



OPEN EYE

Meditation Group

See for Yourself

Buddhism Straight From the Heart - Marvel of the Dharma

***Citta:** The Pali–English Dictionary translates citta as heart or heart-mind, emphasizing it as more the emotive side of mind, as opposed to manas as the intellect in the sense of what grasps mental objects. Citta’s mental function is to store and organize all of the experiences of manas into samskaras – memories, impressions and emotional patterns. Chitta constantly accesses our samskara database to provide context, depth and understanding to our current experience of the world.*

Subconscious mind is termed ‘Citta’ in Vedanta. Much of your subconsciousness consists of submerged experiences, memories thrown into the background but recoverable. The Citta is like a calm lake and thoughts are like waves upon the surface of this lake and name and form are the normal ways in which these waves rise.

Marvel of the Dharma

-Ajaan Mahā Boowa Ñāṅōasampanno (1913-2011)

Those who practice the Dhamma will begin to know the Dhamma or to gain a feel for the Dhamma in the area of meditation more markedly than in other areas, and more extensively. For example, the gratification that comes from being generous is moving in one way, the gratification that comes from maintaining the precepts is moving in another way, the feelings of gratification that come from the different forms of goodness are moving in their own separate ways. This is called finding gratification in skilfulness.

But all of these feelings of gratification converge in the practice of meditation. We begin to feel moved from the moment the citta begins to grow still, when the heart gathers its currents together to stand solely on its own. Even though we may not yet obtain a great deal of stillness from the inward gathering of the citta, we still find ourselves gratified within, in a way we can clearly sense. If the citta or the Dhamma

were a material object, there wouldn’t be anyone in the world who wouldn’t respect this approach, because the goodness, the well-being, and the marvels that arise from this approach and from the practising in line with the teachings of the Buddha are things longed for the world over.

Goodness, Well-being, Marvels

These are things the world has always worked toward from time immemorial - with a pull that has never lost its attraction - and they are things that will always be desired until the world loses its meaning, or until people become extinct, having no more sense of good and evil. That’s when the world will no longer aspire for these profound blessings. The well-being that comes from the marvels - the Dhamma in the area of its results - is something to which all living beings aspire, simply that their abilities and circumstances differ, so that some attain their aspirations, while others have not yet. But the Dhamma can’t be displayed for the world to perceive with its senses of sight, hearing, smell, taste, or touch in the way other things can. Even though there may be other immaterial phenomena similar to the Dhamma - such as smells - still they aren’t like the true Dhamma that is touched by the hearts of those who have practised it. If the Dhamma could be displayed like material objects, there is no doubt but that the human world would have to respect the practice of living in the Dhamma. This is because the Dhamma is something more marvellous than anything else. In all the three levels of existence, there is no greater marvel than in the Dhamma.

The Dhamma can appear as a marvel, conspicuous and clear in the citta. The citta is what knows it - and only the citta. It can’t be displayed in general like material objects, as when we take things out to admire or to show off to others. The Dhamma can’t possibly be displayed like material objects. This is what makes the world lack interest - and lack the things that could be hoped from the Dhamma - in a way that is really a

shame.

Even those who want the marvel of the Dhamma don't know what the marvel is, or what the profundity of the Dhamma is, because the citta has never had contact with that profundity. The eye has never had contact with the marvel. The ear has never obtained any marvel from the current of the Dhamma, because the Dhamma can't be displayed as a current of sound as other things can. This is one obstacle that prevents people from becoming moved by the Dhamma, that prevents them from fully believing and fully entrusting themselves to the Dhamma in a way consistent with the world's long-felt hunger for well-being and prosperity.

Each of the Buddhas who has gained Awakening and taught the Dhamma to the world has had to reflect to the full extent of one's intelligence and ability on the myriad ways of teaching the Dhamma to the world so that the world could see it as a marvel, inasmuch as the Dhamma can't be put in shop windows or in public places. This is because the true Dhamma lies in the heart and reveals itself only in teachings and deeds, which doesn't excite a gratifying sense of absorption in the same way as touching the Dhamma directly with the heart.

Because there is no way to display the Dhamma directly, the Buddhas display it indirectly through teaching. They point out the causes - the Dhamma of conduct and practices leading to the Dhamma of results—at this or that point or this or that level; they proclaim the results - the excellence, the marvels of the stages. They teach the levels of the Dhamma that can be touched with the heart—all the way to the highest marvel, (vimutti) the mental release called nibbana within the heart.

Every Buddha has to devise strategies in teaching the Dhamma so as to bring that marvel out to the world by using various modes of speech and conduct - for example, describing the Dhamma and showing the conduct of the Dhamma as being like this and that - but the actual Dhamma can't be shown. It is something known exclusively in the heart, in the way in which each Buddha and each Arahant possesses this marvel. The marvel lies in their hearts - simply that they can't take the marvel that appears there and display it in the full measure of its wonder. Thus

they devise strategies for displaying it in their actions, which are simply attributes of the Dhamma, not the actual Dhamma itself. For instance, the doctrine they teach in the texts is simply an attribute of the Dhamma. Their act of teaching is also just an attribute of the Dhamma. The actual Dhamma is when a mediator or a person who listens to their teachings about the Dhamma follows the Dhamma in practice and touches it stage by stage within his or her own heart. This is called beginning to make contact with the actual Dhamma, step by step. However much contact is made, it gives a sense of gratification felt exclusively within the heart of the person who has gained that contact through his or her own practice.

When it comes to ingenuity in teaching, no one excels the Buddhas. Even so, they reveal only what they see as appropriate for humanity. They can't reveal the actual Dhamma - for example, by taking out the true marvel in their hearts and unfolding it for the world to see, saying, "This is the marvel of the Tathagata, of each Buddha. Do you see it?" This can't be done, for here we're talking about the marvel of the purity of a heart that was previously swamped with kilesa like a heap of assorted excrement, but now has become a pure, unsullied nature, or a pure, amazing nature because of the practice of constantly and relentlessly cleansing it. They can't show that Dhamma to the world, saying, "Do you see this? Look at it. Look at it. Feast your eyes till they're full and then strive to make this treasure your own!" So instead, they teach by using various strategies for those who practice, describing the path in full detail, in terms both of causes and of results.

What they bring out to show is simply the current of their voices, the breath of their mouths. That's what they bring out to speak, simply the breath of their mouths. They can't bring out the real thing. For example, when they say, "It's marvellous like this," it's just sound. The marvellous nature itself can't be brought out. All they can bring out is the action of saying, "That nature is marvellous," so that we can speculate for ourselves as to what that marvel is like. But the basic principle in making us come to know and see the marvel of the Dhamma, is that first we have to speculate and then we follow with practice. This qualifies as following the principles of the Dhamma the

Buddha taught, and this is fitting and proper. No matter what the difficulties and hardships encountered in following the path, we shouldn't let them form barriers to our progress, because this is where the path lies. If our practice is difficult, we have to stick with it. If it's painful, we have to bear it, because it's a duty we have to perform, a challenge we have to experience— while working so as to attain our aims. The Dhamma of a pure citta is like this: The citta is the Dhamma, the Dhamma is the citta. We call it a citta only as long as it is still with the body and khandhas. After it passes from the body and khandhas, there is no conventional reality to which it can be compared, and so we can't call it anything at all.

No matter how marvellous that nature, no matter how much it may be ours, there is no possible way we can use conventional realities to describe it or to make comparisons, because that Dhamma, that realm of release, has no conventions against which to measure things or make comparisons. It's the same as if we were in outer space: Which way is north, which way is south, we don't know. If we're on Earth, we can say "east," "west," "north," and "south" because there are things that we can observe and compare so as to tell which direction lies which way. We take the Earth as our standard. "High" and "Low" depend on the Earth as their frame of reference. How much higher than this, lower than this, north of this, south of this: These things we can say. But if we're out in outer space, there is no standard by which we can measure things, and so we can't say. Or as when we go up in an airplane: We can't tell how fast or how slow we're going. When we pass a cloud, we can tell that we're going fast, but if we depend simply on our eyesight, we're sure to think that the speed of the airplane is nowhere near the speed of a car. We can clearly see how deceptive our eyesight is in just this way. When we ride in a car, the trees on both sides of the road look as if they were falling in together down on the road behind us. Actually, they stay their separate selves. It's simply that the car runs past them. Since there are things that we sense, that lie close enough for comparison, it seems as if the car were going really fast.

As for the airplane, there's nothing to make comparisons with, so it looks as if the plane were dawdling along, as if it were going slower than a car, even though it's actually many times faster.

This is how it is when we compare the citta of an average non-practicing person with the citta of the Buddha. Whatever we grasp at, no matter how vile, we may say that it's good. We deceive ourselves, don't admit the truth, in the same way as our senses may tell us that a car passes objects much faster than an airplane. The practice of attending to the citta is something very important. Try to develop mindfulness (sati) and progress (pafifia) so that they can keep up with the things that come and entangle the citta. Thus the dukkha and suffering that result from thought- formations have no end, no point of resolution.

The Buddhas all reached Awakening here in this human world because the human world is rich in the Noble Truths. It's where they are plain to see.

The Noble Truth of Dukkha lies in the human body. Human beings know about dukkha. The Noble Truth of the origin of dukkha: This lies in the human heart. The Noble Truth of the path - the path of practice to cure kilesa (unwholesome mental states), tanha (thirst), and asava (cankers/defilements), which are the things that produce dukkha.

What is the path? To put it briefly: samadhi (a state of meditative consciousness) and pafifia (progress). These things human beings can know and can put into practice.

The Noble Truth of the cessation of dukkha—this, human beings also know. No matter which of the Four Noble Truths, all human beings know them - although they may not know how to behave toward them or take interest in behaving in line with them, in which case there is no way the Dhamma can help them at all.

The Buddhas thus taught the Dhamma in the human world, because the human world lies in the centre of all the levels of existence. We have been born in the centre of existence, in the midst of the path and the practice. We should conform correctly to the central point of the practice, so as to comprehend the Buddha's teachings

that lie in the centre of our heart.

The superlative Dhamma lies right here. It doesn't lie anywhere else. The citta is what can reach the Dhamma. The citta is what knows all dhammas. The affairs of the Dhamma, then, do not lie beyond the citta, which is a fitting vessel for them. Good, evil, pleasure, pain: The citta knows these things before anything else knows them, so we should develop mindfulness and pafifia to be resourceful, to keep up with the events that are always becoming involved with the citta in the course of each day.

If we're intent on investigating the origin of dukkha, which fans out from our various thought-formations, we will find that it arises continuously. It arises right here in the citta. It's fashioned right here. Even though we try to make it quiet, it won't be still. Why?

Because of the "unquietness", the thoughts with which the citta disturbs itself, which it forms and sends out towards its preoccupations all the time. Once the citta sends out its thoughts, it then gathers in dukkha for itself. It keeps at it, in and out like this. What goes out is the origin of dukkha, and what comes back in is dukkha. In other words, thoughts form and go out as the origin of dukkha, and when the results come back to the heart, they're stressful. These things are constantly being manufactured like this all the time. When we want the citta to have even just a little bit of calm, we really have to force it; and even then these things still manage to drive the citta into forming thoughts whenever we let down our guard. This is how it is with the origin of dukkha, which is constantly producing suffering. It lies in the heart and is always arising. For this reason, we must use mindfulness and pafifia to diagnose and remedy the origin of dukkha, to keep an eye out for it, and to extinguish it right there, without being negligent. Wherever we sit or stand - whatever our activity - we keep watch over this point, with mindfulness alert to it, and pafifia unravelling it so as to know it constantly for what it truly is.

All those who practice to remove kilesa practice in this way. In particular, those who are ordained in their practice go into the forest to look for a place conducive to their striving—in order to see clearly this very enemy. Even when they stay in inhabited areas, or wherever they go, wherever they stay, they keep

their attention focused continually, step by step, on the persistent effort to remove and desolve the origin of dukkha, which is a splinter, a thorn in the heart. Such people are bound to develop more and more ease and well-being, step by step, in proportion to the persistence of their practice.

We can see clearly when the citta is still and settles down: Thought-formations are still, or don't exist. Turmoil and disturbances don't occur. The dukkha that would otherwise result doesn't appear. When the citta is quiet, dukkha is also quiet. When thought-formations are quiet, the origin of dukkha is also quiet. All that remains at that moment is a feeling of peace and ease. The war between the citta and the kilesas causing dukkha is like this. We have to keep our progress going with persistence. We have to use mindfulness and pafifia, conviction and persistence to contend with the inner conflict that disturbs and ravages the citta, making it stagger and reel within. The disturbances will then gradually be disengaged. Even when there is only a moment of quiet, we will come to see the harm of the thought-formations that are constantly disturbing us. At the same time, we will see the benefits of mental stillness - that it's a genuine pleasure. Whether there is a lot of stillness or a little, pleasure arises in proportion to the foundation of stillness or the strength of the stillness, which in the texts is called samadhi.

A citta centred and still is called a citta in samadhi, or a citta gathered in samadhi. This is what genuine samadhi is like inside the heart. The names of the various stages of samadhi are every where, but actual samadhi is inside the heart. The heart is what gives rise to samadhi. It produces it, makes it on its own. When samadhi is still, the citta experiences calm respite and pleasure. It has its own foundation set firmly and solidly within.

It's as if we were under an eave or under the comforting shelter of a tree. We're comfortable when it rains, we're comfortable when the sun is out, because we don't have to be exposed to the sun and rain. The same holds true with a citta that has an inner foundation of stillness: It's not affected by this preoccupation or that, which would otherwise disturb and entangle it repeatedly, without respite. This is because stillness is the heart's dwelling - "samadhi", which is one level of home for the heart. Pafifia is ingenuity, sound judgement, evaluating causes and effects within and without; above, below, and in

between - inside the body - all the way to the currents of the citta that send out thoughts from various angles. Mindfulness and pafifia keep track of these things, investigating and evaluating them so as to know causes and effects in terms of the heart's thought-formations, or in terms of the nature of saikhara within us, until we see the truth of each of these things.

Don't go investigating these things off target, by being clever with assumptions and interpretations that go against the truth - because in the investigation of phenomena, we investigate in line with the truth. We don't resist the truth, for that would simply enhance the kilesas causing dukkha at the very moment we think we're investigating phenomena so as to remove them.

Birth we have already experienced. As for old age, we've been growing old from the day of our birth, older and older, step by step. Whatever our age, that's how long we've been growing old, until we reach the end of life. When we're old to the nth degree, we fall apart. In other words, we've been growing old from the moment of birth - older by the day, the month, the year - older and older continually. We call it "growing up", but actually it's growing old. See? Investigate it for what it really is. This is the great highway

- the way of nature. Don't resist it. For example, the body is growing old, but we don't want it to be old. We want it always to be young. This is called resisting the truth - which is dukkha. Even when we try to resist it, we don't get anywhere. What do we hope to gain by resisting it and creating dukkha for ourselves? Actually, we gain nothing but the dukkha that comes from resisting the truth.

Use pafifia to investigate just like this. Whenever pain arises in any part of the body, if we have medicine to treat it, then we treat it. When the medicine can take care of it, the body recovers. When the medicine can't, it dies. It goes on its own. There's no need for us to force it not to die, or to stay alive for so-and-so many years, for that would be an absurdity. Even if we forced it, it wouldn't stay. We wouldn't get any results and would just be wearing ourselves out in vain. The body has to follow its own natural principles. When we investigate in line with its truth this way,

we can be at our ease. Wherever there's pain, keep aware of it continually in line with its truth. Whether it hurts a lot or a little, keep aware of its manifestations until it reaches the ultimate point of pain - the death of the body - and that's as far as it goes.

Use your pafifia to investigate, to contemplate in line with the natural principles of things as they already are. This is called pafifia that doesn't fly in the face of truth - and the heart can then be at ease.

We study the four "Noble Truths" here in our body. In other words, we study birth, ageing, illness, and death, all of which lie in this single heap of elements (dhatu) without ever leaving it. Birth is an affair of these elements. Growing up or growing old, it's old right here. When there's illness, it manages to be ill right here, in one part or another. When death comes, it dies right here. So we have to study right here - where else would we study? We have to study and know the things that involve us directly before we study anything else. We have to study them comprehensively and to completion - studying our own birth, our ageing, our illness and pain, and completing our study of our own death. That's when we'll be wise - wise to all the events around us.

People who know the Dhamma through practising so that they are wise to the events that occur to themselves, do not flinch in the face of any of the conventional realities of the world at all. This is how it is when we study the Dhamma, when we know and see the Dhamma in the area of the heart - in other words, when we know rightly and well. "Mindfulness and pafifia that are wise all around themselves" are wise in this way, not wise simply from being able to remember. They have to be wise in curing doubt, in curing the recalcitrance of the heart, as well as in curing their own attachments and false assumptions so as to leave only a nature that is pure and simple. That's when we'll be really at ease, really relieved. Let the khandhas be khandhas pure and simple in their own way, without our messing with them, without our struggling with them for power, without our forcing or coercing them to be like this or like that. The khandhas are then khandhas, the citta is then the citta, each with its own separate reality, each not infringing on the others as it used to. Each performs its own duties. This is called khandhas pure

and simple, the citta pure and simple, without any conventional realities adulterating them. What knows is what knows, the elements are elements, the khandhas are khandhas.

Whatever things may break apart, let them break apart.

We have already known them clearly with our pafifia.

We have no doubts. We've known them in advance, even before they die, so when death comes, what doubts can we have? - especially now that they display the truth of their nature for us to see clearly. This is called studying the Dhamma, practising the Dhamma.

To study and practice this way is to follow the same way that sages have practised and known before us.

All of these conditions are matters of conventional reality - matters of the elements, the khandhas, or the sense media (ayatana). The four khandhas, the five khandhas, whatever, are individual conditions, individual conditions that are separated in line with conventions. Pafifia is also a condition; and mindfulness, another condition - conditions of the heart - but they're Dhamma, means of curing the citta that is clouded and obscured, means of washing away the things that cloud and obscure it, until radiance appears through the power of the pafifia that cleanses the heart. Once the heart is radiant, in the next step it becomes pure.

Why is it pure? Because all impurities have fallen away from it. The various misconstruings that are an affair of the kilesas are all gone from the heart, so the heart is pure. This pure heart means that we have completed our study of ourselves, in line with the statement of the teaching:

vusitam brahmacariyam katam kara)^ofyam

"The task of the practice is done, the holy life is complete, there is no further task to be done."

When the tasks we have had to do - abandoning and striving - are done to completion, we know right here, because delusion lay right here in the heart. We study and practice simply to cure our own delusion. Once we know right here, and delusion is gone, what else is there to know? - for beyond this there is nothing further to know. What else is there for us to be deluded about? We're no longer deluded, because we know fully all around.

(Marvel of the Dharma - To be continued next week)