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Article 15

Aboriginal Mediation: Sathi Bhavana with Deep Connection

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The word, concept and spiritual practice that is *dadirri (da-did-ee)* is from the Ngan'gikurunggurr and Ngen'giwumirri languages of the Aboriginal peoples of the Daly River region in the Northern Territory, Australia. (Rose 1988).

In the Aboriginal way of living, we learnt to listen from our earliest days. We could not live good and useful lives unless we listened. This was the normal way for us to learn - not by asking questions. We learnt by watching and

listening, waiting and then acting. Our people have passed on this way of listening for over 40,000 years.

The listening that was practiced is deep listening, an almost Extra Sensory listening that connected being with country. It is the being aware of the motion of the flowing water, the rustling of leaves and the movement of spinifex grass when we are connected to country.

In the Kayagat-sati Sutta: Mindfulness Immersed in the Body, Lord Buddha teaches “Breathing in long, he discerns, 'I am breathing in long'; or breathing out long, he discerns, 'I am breathing out long.' Or breathing in short, he discerns, 'I am breathing in short'; or breathing out short, he discerns, 'I am breathing out short.' In a Dadirri practice one could say “Breathing in long, he discerns I am breathing in long, my breath comes from the air, from the trees, I put back CO2 to the forest I am one with the forest and connected with country.

When I was studying meditation in Sri Lanka and Thailand, many Westerns would be concerned about their quiet and peace being interrupted by hammers of workers or the rattle of kitchen pans outside and even the mediation session ending. In its extreme, Western meditation students would display extreme anxiety at having to return to Colombo for a Visa extension or to the airport.

With deep listening we can connect to our situation and being one with the external sounds and being connected. As a Buddhist practicing non-attachment we are not consumed by the external sound and we are mindful of what we are doing. For example, when I am walking I am walking, I acknowledge the sound of the car horn in the distance, however, my feet are connected to country the soil is part of me, this is my responsibility to look after the soil. By extension when can use insight to explore the fact that the car is also connected to the road, a base of bitumen on the soil, the soil where Indigenous people walked for thousands of years, I too walk on Aboriginal land.

Our Western mind labels good sounds and bad sounds, however, what if we acknowledge that sound is connected to country. The workers hammer is hitting a nail, the iron comes from the mineral deposits in the soil, the worker is building shelter, animals and humans use shelter to protect themselves from the elements and the elements are what sustain our country, the wind shaping

the soil, the rain moistening it and sustaining plant and animal life that are part of country, we are part of country.

In considering deep listening we are not attached to the noise but connected to country and mindful. Connections are important for Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, these connections are both positive and can be profound. Lord Buddha acknowledge his connection to the Bodhi tree, his connection to the forest, his five fellow meditators, and even his horse Kanthika. Acknowledgment and connection in his practice was one of non-attachment. Lord Buddha was not attached to the Boddhi tree, his connection was one of acknowledging the trees purpose, deep listening to the forest: the spirits, the animals the connections of soil, trees, animal activity without being disturbed by the sounds and being connected to place, whilst mindful of his task.

Dr Miriam Rose was an Australia Day Award recipient and this years NAIDOC theme is Healing Country.

References and Further Reading

<https://www.miriamrosefoundation.org.au/about-dadiriddha>

<https://www.accesstoinsight.org/tipitaka/mn/mn.119.than.html>

Article 16

CLEAR COMPREHENSION (SAMPAJANNA)

Clear comprehension is one of the factors that contribute to success in the practice of Mindfulness. Sampajanna is the Pali term for clear comprehension. It implies a complete and good understanding of the method used to develop mindfulness. It also signifies the combination of Wisdom with mindfulness as applied to all objects contacted by the mind. The practitioner is kept aware of exactly what he or she is doing in the practice.

In relation to the four main body postures it can be illustrated as follows:

1 *The standing posture*

The body is erect and resting on the two feet. The contact is between the floor or ground with the heel of the right foot and the left foot.

2 *The Walking posture*

The body is erect and resting on the two feet. The contact is between the floor or ground with the heel of (say) the right foot, the body momentarily resting on that foot. and then transferring the weight of the body to the left foot. One may further note the movement of the either foot from one point to the next.

3 *The sitting posture*

The body is erect and resting on the buttocks, and the two legs. The contact is between the floor or ground with the two legs and two feet.

4 *The Reclining posture*

The body is reclining on a side of the body, right or left. The contact is between the floor or ground with the length of the body, right or left.

The clear comprehension draws the mind to the contact area or point, or points. This implies drawing the mind to the body.

In the walking posture, the mind has the opportunity of being active, dwelling momentarily on one contact point, the movement and then the next contact point.

There are other postures possible and in each case by defining the posture one can note how clear comprehension assists in tracing the placement of attention.

In whatever postures or movements of the whole body or parts of the body, clear understanding and mindfulness of what is being done at a given time can constitute clear comprehension. In a way it is an extension of mindfulness. In another way it is an aid to mindfulness. Mindfulness and clear comprehension work effectively together.

If clear comprehension is absent, one can sit in meditation, walk in meditation and so on like a machine with no awareness of what exactly is being done.

The Cankamana Sutta lists five advantages of walking meditation if done properly:

1 Helps in preparing for long journeys

- 2 Helps for preparing to strive
- 3 Reduces being prone to illness
- 4 Helps in digesting food
- 5 Results are long lasting

A reader may do an internet search for clear comprehension or samapajanna. The teachings given by the Buddha on how comprehension is gradually developed can be seen. For example, when one moves the head to the left while walking one observes what is on the left as fully as possible and similarly when one moves the head to the right, what is on the right. There are several such descriptions given. It looks very simple but that is where and how you train yourself.

The idea of mindfulness becomes meaningful with the experience of clear comprehension. Otherwise what you think is walking meditation can become mechanical experience no different from walking for exercise.

THE END OF THE 5 PAGE QSA DHAMMA MAGAZINE FOR FEBRUARY 2021

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