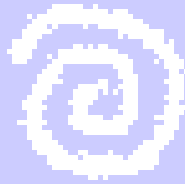


ADVANCED MEDITATION IN PRACTICE

PART II: MIND ONLY

SUPER-CONSCIOUSNESS (PRAJNAPARAMITA)
THROUGH MEDITATION



Goldenage - Monday, 17 January 2005

THE MEDITATION ON MIND ONLY

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Introduction

This presentation is written under the assumption that the reader has at least some basic knowledge of meditation techniques and practices. Briefly, one should know how to sit in a relaxed position (the lotus posture is recommended: spine erect, with hands placed in the lap, comfortably on top of each other, palms upwards). Be comfortable, become passive and motionless. The surroundings should be pleasant and relatively quite. The early morning is the best time to practice meditation, a small flame can be burned to represent the light of the spirit and incense may be burned to aid in easy realization and recall of the state of consciousness attained at the previous session. The mind should be cleared by first focusing on the level of consciousness that appears to be aware of the creation represented by the world around one. The mind should then be allowed to slip quietly into its source, free from extraneous thought, by focusing on the feeling of self that exists prior to speech. This is, in effect, the level of consciousness held by the individual prior to coming “into body”, prior to birth so to speak. This may be termed the “root consciousness of personality”.

It is thus proposed and anticipated that the state of “root consciousness” can be attained by the reader of this text at will. Anyone requiring assistance in this matter is welcome to contact the author (Goldenage). The narrative continues:

1. Structural Background

The Heart sutra provides a lesson in the basic comprehension of being and the world delivered to one of the Buddha's wisest disciples [Shariputra (Sanskrit) or Sharadwatibu (Tibetan)]. The lesson in insight is presented by The Buddha of Compassion [called Avalokitesvara (Sanskrit) or Chenrezig (Tibetan)] a transcendent being. This entity or state of pure consciousness has the designation of "Bodhisattva" which means that he is in the final stages of attaining Buddhahood. A Bodhisattva is one who has vowed to help all sentient beings attain Nirvana, that is, Supreme or Ultimate Enlightenment, before he himself achieves it.

The "teaching" contained in the Heart Sutra is the very essence of Avalokitesvara's own attainment. Here, the core insight concerns the nature and origin of "compassion". One should thus understand that it is the comprehension as to the origin of this deep-rooted feeling that is being offered by Avalokitesvara. In sum, this realisation explains how the notion of compassion (in all of its forms) enters into the realm of sentient being, as a collective category of consciousness exposed to the world. This is the world characterised by the apprehension of forms and the allocation of names thereto.

The origin of the insight proposed by Avalokitesvara arises from a form of deep meditation or samaadhi and the type of insight concerned is called **Prajnaparamita**. Prajnaparamita is "the deep consciousness of transcendence & wisdom". This is a viewpoint obtained from outside the "normal" world of duality, of name and form which is inhabited by the ego-self. It is the "view" from "beyond the peak" (para {beyond}-mita {peak}) wherein the duality of name & form has yet to arise. This is a state of consciousness where the ordinary world cannot be immediately perceived by the senses. For all intents and purposes therefore, the world does not exist.

This is all well and good one might say, but how can this state of awareness be achieved by the ordinary person? This is a fair question

and the answer this query comes about as the result of assessing the categories of body and soul. Here the body is also taken to mean the world of physicality at large as well as the human body. The term soul can be taken to indicate “personal consciousness” consisting of aspects of thinking, perception, memory and so forth together with its operational ports or senses (sight, smell, touch, taste, hearing, and mind). Thus both the “real physical world” (including the body etc.) as well as the conscious being inhabiting the body can be subject to examination. An examination concluding that both categories are “empty of self-existence”. Thus Avalokitesvara found the structure of form or body to be quite empty of self-existence and he stated this observation as “form is emptiness!”

Now the meaning of this contention is based on the whole concept of meditative contemplation used by the Buddha himself. Thus by understanding this we may see, in part, how the Buddha reached nirvana. We also can gain some insight into that conscious state without entering it directly. In brief, the procedure involved systematic negation. One might say that through the negative assessment of the world and being the Buddha “backs out of the world” & into a state of unlimited positivism. How was that achieved? What exactly does the statement “form is emptiness” mean and why is it of such importance for a meditative approach?

In effect it will come as no surprise for most to learn that there is no “self” in form but there is a bit more to it than that. It really means that within form nothing has existence in and of itself. A thing, such as a wooden table for instance, arises as a discriminative product from the ground-state enjoyed by all other things. This is so for the world, for the universe and for all thoughts about the contents of these categories. The aspect of discrimination that confers the character of “apart-ness” to our wooden table is the work of the mind.

But why or how is this so? If one examines the world of things closely it soon becomes apparent that no thing can be identified (in time, space or mind) as “in-and-of-itself”, as self-existing. This is because “categories” of things overlap in as much as each can only be defined

in terms of the characteristics shared by others. And nor is this so strange, taking again our wooden table we may for instance distinguish it from a tree. A tree has a natural growth-form, a table does not. Another non overlapping character for distinguishing them apart may be that the tree is alive (say) but then, they may both be made of wood (a clear overlap). As products, they both arise as the result of a life-process, they both decay into the constituents of soil, they are both comprised of the constituents of soil and so forth. To repeat then, there is no thing that can be described as existing in and of itself. Everything is thus part of a matrix of continuity, things as it were, can be seen to emerge out of this continuity or one can concentrate on the fact that there are these shared characteristics which tend to draw things back into a kind of perceptual soup.

2 Initial meditation

If one concentrates firmly on the shared aspects of things as a continuum a curious transition will occur. In a sudden moment the mind will find itself observing the veil of continuity and standing completely apart there-from. This is the very first step into the sphere of super-consciousness (Prajnaparamita), a small one but a start.

There is a deep flux-state controlled by the mind, things either appear to be quite discrete (at any level of discrimination) or they merge. Now the logic of non-overlap in description, given in the first section, demonstrates conclusively that things do not exhibit the characteristic of self-sufficiency. Why then do they appear to differ and to be sufficiently separate that the word “discrete”, as in the phrase “discrete entities”, can be deployed by the waking mind to describe the situation?

Now, the answer can be one of two alternatives: 1) things are separate from each other because they exist in and of themselves (in spite of the obvious logic to the contrary), and are actually outside the mind; 2) it is a property of mind itself that separates one thing from another and this is done by “discrimination” which in effect replaces a false perceptual barrier around each detected & specified item. Furthermore the nature of this boundary is: 1) that it is infinitesimally

thin; 2) that this barrier in fact consists of “emptiness” for it is certainly not space nor is it anything else. It is an artefact of the mind.

But things are multitudinous and densely packed at every level of perception from the microscopic to the macroscopic. In effect, this means that the world we see around us is chock-full of (aggregated) emptiness (form is emptiness) and it is the mind alone that confers content therein through the process of discrimination. Now, if this insight is held firmly in focus and then considered at progressively deeper levels, the world of name and form vanishes and the subject commences to “course in the realm of super-consciousness (Prajnaparamita).”

3 Logic of emptiness in form

Now if form is emptiness it also must follow that emptiness is form. Now, from the perspective of even the first degree of super-consciousness (above), it is very easy to see that emptiness must be form since it is the work of but a moment to focus on the table and indeed any other object and to then see it as otherwise expected i.e. as a detailed object. However it also must be the case that from the widest perspective down to the multitude of the most minutely discriminated particle or charged state, there must also exist a successive continuum of emptiness (about each object from the largest to the smallest and indeed including charged states). This continuum must therefore exactly co-occur with form at the limit of perception.

Thus, not only is there no self-sufficiency in form i.e. form is emptiness but also that which is non self sufficient is form i.e. emptiness is form. So, whatever is emptiness is form and whatever is form is emptiness, the two cannot be separated from one another and are indeed co-extensive.

4 Logic of emptiness in consciousness

Using the same formula as before, we can state that ego-consciousness is emptiness and emptiness is ego-consciousness

The same indeed can be said of sensation, perceptions and memory. On the face if it however, this may well be a much more difficult pill to swallow than is the case for the claim made with respect to form. However, to pave the way for the systematic explanation that must follow it can be said that the aim of the exercise is to show, by negation, that even the characteristics of the ego are without true self-existing substance. Put another way, the ego is merely a work of fiction that is sustained by thought (acts of the mind) alone. That this is so is shown by the modern-world practice of self-reinforcement. Here the ego is systematically reinforced by procedures that have the subject repeating phrases (sometimes in front of a mirror) along the lines of "I am popular", "I can sell anything to anyone" and so forth. The resulting artificial nature of the universal sales-person is widely known.

As part of consciousness we may take the example of 'sensation' which depends on experience in the evaluation of form. The elements of form represent apparent apprehension of sensations by a conscious separation through the doorways representing the 5 sense organs. This consciousness "imagines that it feels externality". By means of the attachment of "expectations" to these sensations, which are induced by "habit-energy" (ancient memories) elements of physicality are anticipated and through subdivisions and combinations a separable differentiation results. Hence through the experience of sensation, the consciousness constructs its own prison out of its own reflection and eventually finds itself immersed in the world of name and form.

Thus we may see that the "appearance of an object" is not necessarily "concrete". Form is a mask that cannot be removed without concealing the identity of the object i.e. the mask of a table, of a coin etc. It is a subjective or conceptual category to give meaning to the mind's conception of externality. It corresponds with "emptiness" as used above. In other words, if that mask could be removed the object, all objects, would be revealed only as a non-discernable continuum, that is, as "true" emptiness.

Similarly the category of "perception" depends on both form and sensation.

Memory likewise depends on form, sensation & perception. The faculty of memory is also sometimes termed predisposition, recollection, the expression of the “karmic genome” and so forth. It may also be described as resulting from impressions on the mind of acts done in former existence. And again, as resulting in the “mental conformation” with creations of the mind as in the production of an external world which is regarded as real though actually being non-existent. As a prefabricated set of guidelines from the past it may be held to account for: intelligence, belief, shame, confidence, indolence, pride, anger, envy, sloth, repentance, doubt etc. This category of consciousness is also sometimes poorly named “volition”.

Consciousness itself, being associated with the capacity to effect division, can be thought of as constituting the knowledge that results from division. For division to take place there must first be separate discrimination thus consciousness depends on form, sensation, perception & memory. In a similar manner all categories associated with the soul can be understood to be empty of self-existence. Thus there are no: forms, no feelings, perceptions, volitions or consciousness. No eye, ear, nose, tongue, body or mind; No form, sound, smell, taste, touch or mind-object; no field of consciousness in which the eye operates and so forth.

5 Logic of deconstruction (mind alone)

If nothing survives as self-sufficient after such a logic of deconstruction is applied what then remains? The answer is mind-only. It is the very function which observes this process that alone remains and it follows that all that apparently greets this capacity must therefore be that category itself. The senses are mind, the objects of the senses are of mind alone as is the postulation of self, soul, body and so forth.

When mind perceives the world of name and form, it does so by means of the five sense-organs as the associated sense-fields are scanned. The resultant picture or impression is conceived as “outside” and separate from the sense organs so giving rise to the apprehension

of an extended external and objective world. However, both the mind along with the ego-consciousness operate within a higher sphere of being than that defined by the limits of the body and indeed by “physicality”.

Put another way, this (infinitely) larger sphere is itself Mind so that what is perceived through the senses (by the personal mind) is nothing other than its own source (as back-ground). This “consistent” back-ground of “mind-stuff” is an illusion formed by anticipation coupled with the discrimination of energy-attachments that arise from the beginning-less “past”. Thus the world of names and forms is both a delusion and an illusion which is created moment to moment by reflectivity. The resulting awareness or “false consciousness” (that aspect of mind which views the world through the senses) is called the ego-self, which really, does not exist except as a changing idea. Extant is Mind Alone, the attribute of transcendent Being – empty, motionless, silent, formless, unlighted (yet within which arise forms, movement, noise, light and shadows in the same way that dreams arise in the mind of the sleeper). Life is thus an imagined play providing a false foundation but, from this, the personal self (if awakened to the image) is presented with the only available opportunity to recall its true Source and timeless state. The rest is but a dream.

There is no external world apart from your-self. What you see, what your eyes tell you is something outside of yourself, is merely a deep projection of your own mind. Put another way, the world and all of its forms is merely “mind-stuff”. There is no split between your-self as a being, as Being itself, and the world as a non-being-entity (as non-being) that is, as a “reality” apart from your-self. You may (unknowingly) imagine that there is an external process that effects transformation of things such as when gold is beaten into a necklace or again into earrings. Philosophers may describe it thus but this is not correct, nor is it otherwise. All differentiation (change) in transformation must be regarded as due to discrimination only (i.e. the allocation of stages and names), as when milk sours. This change, from milk to curds, is a process arising from discrimination, it is discriminated by both the philosophers and the ignorant into named segments of

appearance in form, but, really there is no change. This is because the external objects, being of mind itself, have no reality of their own.

A ball of clay is nothing other than the dust-motes that comprise it, it is not different there from. Likewise the ball is different from the particles otherwise it would not be possible to differentiate it from those same dust-motes. In the same way, what is seen by those who do not perceive the truth, as an evolving object (i.e. the growth of an apple), is no more than the discrimination of their own minds. There is really nothing growing, nothing disappearing (as when the apple is eaten). It is like viewing the things of imagination change, as in an hallucination. It is like seeing the rise and disappearance of things in a dream or like the birth and death of a barren woman's child. Really, it is the discrimination of the mind alone through the organs of perception (eye, nose, ear, nose, skin) that grants the appearance of externality. The transformation of the form in time, the embracing of the spirit (soul) in the elements and the sense organs – may be seen by the ignorant as a chain of origination – those who thus imagine the birth of a child, are not the wise.

6 Meditation – mind alone

Concentrate on yourself alone; see the world fade away as the One Self (Mind) Alone begins to shine. Focus back on the thought of the world and by thus discriminating, see it at once appear. Attain this perception at will.

It is only deep-seated attachment to the discriminated aspects of mind-stuff that causes the personal self, in ignorance, to imagine the world apart. For things have no self-nature, they are mind alone and thus appear to the awakened consciousness as mere illusion. But, as already mentioned they are in one way perceived as existing and in another way are not so perceived. All things can thus be seen in two ways in accordance with ignorance and knowledge.

As long as there is a mental perturbation which makes one cling to an objective world of discrimination there is materialism (the objective

world). When it is recognised that there is nothing beyond that which is seen by mind of itself, the discrimination of being and non-being ceases and thus there is no external world as the object of perception. Discriminating ceasing, one abides in the Self Alone. When reality is discriminated other than as it is (the Self Alone), there is the clinging to the idea that all things have their self-nature. Then what is alone by itself, is not seen, and when what is alone by itself is not seen there is no disappearance of discrimination that brings forth the Self, that which is alone, the true Reality. An insight into form causes rebirth while the insight into formlessness (emptiness) excels beyond the senses bringing Self Realisation (as non-dualism) where all things are characterised with non-duality and no birth.

The world results from the discrimination of unrealities, where duality obtains there is both permanency and impermanency because of it not being one. Therefore destroy the notion of permanency and impermanency by getting rid of the knowledge based on naming (discrimination), that is, of appearance (as of the identified character of perceptual objects) and hold fast to that insight based on the knowledge of solitude.

When names are pronounced, appearances are determined and there is discrimination and hence categorisation. Names and forms are thus obtained by mutual conditioning. Name is not reality nor is appearance understood as non-reality thus leading to the imageless state obtaining the body that is free from will and thought construction. Keep then away from permanency and impermanency yet hold both in sight in order to maintain equilibrium.

Apart from discrimination, there are no beings. When it is not realised that all things rise from the discrimination of the Mind itself (by the ego-mind), discrimination asserts itself. When understood thus, discrimination ceases.

An individual mind is evolved by clinging to Mind in itself – there is no visible world outside (of Mind itself) therefore it follows that Mind-only exists. Mind or that which has reflection as its nature (the One Self alone), utilises the self-formulation of the sense-fields to register

appearances apparently generated outside of the sensing-organs but, these are inside Mind itself. Mind is set in motion in various ways, and mind is liberated; mind rises in no other way and mind thus ceases.

Self realisation, when established, does so in the region beyond that of the conditional appearances arising as thought, body, senses, the objects of senses and the like. The sense organs are illusion (Maya) and the sense-fields are as a dream, as actor, acts and acting. They do not exist except as illusion. Words only confer the notions of existence upon those apprehensions registered by the non-discerning consciousness. Where no word exists, the targets thereof are wanting. Multiplicity then appears because the mind is saturated with the forms of ignorance as evil habits, themselves due to attachment to the delusions and illusions regarded as objective reality that arise from the timeless past. No recognisable adjuncts exist where mind-only reigns.

The construction of appearances created by delusion is the hallmark of worldly knowledge, bedecked with names and imagined individuality. This world of delusion is discriminated as to that which is perceived and that which perceives but really, there is no such dualism in it. There is no such external world. The whole is just the Mind. Seek the realm which so sees, the blissful region of the wise, free from appearance and beyond thought.

Desire-less one may behold the mystery, Desiring one may see the manifestation. Tao, Te Ching

7 The meditation of super-consciousness (Prajnaparamita)

By application of the same logic Avalokitesvara finds that there is not any attainment even to the realm of Nirvana which is thus rejected in favour of a state termed “ultimate nirvana”. Nirvana is not therefore held to be something permanent and pure.

The term “ultimate nirvana” means something more than nirvana as an absolute. The bodhisattva (Avalokitesvara) certainly reaches and experiences Nirvana in the fullest but he traverses this state of consciousness, of ultimate Buddha Consciousness, of Buddha Mind. Having traversed the Buddha Mind, Avalokitesvara is aware that samsara (the cycle of birth and death) is merely an appearance and is not self-existent. That there are no reasons for bondage, there are no persons or beings in bondage (or otherwise). He realises furthermore, and that all beings are both one in the Buddha Mind and at once non-existent therein. However, the Bodhisattva none-the-less progresses to a higher state in the realisation of Compassion (as far as the worlds of sentient beings are concerned).

What, therefore, is the nature of this compassion? It is quite simply this: Avalokitesvara, instead of fixating on nirvana and plunging further therein, looks back for just an instant. In that instant he sees that not only is nirvana void of self-content but it is therefore no more real than samsara. In this realisation he is overwhelmed by a “compassion” that comes from totally experiencing and understanding the depths of pain and suffering felt by all sentient beings not privy to the insight just obtained. Compassion as self-compassion is thus another name for responsibility.

He knows absolutely that the world and its beings are as nothing. He knows even so much as that the world in all its extensions and all its beings are mere images conjured up by Mind only. As the identity of this knowledge, he experiences the act by which he himself conjures up the universe and thus he knows the extent of the “unreality” involved therein. Yet he none the less returns to the recently vacated “world of name and form” to teach and to alleviate suffering knowing full well the content of the option abandoned. This is the pathway of the Bhodisattva wherein the vow, to remain in samsara until the last sentient being is freed there-from, is embraced willingly, and why? Because it is now also known that the fiction of time is a product of mind that it does not exist, and the task is therefore also without existence since it will take no time at all. This is the “supreme enlightenment”.

This state of super-consciousness (Prajnaparamita) may also be reached through experiencing the sequential discharge of the chakra system as involved in release of the serpent-power, the Kundalini lightening-strike of eternal being (see part I of this series, The Serpent Power Meditation).

Prajnaparamita: Perfection of wisdom. Para - before, ita - gone, paramita - "what has gone beyond", that which is transcendent, that leads us to the other shore of samsara, the great deep ocean of suffering.

It is a deep samaadhi from which "compassion" itself arises in the minds of all being(s). It is also called "the womb of the Buddhas" and sometimes depicted as a female entity (not surprisingly) upon which meditation may be focused by those interested in achieving this state for themselves. It is, in a word **super-consciousness**.

Nirvana

Nirvana means 'extinction' (of the ego-self) and it represented the ultimate goal of early Buddhists and those following the Hinayana (Lesser pathway). It was characterized as the extinction of both craving and of the separate 'ego.' Nirvana was also held as the state of peace and quietude attained by extinguishing all illusions and involved the permanent cessation of desire, anger, ignorance, all passions. It was achieved by, among other things, getting rid of the capacity for discrimination. Thus it could be said that: "I enter into Nirvana when the mental outlook which is caused by discrimination ceases."

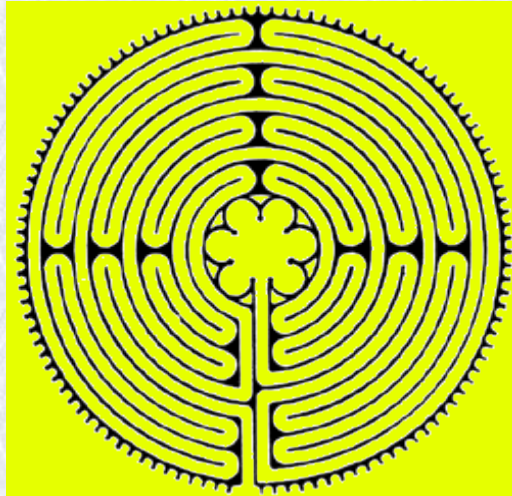
Nirvana (Sanskrit): The state of peace transcending the misery of samsara (the cycle of birth and death); it is the goal of a practitioner seeking individual personal liberation. Early Buddhist Mahayana (Greater Path movement) replaced this image by the term 'enlightenment'. The term "Nirvana" is not a synonym for enlightenment in the Mahayana system.

Nirvana:

Nir (negative prefix), vri (root - to cover, obstruct etc. Nir-vana (no walls of the mind). Walls = avarana from vri.

Nir (negative prefix), va (blow), or van (desire), cessation of birth

Goldenage January 17, 2005



Thought is light
Goldenage