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STAGE TWO: OUR MASTERS THE FEELINGS

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Once we understand the secrets of the *kaya*, we turn to the secrets of the *vedana*. The *vedana* have the highest power and influence over human beings, over all living things. My words will surprise you, nonetheless, the entire world - animals, humans, and all living beings - depends on the *vedana*. They all are under the power of the feelings. This sounds funny and unbelievable, so examine it for yourselves. It is a fact that we - our entire species - are being forced by the *vedana* to do their bidding. When there are *sukha-vedana* (*pleasant* feelings) we try to get more of those feelings. The *pleasant* feelings always pull the mind in a certain direction and condition certain kinds of activity. *Dukkha-vedana* (*unpleasant*, disagreeable feelings) affect the mind and influence life in the opposite direction, but still lead to all kinds of habitual responses. The mind struggles with them and turns them into problems that cause *dukkha*. The feelings have great power over what we do. The whole world is under the command of these *vedana*, although there may be other factors involved as well. For example, while *tanha* (craving) can control the mind, craving itself is first conditioned by feeling. Thus, the *vedana* have the strongest and most powerful influence over our entire mind. We ought to understand the secrets of *vedana*. (25)

I will say something at which you can laugh if you wish, "If we can master the *vedana* we will be able to master the world." We will be able to control the world, when we can control the feelings as we require. Then we could supervise the world as it so badly needs. Now, nobody is interested in controlling the *vedana*, so the world has gotten out of proper control. Have you seen all the crises and problems that arise constantly? The wars, the famines, the corruption, the pollution, all these things, are activities originating in our failure to control the feelings from the start. If we would control the feelings, then we could control the world. This is something you need to consider. (26)

If we speak in line with the Lord Buddha's words, we say that the causes of everything in the world are centered on the *vedana*. The myriad activities happen in the world because our feeling of the *vedana* forces us to desire, and then act out those desires. Even such beliefs as reincarnation and rebirth are conditioned by the *vedana*. If we believe, we travel around in the samsaric cycle, the cycles of birth and death, of heaven and hell. Everything originates in feeling. To control the *vedana* is to control the origin, the source, the birth place of all things. This is how necessary it is to understand these feelings correctly and comprehensively. Then, we will be able to control them and their secrets will not deceive us into doing anything foolish ever again. (27)

There are three main points to realize regarding the *vedana*. First, understand the *vedana* themselves, the things that cause feeling in the mind, that the mind feels. Second, know how the *vedana* condition the *citta*, the mind-heart. They stir up thoughts, memories, words, and actions. Know this concocting of the mind. Third, discover that we can control the mind by controlling the *vedana*, in the same way that the flesh-body is controlled by the regulation of the breath. Then we will be able to master the mind by correctly mastering the feelings which condition it. These three things make up the secrets of the *vedana*.

1. Understand the feelings themselves.
2. Know the things that condition the feelings.

3. Then, know how to control those things that condition the feelings, which is the same as controlling the feelings themselves.

These are the three important things to understand about *vedana*. (28)

Since the first and second stages of practice both follow the same principle, it is helpful to compare the two. In the stage regarding the body, we find out what it is that conditions the flesh-body, and then we study that thing. We study that body-conditioner until we know it in great detail. We study how that thing conditions the body. Then, by regulating that thing, we can control the body. This is our way to make the body more calm and peaceful. As for the mind, its conditioner is the feelings. By controlling the *vedana* so that they do not condition or stir up the mind, or so that they condition the mind in a desirable way, we are able to calm the mind. This how the first stage regarding the *kaya* and the second stage regarding the *vedana* follow the same basic principle and are parallel in their method of practice.(29)

LECTURE FOUR: MASTERING THE VEDANA

In this lecture we will speak about the second tetrad of Anapanasati. These four steps deal with the feelings and are called "vedananupassana (contemplation of feeling)." The first two steps of this tetrad take piti and sukha as the objects of our further study and detailed examination.

The practice of these steps develops out of the practice of the previous step. Once the body-conditioner or breath is calmed, the feelings piti and sukha appear. Then, we take these very piti and sukha as the next objects or materials of our practice.

If we calm the *kaya-sankhara* (body-conditioner) to the extent of *jhana* (the first *jhana* and so forth), then piti and sukha will be full and complete as factors of *jhana*. Nevertheless, if we are unable to reach *jhana* and are able only to calm the body-conditioner partially, there is likely to be a degree of piti and sukha proportionate to the extent of that calming. Thus, even those who are unable to bring about *jhana* can still manage enough piti and sukha to practice these steps.

Here, we will study the characteristics and meanings of piti and sukha. Piti (contentment) arises due to our successfully making *samadhi* the previous steps, which means we were able to calm the body-conditioner or breath. Contentment or satisfaction arises with this success. Once there is contentment you need not doubt that happiness (sukha) will follow. Due to satisfaction, joy arises. This is how we are able to get sufficient piti and sukha for the practice of steps five and six.

PITI IS NOT PEACEFUL

The next thing to observe is that there are different levels to this word piti, such as contentment, satisfaction, and rapture. We must know these gradations of the more and less energetic forms of piti. The important quality of piti for you to be aware of is that it is not peaceful. There is a kind of excitement or disturbance in the thing, called piti. Only when it becomes sukha is it tranquil. Piti has varying levels but all are characterized as stimulating, as causing the citta to shake. Sukha is the opposite. It calms and soothes the mind. This is how piti and sukha differ. (96)

So now we are ready to practice step one of the second tetrad - "experiencing piti (piti-patsamvedi)" - which is contemplating piti every time we breathe in and breathe out. We must keep watching until we find the piti that arose when we succeeded in calming the body-conditioner. Find out what this feeling is like. Fully experience it. Take it as the new object which the mind contemplates. The citta is absorbed in contemplating it the same as if there was ekaggata. The mind is absorbed with the single object piti. So far, we have contemplated a number of objects: the long breath, the short breath, all bodies, and calming the bodies. Now, we switch to piti. This piti has stimulating power. It makes the mind quiver, shake, and tremble. It should be easy for you to understand the various degrees of piti through the different English words we can use. How stimulating is contentment? How stimulating is satisfaction? And how stimulating is rapture? Go observe and find lit by yourself. The mind focuses upon piti and fully experiences it every time there is an inhalation and every time there is an exhalation. This is the essence of the practice of step five. (97)

To put it most concisely, we breathe and experience piti with every breath. Breathing in and out, fully experience this feeling of contentment and simultaneously be aware of each in-breath and each out-breath. When this step is being practiced there is a very pleasant feeling of well being. This work is fun to do, it is a most enjoyable lesson. Please try your best in this step. (98)

STUDY THE FLAVOR OF PITI

In each moment that we breathe with the experience of piti, we simultaneously study and train. Earlier, we trained and studied while breathing long, breathing short, and so forth. Now, study and train as piti is experienced in the mind. What is it like? Is it heavy? Is it light? How coarse is it? How subtle is it? This can be called "knowing what flavor it has." In particular, know what influence its flavor has on the mind or on the thoughts. Study in order to understand the nature of piti, just as we studied until understanding the nature of the breath during the practice of the previous tetrad. This is how to practice this step. (99)

The most important thing to study and observe is the power piti has over the mind. What influence does piti have on the mind and thoughts? Carefully observe how the mind is when piti has not arisen. Once piti arises, what is the citta like? What is the effect of a lot of piti? How is the mind when there is only a little piti? When piti is heavy, especially rapture, how much more does it stimulate the mind? Study the coarse kinds of piti, medium levels, and the finest types, to see how they differ. Then, see how their influence upon the mind differs. This is the crucial point of this step of practice. (100)

Finally, we realize that piti stimulates the mind in a coarse way. It does not have a refined and subtle effect like sukha, which we will look at next. In this step, understand the natures, facts, and secrets of this phenomenon known as piti. Observe its relationship to the mind until you are most familiar with this experience. (101)

SUKHA SOOTHES THE MIND

Now we come to the second step of this second tetrad, or step six overall, “experiencing sukha (sukha-patisamvedi).” In this step, we contemplate sukha (happiness) with every inhalation and exhalation. Focus on sukha in terms of it being the result arising out of piti. When piti has finished stimulating the citta in piti’s coarse way, it loses energy. That is, it calms down and transforms into sukha. We will see that the two feelings are very different. This sukha does not stimulate or excite, rather it calms and soothes. Here we contemplate sukha as the agent which makes the citta tranquil. Usually piti obscures sukha, but when piti fades away sukha remains. The coarse feeling gives way to the calm feeling. Taste the tranquil flavor of sukha with every inhalation and exhalation. This is the gist of step six. (102)

While contemplating sukha within the mind, we study and train just as we have done with the breath and with piti. How light is it? How heavy? How coarse is it? How subtle? How does it flavor awareness and experience? In Thai and Pali we use the word “drink” to describe this experiencing. Drink the flavor of sukha while breathing in and breathing out. At the same time, study its nature and truths. (103)

It will be easy to see that when the power of piti appears, the breath will be rough. If the influence of sukha is evident the breath will be fine. We even can say that when piti manifests its power the flesh-body is coarse. When sukha manifests its influence the body calms down and becomes subtle. There are also effects on the citta. When piti shows its power it disturbs the mind proportionately, whereas the influence of sukha calms and relaxes the mind. The two feelings are opposites. This is what you must observe well at every opportunity, namely, with every in- and out-breath. (104)

To summarize, once piti and sukha arise, they have different effects upon the breath. One will make it coarse, while the other makes it calm. They have different effects upon the body. One makes it coarse or agitated, while the other makes it calm. They have different effects upon the mind. One excites the mind, while the other calms it. When you can catch or grasp or seize this distinction through your own experience of it, rather than merely thinking about it, you will have met with success in the practice of this step. (105)

These might be some difficulties. While we are contemplate sukha, piti might interfere. It may take over such that the feel sukha disappears. Therefore, we must develop the ability to maintain that feeling for as long as we need and prevent piti from coming in. Piti is much more strong and coarse than sukha. If piti interferes, the contemplation of sukha is ruined and real tranquility does not arise. We must put forth superb effort in our contemplation of sukha so that it does not fade away. Do not let any other feelings interfere. In this step we should feel saturated with happiness. What a wonderful way to meet with success in the practice of step six. (106)

EXPERIENCING THE MIND-CONDITIONER

Now we come to step seven: "experiencing the mind-conditioner (cittasankhara-patisamvedi)." If we have completed step six successfully, then we know all about the feelings of piti and sukha. What does the arising of piti do to the citta? What does the arising of sukha do to the citta? What kind of thoughts does piti condition? What kind of thoughts does sukha condition? We have noted and scrutinized these effects since steps five and six. Once we come to step seven, it is easy to realize that, "Oh, piti and sukha are mind-conditioners." These vedana are mind-conditioners in the same way that the breath is the body-conditioner. The method of study and observation is the same as in step three. (107)

We have observed that piti is coarse and excited, whereas sukha is fine and peaceful. Thus, when piti conditions or brews up a thought, the thought is coarse. On the other hand, when sukha brews up a thought, it is calm and tranquil. This is how we realize that the vedana condition thoughts. Then we realize that the feelings condition both coarse thoughts and subtle thoughts. We call this activity "conditioning the mind." (108)

When piti is strong, it causes trembling in the body. And if it is very strong the body might even dance or bounce with joy. This feeling is coarse and powerful. On the other hand, sukha is calming, soothing, and relaxing. We learn that their characteristics are very different. When piti dominates the mind, it is impossible to think subtle thoughts. We feel a tingling all over; it makes the hair stand up all over our bodies. So we need to be able to control piti. Sukha, however, has advantages. It leads to tranquil, refined states. It can cause subtle, profound, and refined thoughts. It is as if these two feelings are opponents or foes. But that does not matter, for we know how to regulate them. We are able to control them by training according to the method we are now practicing. Just this much is to understand the citta-sankhara reasonably well already. (109)

FRIENDS AND FOES

Even so, we must observe and understand another, quite different secret. These two feelings must arise together. That is, if we are not contented or satisfied, happiness cannot occur. Contentment causes happiness, joy comes from satisfaction. This contentment and satisfaction is the set of things we call piti, the group of stimulating pleasant feelings. Although happiness and joy are the group of soothing feelings, still, they cannot exist without satisfaction. You can observe that in any event where there is happiness, satisfaction must always come before. Piti leads the way. Experiencing success we are satisfied, we are excited and disturbed by that success. Once Piti loses strength, when the mind gets tired of all that agitation and excitement then sukha remains. The feeling calms down. So they are comrades at the same time that they oppose each other. They are comrades in that they must arrive together. There must be contentment first in order for there to be joy. We need to be careful about this. We must act toward them in an extremely subtle and refined way. It is like an art. It is a spiritual art to control piti and sukha so that they benefit our lives. This is the secret that we ought to know concerning piti and sukha. (110)

By now we have discovered that piti is an enemy of vipassana, whereas sukha is not. Happiness-joy is a friend or supporter of vipassana. "Vipassana" means "seeing clearly," having direct insight into the truth of aniccam (impermanence), dukkham (unsatisfactoriness) and anatta (not self). We require a very refined mind to realize aniccam, dukkham, and anatta through vipassana. Should piti arise, vipassana

is impossible. The mind gets all clouded and restless. Piti must be gotten rid of, for it is the enemy of vipassana, of clear, subtle mental vision. Sukha, however, is not like that at all. Sukha soothes and calms, it makes the mind active and ready for vipassana. For this reason, we must have the ability to regulate piti and sukha. (111)

In the end, we will realize that the feelings (e.g., piti and sukha) are mind-conditioners. When piti conditions it, the citta is coarse and its thoughts are coarse, both the mind and the thoughts are coarse. When sukha conditions or supports it, the citta is subtle and tranquil, and its thoughts are subtle and tranquil. Both feelings condition the mind, but from different angles. The vedana are conditioners of the citta, thus they get the name "mind-conditioner (citta-sankhara)." (112)

When this fact is discovered, we contemplate it in the mind every time we breathe in and breathe out. Breathe in and breathe out while becoming certain of this fact. This is the practice in step seven. (113)

CALMING THE FEELINGS

Step eight is "calming the mind-conditioners (passambhayaṃ citta-sankharaṃ)" while breathing in and breathing out. Make the citta-sankharaṃ, the vedana, calm and peaceful. Lessen their energy while breathing in and lower their energy while breathing out. First, we must be able to calm the feelings, only then can we experience this every time we breathe in and out. (114)

Various ways of lessening the strength of the vedana exist. Lowering their energy or stopping them completely is not only possible, it must be done. There are two approaches for us to use: the samadhi (concentration) method and the panna (wisdom) method. (115)

THE CONCENTRATION METHOD

Piti's impulse can be calmed with the samadhi method, which is to develop a higher level of concentration in order to remove piti and sukha from what is felt. We probably are not able to do this yet, because we have only just begun our training. Still, there is the secret that these feelings can be gotten rid of by making a higher level of samadhi, such as the third or fourth jhana. Or, we could do it even by changing our thought. Bring another kind of thought into the mind to intervene and suppress that satisfied feeling. Either activity uses the Power of samadhi. The power of another type of samadhi shuts off piti's energy in particular. Generally, it is not necessary to get rid of sukha. In fact, we ought to preserve it as a support of further practice. Here, we especially need to control piti. We can control it with samadhi techniques, either by changing mind's object or by having a higher degree of concentration or jhana. Either will calm down piti. (116)

Or, we might say that we bring in the true meaning of the word samadhi to drive away piti. The real meaning of samadhi is "having ekaggata-citta with nibbana as its object." We have already explained that ekaggata-citta is the mind gathered together into one pinnacle or peak. True samadhi has nibbana or santi (spiritual tranquility) as its object. We can recall what genuine samadhi is like. Now that piti causes complications, disturbances, and difficulties, chase it away. We do not want it and we do not need it. We aim at the one-pinnacled mind that has santi or nibbana as its object. The feeling of piti dissolves because we do not want it anymore. This is a skillful means that uses samadhi to drive away piti. (117)

THE WISDOM METHOD

Now we come to the method that uses panna (wisdom) to diminish the strength of piti, to eradicate the influence of piti, or even of sukha if we wish. We use the panna that realizes the true nature (characteristics, qualities, conditions) of all things to know what piti arises from and due to what cause it will cease. Piti bubbles up when a satisfying, correct condition is achieved. It must cease due to the lack of that condition, due to realizing that it is illusory, that it is not real. Once we see wisely in this way, the feeling of being agitated by piti will abate. Another wisdom method is to see the assada and adinava of piti. Assada is a thing's attractive quality, its charm that deliciously tempts the heart. Piti has an enchanting flavor. Adinava is a thing's wicked punishment. The adinava of piti is the fact that it excites and disturbs, that it drives away tranquility, that it is the foe of vipassana. Once we realize this, piti dissolves. If we see its arising, ceasing, charm, and wickedness, then it dissolves, then it disappears. This is to drive off piti with the panna technique. (118)

Every one of us should understand well the meaning of the word "assada" and "adinava." If you can remember the Pali, that is even better than the English translations. Assada is the attractive, satisfying, lovely, infatuating quality or charm of something. Adinava, is the lowliness or wickedness of a thing. There is no excuse for us to be deceived by these two. Once we see them we will know that getting pleased by and falling in love with anything is positive foolishness. To go and hate something is negative foolishness. If we know these two well, that they constantly deceive us and lure us into loving and hating, then they will teach us that we must not indulge in liking and disliking, and we will be freed from the power of things. For example, money has both assada and adinava. Once we know both of them, we will not be misled by or go crazy about money. To completely understand this pair is the safest thing we can do. Know the assada and adinava of piti and you will get sick of piti. It will flee by itself. This is how to use the wisdom method to chase away piti. Even sukha should not be indulged. Although we may save some sukha for a beneficial purpose, we do not get lost in it: Please remember these two words for the rest of your lives. Then they will become the kind of charm that protects, a talisman that truly protects, rather than endangers. (119)

At this point now, the mind can regulate the feelings. It has developed the kind of mastery and self-control where the feelings no longer have the power to drag us this way or that. The sukha-vedana, the pleasant feelings we have been discussing here, pull the mind in an agreeable direction, in a positive way. There is another set of vedana that pull us in a negative way, in an undesirable, dissatisfying direction. We already have talked about the group of pleasant feelings. We need to be aware of these feelings which are unpleasant, the dukkha-vedana, also. We must know how to keep these feelings of displeasure and unhappiness from dragging us into a state of dukkha. They can be defeated with the same method as used on piti. Whether happy feelings or unhappy feelings we can control them all. We become controllers of all feelings without exception. We practice by bringing any vedana into the mind and experiencing it fully. Then we scrutinize it with panna to drive that feeling away. Experience this ability to get rid of any kind of vedana. Know that the feelings cannot condition the citta anymore. Rehearse this technique with every inhalation and exhalation until deft and expert at it. Thus, you will meet with success in the practice of step eight. (120)

WHY BOTHER?

One last point to consider is the question of why we bother talking so much about the feelings. Why is it necessary to include them in this line of practice? Why not hurry on to vipassana and get to nibbana as fast as possible? The reason is that we must understand the vedana and be able to regulate them in order to control the mind as our practice continues on to the realization of the path fruitions (magga-phala-nibbana), which is our primary purpose. We have a special secondary purpose, also. That is once we can regulate the feelings we will be able to keep life on the correct path. When we are foolish about the vedana we fall under the power of and become slaves to materialism, which always happens when we indulge in material pleasures, that is, the flavors of feelings. All the crises occurring in this world have their origin in people not understanding the vedana, giving in to the vedana, and being enamoured with the vedana. They entice us to act like this, which leads to disagreements, quarrels, conflicts and eventually war. Sometimes they lead even to world wars. All because people suffer defeat through the deceptions of vedana. By now you ought to realize that the feelings must be understood. We must know their secrets and manage to regulate them if there is to be peace in this world. There is no need to talk about realizing nibbana, when merely living on this planet in peace within ourselves and with others, which requires that we able to control the feelings, is more than we can manage now. I hope that you all will take advantage of this ability for the rest of your lives. This tetrad has been included in the practice of Anapanasati due to the great power and importance of the vedana. So this is the second tetrad of Anapanasati. We have used up all our time today and must end the lecture here. (121)