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Comments and questions requested

Article 18

SATIPATTHANA SUTTA (DISCOURSE ON THE FOUR FOUNDATIONS OF MINDFULNESS)

(2) SENSATIONS (VEDANA) IN THE CONTEXT OF DEPENDENT ORIGINATION

In the first article on sensations (Article 17 published in the QSA Dhamma Magazine in March 2021) general considerations regarding Sensations were examined. In this article, it is intended to look at another aspect of Sensations. It is the importance of Sensations in the chain of experiences called Dependent Origination (Paticca Samuppada).

Dependent Origination is the best known presentation of Causation Theory in Buddhism. It explains the causes that lead to suffering in the cycle of births and deaths. It is presented as a chain consisting of twelve links as follows:

<i>ENGLISH</i>	<i>PALI</i>	
Ignorance	Avijja	1
Component things	Sankhara	2
Consciousness	Citta or Vinnana	3
Name-form Structure	Nama-Rupa	4
Six Bases	Salayatana	5
Contact	Phassa	6
Sensation	Vedana	7
Craving	Tanha	8
Becoming	Bhava	9
Birth	Jati	10
Aging, Death	Jara, Marana	11
Sorrow, Lament, suffering	Soka, Parideva, Dukkha	12

A Buddhist practitioner who aims at emancipation from the suffering in Samasara (cycle of births) needs to break this chain. It is not easy to break the chain. The Buddha has recommended to us that link number 7 is one that can be used to break the chain as it is a thing that we experience all our lives. This is why, the second foundation of mindfulness (Contemplation of Sensations) becomes so vital in our practice.

How this is done is explained briefly in Article 17 of this magazine. Further considerations on sensations are discussed in Article 19 of this magazine. Compiled by Rahubdde Sarath-Chandra.

Article 19

SATIPATTHANA SUTTA (DISCOURSE ON THE FOUR FOUNDATIONS OF MINDFULNESS)

(3) SENSATIONS (VEDANA) THE SIGNIFICANCE OF SENSATIONS

In Satipatthana Sutta, the section on Vedana is short but it is very powerful.

There are three basic types of feeling, namely liked, disliked or neutral. Each can be worldly (amisa) or other worldly (niramisa) making a total of nine. The

analysis can be presented in many other ways such as a set of 5, 9, 54 or 108. Ultimately these amount to the same.

A being is a body, mind and an inter-connection (which is consciousness). The body is a combination of the four great elements, solidity, fluidity, air and heat. We try to find happiness for this body but we ignore the mind as we do not see it. We can reduce this search for pleasing the body and start paying attention to the mind. The mind becomes active as it comes into contact with objects in the internal or external world or in the mind itself.

It is worth paying attention to Vedana (feeling or sensation) experienced by the senses and the information generated by it. At times, these might be appearing in extremes. For example a sound may be loud or small, good or bad and so on. We notice these as they come without trying to manipulate them. Gradually we may notice aspects that are not obvious. These aspects may be in the body or found elsewhere.

With the impact of this information we may find that we like some and dislike others. This is where sensations (Vedana) arise. Noticing through contact generally is the first experience. The second experience is the assessment as likes or dislikes. Contact leads to sensation. All these can happen in the body itself.

This is also indicated in the chain of Dependent Origination. The subset Contact-Vedana-Tanha- Upadana etc shows this. Continuation in the cycle of births and deaths is indicated in the chain of links in Dependent Origination (Paticca Samuppda). (Please see article 18 of this magazine).

Ultimately Vedana ends up with Dukkha of all forms, life after life. Because it is part of life experience, we can learn how to use Feelings for the purpose of attaining enlightenment.

Pancakanga Sutta mentions categorisations of Vedana. This is useful for further study.

Kim Mulaka Sutta emphasises that Vedana is the root of many mental states.

We start mindfulness meditation with observation of contacts e.g. Breath contacting the nostril, or the back contacting the floor etc. This contact leads to Vedana and so on.

This article was written by Rahubadde Sarath-Chandra based on a talk given by Mr. Amaranath Jayakody in a session of the Mindfulness program conducted by him in QSA Buddhist Forum 3 in March 2021 on Zoom.

Article 20

The way to worldly Happiness

(1) MAINTAINING A BALANCE IN LIFE

Enlightenment (Nibbana) is our ultimate aim. Short of that, we all like to lead a happy worldly life. A good part of Buddha's teachings is about that. Do we look at such teachings often enough? Probably not.

In this article one such teaching is considered. It is about maintaining balance in day to day living.

For example, when we get a promotion in the job, when we get a lot of money from our business or by selling a property, when we get a high price for a stock we sell, when we win in a game, when our son or daughter wins a prize or gets high marks in an examination, when our politician wins a seat, when our team wins a match, we get elated. In these and similar situations it is reasonable to become happy, but is it reasonable to become highly elated and jump around?

High elation throws you off balance. It is better to be quietly happy. The event may be due to good actions done in the past. It might not be a current achievement. The high elation might bring you immediate suffering as in the case of drinking or sports related injuries. Moreover, our success often can mean someone else's failure. It is good to have compassion towards them. The high elation passes like the wind and may never come again. Reasonable happiness might last for a long term.

When the opposite happens, that is when things go wrong, when you experience serious problems at work, incur heavy losses in business or the share market, when the children fail to do well in examinations, or when you are on the losing side in a game, one may experience disappointment and sadness. Here again one can stay in quiet acceptance as it is part of living. There is no need for lamentation. It might be the result of bad actions in the past. If one accepts failure as a common occurrence, the sadness will pass away quickly. If you hold on to it too much it might leave a continuing scar in the mind.

It shows us that staying in balance is the best option. It is our experience, and it is what the Buddha taught. Once you understand this principle you will find it much easier to tide over both success and failure, both gain and loss, good fame

and ill-fame etc. The question remains to find how we can develop this mental strength.

Firstly, we need to understand the working of Kamma, our actions in the past bearing results now or in the future. Learn to say to yourself, this is what I may have done in the past!

Secondly, both success and failure are generated ultimately by craving (tanha). We can keep reducing craving simply by reducing the strength of unwholesome roots in the mind, namely greed, hatred and delusion. One needs to observe one's conduct and spoken words and note whether these are wholesome or unwholesome. Whatever religion one might belong to, this can be done. If it is gradual, it is easy.

Thirdly, learn to be compassionate towards others. This helps to reduce the gulf between myself and others. We are after all in the same boat. The idea of compassion (karuna) itself is good. Translating this into action brings tangible results. Buddhist chaplaincy is one way you can practise compassion towards others.

Fourthly, the attitude of measuring others (Mana) is not always helpful. It is useful to reflect on the equality of everyone in society, as opposed to thinking that only we are great and others are worthless.

Fifthly, it is good to try staying in mental balance in the face of what happens in the world. Come what may is a useful attitude if applied in a reasonable manner. This leads to a most fundamental idea, namely Equanimity (Upekkha). This is the seventh factor of awakening in the path to enlightenment.

What is embedded deep in the mind can be seen only in meditation. Mindfulness is particularly important. This is continually discussed in Buddhist Forum 3 conducted by QSA.

COMMENTS ON ARTICLES AND DHAMMA QUESTIONS

Readers are invited to send any comments on articles or Dhamma questions to QSA via infoqsa@gmail.com

THE END OF THE 6 PAGE QSA DHAMMA MAGAZINE FOR APRIL 2021

Issued by the President of QSA, Reverend James Wilson

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