

Understanding of Yogīs

(Dhamma talk given at the One-day Retreat on July 4, 1998)

At the June 1998 retreat, I talked about the achievement of yogīs, who practice *VipassanĒ* meditation. And that is the ability not to add anything the unreal objects and not to take anything real from the objects. That means they are able to take the object as it is without any addition. This time I want to talk about the difference between the understanding of yogīs and that of those who do not practice *VipassanĒ* meditation regarding walking and so on.

On page 25 of the book distributed to you, there is a piece of writing on how yogīs know. I will read that. There were people as there are now who said that they knew "I am (We are) going when I am (we are) going." It is just ordinary. Everybody knows that he is going when he is going. They might say even animals know, "They are going, when they are going." If knowing "I am going, when I am going." is said to be meditation, then they may say "'We are meditating too'. Although we do not sit down like you and meditate, still we are meditating because we know, 'We are going, when we are going'". The reply to such people is that there is a big difference between the understanding of those who do not practice meditation and the understanding of those who practice *VipassanĒ* meditation.

In order to understand this explanation -- actually this explanation was given in the ancient commentaries -- first you need to understand what is walking and what is moving. What are involved in what we call a movement. According to *AbhidhammĒ* nothing moves. Whether it is mind or matter, it disappears at the place it arises. So whether it is mind or matter, it does move, and there is no movement at all according to *AbhidhammĒ*. But we [think that we] are moving, we are moving our bodies, our hands, our legs, and so on. It is not easy to accept that there is no moving because we are moving all the time. But the ultimate analysis is that there is no moving. There are only still things, still mind and matter. But they arise and disappear in so rapid succession that we think that there is movement.

We can take the analogy of a moving picture in the movie film. I do not know whether you go to a cinema or not, but let us assume you go to a cinema and you watch a movie. When you watch a movie, do you see moving pictures on the screen? You don't. If you think the pictures on the screen are moving, just look at the film. Right? A movie film contains many frames. In each frame there is a picture. A picture in one frame is generally] just a tiny little bit different from the picture in the adjacent frame. There is a very small and almost imperceptible difference. But when one puts a movie film in a projector and the projector is made to project thirty six frames a second, we get the illusion of moving pictures. The picture in the frame (say frame number one) which is being projected actually does not move; it disappears immediately after it is projected. The next moment the picture of the frame number two is projected on the screen. It does not move and then disappears again. But our vision is not so quick. We are unable to see the individual pictures come and go. What we see is what we conjure up in our minds. We think we see moving pictures, because we retain the picture we saw a moment ago and connect it with the picture we now see. There is an illusion of

movement, but actually there is no movement at all, just the individual pictures appearing one after another in rapid succession. That is just about thirty six frames a second.

But what about mind, how many thought moments can arise in a second?

According to our books, it is said that billions of thought moments can arise in a second. When we want to make a movement -- let us assume that there is a movement -- first there is the intention in our mind to make that movement. We want to move, that is why there is movement. There is the mental activity such as desire and intention in our mind. "We want to move" is a mental activity, which produces material properties. That activity -- the desire to move -- may last for one or two seconds. During these one or two seconds, how many thought moments arise? Billions of thought moments. They create or produce billions of material properties. There are four essential elements among the material properties; they are element of earth, element of water, element of air and element of fire.

What is produced when we have the intention to move? It is the element of air (also known as the wind element). Billions of particles of element of air are produced. And also billions of old air elements disappear. Some disappear and some arise new. That creates illusion in our mind that we move or we are moving. Actually what we call moving is just an increase in the material properties of air element in our body. That is what we call movement. In this so called movement, we do not find any abiding entity, we do not find any person or any soul.

First we must understand the mechanism of moving. There is the intention and the intention produces air element. On page 26 of the book, you will read that an air element produces what is called bodily intimation. That may be a little difficult to understand. Bodily intimation means movement. And moving forward of the whole body by the diffusion of the air element caused by mind is called "going". When people say, they also know "They are going, when they are going"

Do you think that they really know?

Let us examine. May be they know sometimes, but even then they know very superficially. "They know" means "they are aware of that they are working in a very superficial way." If you see a man on the sidewalk, stop him and ask what he is thinking at that moment. Most probably he is thinking of something else than the walking. He may be thinking of his home, or office, or problems or his plans or other things. Very rarely will you find a man who is thinking of his walking or who is aware of his walking. So their understanding [of walking] is very shallow. Their understanding is with the notion that they are persons and they are the same persons as they were a moment ago. Their understanding cannot be called meditation because meditation is defined as the work of development which is the cause of further development. Since their understanding cannot cause further development, it cannot be called meditation.

When they say "They know.", they do not know every time the intention to go and the material phenomena that moves arise. Every time the intention arises, and the material phenomena arise, they don't know. They may know very infrequently or sometimes only. They do not know intention and matter separately. When they say "I know, I am going when I am

going.", they refer to mind and matter together. They do not see mind and matter separately from one another. They cannot distinguish mind from matter and matter from mind. They take themselves as a whole -- one whole unit. They do not know separately the intention which is mind and the movement which is matter.

They do not know that the successive movement arise due to successive moments of intention. As I said before, even though intention may last for one or two seconds, there are billions of moments of intention. They arise one after another in a very rapid succession. Due to the arising of very rapid succession of intention, there is the successive movement. They do not know that there are only two things at a time; successive intention and successive movement. They do not know that there is just the intention [which is mind] and the movement [which is matter].

They think that there is some other thing which is permanent as a person or as a soul and so on. They do not see for themselves that successive intention and successive movement arise and disappear at the very moment. At the very moment they arise, they disappear. Next moment there is another pair of intention and movement or intention and material property. They do not see that successive intention and successive movement arise and disappear at every moment section by section, link by link, part by part. They do not reach to the next moment of intention and arising movement. So one pair of, say, mind and matter arise and then disappear. It does not exist until or including the next moment. At this moment they arise, at this very moment they disappear. Next moment there is a new pair of mind and matter. They do not know in this way. What they say "They know" is just very superficial knowing and even that they know is just once a while. Their understanding is very superficial and is very different from the understanding of those who practice Vipassanā meditation.

When you practice *Vipassanā* meditation, you pay close attention to the what is happening at the moment. You pay attention to the lifting, moving, putting and then shifting and so there is a moving forward. When you apply mindfulness to these activities and when your concentration gets strong, then you come to see the movement of walking or whatever in the true perspective. Yogis who meditate know every time the intention to go in the material phenomena that movement arise. It is because they are watching, and paying attention. They see the intention arise and then every time the intention to go creates the material properties [wind elements] movement arise. Every time the intention and the movement arise, the yogis know. And they know intention and matter separately.

Those who practice meditation know that there is intention and the movement is separate or distinct from the intention. They are two different things, not one mixed with the other. This also, yogis come to know through the practice of mindfulness and through attainment of *Samādhi* or concentration. And they know that successive movements arise due to successive moments of intention. These movements arise what are called movements, these movements arise due to the successive moment of intention. Because there are successive moments of intention, there are successive movements arising. If moments of intention no longer arise, there is no moving, there will be no moving.

Suppose you want to move, and you make notes of intention to move. If that intention really disappears, you may not move because there is no more intention. When there is no intention, there is no moving. This also yogis come to know through concentration. They know that there are only two things at a time; successive intention and successive movement and none other. When you pay real close attention to the walking, you come to see that there are only two things at the time of walking; the intention that produces material properties and the successive movement. Just these two things and nothing over and above these things which we can call a 'person' or a 'being' or a 'man' or a 'woman' or a 'soul'.

When you pay attention to the intention and the successive movements, you will not fail to see that they arise and disappear at every moment. As the saying goes, they arise bit by bit, link by link, part by part, second by second. Although they seem to be connected, they are not actually connected. They are just different segments or different parts put one close to the other. Maybe we can take the line of ends. When you look at them from a distance, you think that there is a line of ends. Actually there is no line of ends, just the ends. When you go close and look at the individual ends, you lose the notion that there is a line of ends. Just the individual end at a given point. At every point, there is a different, a separate end. In the same way at the given point in the moment there is a new or separate pair of mind and matter. They arise and disappear bit by bit, segment by segment. This also a yogi sees when he pays close attention to what is happening at the moment and also when he gets concentration. When a yogi knows, he knows with the reference to three questions. That is;

"Who goes?", "Whose going is it?", "On what account does he go?, or "Why does he go", or "What causes his going?"

So "Who goes?" A person goes?

No living being or a person whatsoever. There is just mind and matter arising and disappearing. In the ultimate analysis, we do not find any living being there, just mind and matter arising and disappearing, performing their respective functions. So to the question "Who goes?" yogis can answer "Nobody goes" "No living being, no person, whatsoever"

Then the second is easy.

"Whose going is it?"

"Nobody's."

Since there is nothing we can call a person, the going is not this person's property, or that person's property.

So "Whose going is it?"

Not the going of any living being or a "Person" or an "Atta".

Then "On what account does he go?" "Why does he go?"

Because of the diffusion of air element caused by mind. Here mind means intention.

"Why does he go?" or "On account of what does he go?"

On account of diffusion of air element he is said to go.

But actually "Does he go?" "Does he move?"

Conventionally he does. But in ultimate sense, he does not. Because even there is no "he", just the mind and matter. When a yogi knows the correct answers to the three questions,

he is said to understand the movement and he is said to understand the action according to reality. When a yogi sees this way, he understands that when we say, "I go" or "He goes", it is just for the sake of convenience of usage. We have to use these terms "I go" "He goes" and so on for the sake of usage, for the sake of convenience in communicating with each other. It is not convenient in real life to say, "Mind and matter go" and "Mind and matter sit" and so on. We have to use "I", "you", or "he" designating a "person" and so on. But in reality, there is no person, there is no man or woman, just the mind and matter. In the act of going, just the intention and the diffusion of increase of air element. These air elements are those that originated in the mental activity.

There are some verses at the end, but they are translated as prose here;

"Just as a ship goes by the force of win (the sailing ship), just as an arrow goes by the force of bowstring, so goes this body driven by wind, that is air element caused by mind." A ship goes by the force of the wind and an arrow goes by the force of bowstring. In the same way the body goes by the force of what we call air element. That air element is originated by mental activity.

"Just as a puppet goes, stands and sits motivated by the force of strings (attached to it), so does this body motivated by the string of mind go, stand and sit." So a puppet has string attached to it and by pulling strings a man can make look like dancing and so on. So it goes, it stands, it sits by the force of this strings attached to it.

In the same way, we move -- our body, go or stand or sit motivated by the string of mind. When we don't want to go we do not go. When we don't walk we do not walk. Who is there in this world that cannot without causes conditioned by his own power sit or go? Can you sit without the intention to sit? Can you go without the intention to go? No. this is how yogis understand going and other activities, that is when they practice meditation and when they apply mindfulness to what is happening at the moment. Even yogis may lose this kind of understanding when they do not meditate, when they are away from meditation for a long time. The understanding of a yogi and the understanding of an ordinary person or understanding of those who do not practice meditation are far apart. They are quite the opposite. Those who do not practice meditation think that there is a person and so on. But those who practice know that there is no person, just mind and matter, go rolling on and on doing their respective functions.

This correct and deep understanding, you can get just by paying attention to what is happening at the moment. You don't need to use an expensive instrument or machine to discover this. You just need mindfulness. You just need to use mindfulness as a tool to discover this secret of what we call walking, pulling, sitting and so on or what we call movements. According to *Abhidhammā*, there is nothing that moves and we can verify that statement by knowledge through personal experience. In order to get this kind of knowledge, we need to practice *Vipassanā* or Satipaṭṭhāna meditation.

I'm glad that you are practicing *Satipaṭṭhāna* meditation and you may have obtained this knowledge by now. If you have not obtained it yet, I hope that you will get it in the future.

SĒdhu, Sadh| Sadhu!