Tranquility of mind is essential to overcome the enemy. We do this by eliminating the defilements known as the five hindrances. Train the mind to be still. Get rid of this constant chattering of the mind. You can use the four protective meditations - Loving Kindness, Repulsiveness of the Body, Death or the Qualities of the Buddha - as required for the appropriate hindrance. It does not matter what you use. But get rid of the chattering mind that is thinking of houses, wealth, children enemies, relatives, friends and lovers. These thoughts are but mind objects that arise from within. They have no substance. When you cultivate Tranquility Meditation (Breathing Awareness) little by little they get weaker. Tranquility of the mind means the enemy is getting weak. Why is this important? It is important because a calm and concentrated mind and body is required for insight and wisdom (knowing) to arise. We have to work at making the friend (knowing) strong by cultivation Insight Meditation (*Vipassana Bhavana*) and a stable mind is required to do this.

From time to time bring the friend, this new found knowledge, (what you see is not there and what is there you do not see) out and investigate your thought objects that arise in your mind in this new light. Observe them arise and pass away. Like the mirage, investigate these thought objects because you know now that they are not real. The objects disappeared the moment you saw them. What you are seeing now as your house and possessions are just memories that arise from within. See them for what they are.

Then investigate what you are holding onto as me, my child or my friend and examine the form that you are attracted towards. It is made up of 32 components such as skin, flesh, blood, urine, mucus, hair nails and teeth. This is this body that we call "form" that you are so attracted towards. You can also investigate the body based on the four great elements and the nine cemetery meditations. Now continue with the practice of

tranquility meditation but do so with knowledge. You know now what you have to do. This method of preparation of weakening the defilements (enemy) is virtue and concentration (*sila samadhi*). The method of cultivating the friend is wisdom (*panna*).

Then go back to tranquility. If you have strong lust, hatred and delusion resulting from a lapse in virtue it is very difficult to calm the mind. Observe the precepts with effort and go back to cultivating Tranquility. Always keep awareness on the primary object (*sati nimitta*) and practice tranquility meditation as instructed by your teacher. At this stage most of your time should be on tranquility meditation.

You will also now understand that Samadhi is not our goal. The purpose is right view. It is to cultivate the friend (knowing) by seeing name and form (*nama rupa*) as undesirable, suffering, impermanent and not self. The purpose of Samadhi is to weaken the enemy – not-knowing. Your work is done only when you have cultivated the friend - knowing. Samadhi is the foundation so that you can get rid of this false view of name and form being desirable, joyful, permanent and self.

One day you will see this body as its components parts and realize that it is undesirable. Then craving and grasping for form will fall away. When this happens you have come to the point in life when you see the mirage as a mirage. That is when you see that what you see is not there and what is there you do not see. You know that the results are right when you see that craving is gone. You cannot get rid of craving while you have this false view. For craving to be eliminated you have to see the opposing view.

You should see form as its components such as the five aggregates, the four great elements or sense bases. And later when you recollect the form in your mind you should know that these are mind objects arising from within the mind and that they are in fact an image of reality. Reality is a process of change made up of undesirable components that arise and fall.

Use the example of the mirage. In life when you see a mirage as a mirage you see impermanence, suffering and not self (*anicca, dukka, and anatta*). You have no craving, grasping and suffering because in the desert you see the mirage as impermanent, suffering and not self. It was because right view arose in the mind. That is why we did not see water. We saw that this false view of thinking it is water and running after it was going to lead to suffering. The deer saw it as desirable, joyful, permanent, and self. That is why he suffered.

Every time you look at something see it as undesirable, suffering, impermanent and not self. Start looking with this view. This is knowing. What you see is not there what is there you do not see. Now you know what you are trying to cultivate with Insight (*Vipassana*).

We were going to war and were collecting our weapons. But we did not know why we were going to war and who the enemy was. You must see this from life experience. Virtue, concentration and wisdom are the weapons to fight this deception (*mara*). They are not the war. Right now our defilements (*mara*) have shown this deception as truth. He

has done such a good job that we are fooled. Cultivating virtue, concentration and wisdom will result in slowly reducing sorrow and lamentation.

The difficulty is finding the enemy. Today I have shown you where the enemy is hiding. As such, you must first seek out the enemy and know why you are going to war. You must know how strong the enemy is and what weapons are needed to be used at what point. Now you know all of this. You now know that you cannot win the war by just collecting the (knowledge of the) weapons.

Now you know what *Nibbana* is and you also know what you have to do to attain *Nibbana*. *Nibbana* is no birth, decay, death sorrow and lamentation. It is deep but not a lot of work. The deep is made simple by bringing it all to one point, the point of not-knowing and knowing.

.Conclusion of the Method (1-5) and the Path (6-10)

1. The enemy, not-knowing, is the false view that “What we see (experience) is what is there and what is there is what we see (experience).”
2. The friend, knowing, is the right view that “What we see (experience) is not there and what is there we do not see (experience).”
3. The enemy, false view is hiding in name and form and in becoming. When we see name and form and becoming as “What we see and experience is not there and what is there we do not see.” we will have right view.
4. The enemy and friend cannot co-exist together just as night and day cannot co-exist together. When right view appears false view disappears.
5. When there is knowing there is no more birth, decay, death, sorrow and lamentation. This is *Nibbana*.
6. At present the enemy is strong and the friend is weak because we have cultivated the false view of the enemy for eons of time in this *samsaric* journey
7. The weapons required to overthrow the enemy and cultivate the friend are virtue (Restraining Disciplines - *samvara vinaya*), concentration (Tranquility Meditation) and wisdom (Insight Meditation).
8. We have to weaken the enemy and then cultivate the friend.
9. Virtue and concentration are required to weaken the enemy
10. Wisdom is the weapon required to cultivate the friend.

We are very fortunate. A few generations ago, at the time of our grandparents, no one knew about Tranquility and Insight Meditation (*Samatha* and *Vipassana Bhavana*). Now we get to hear such deep Dhamma because we have the merit. Do not let this opportunity go. If you do, you will regret later. Just not taking this opportunity in itself may result in you not having another opportunity in this life. Go home and reflect on what you have learned then knowledge and insight will arise. Without belief in what anyone says, just take the example of the mirage and investigate with insight. See for yourself. Let go of past conditioning. A truth has been revealed. Just examine this truth.

Sadhu sadhu sadhu
May all being be happy

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