

Tony Bernhard 6-2-2010

Tony Bernhard is one of Spirit Rock's Community Dharma Leaders. He sits on the board of the Sati Center, is a member of the Spirit Rock Planning Committee and hosts sitting groups and teaches dharma in Davis, CA.

When the Pali Canon was transferred from a verbal tradition to a written one, the palm leaves on which the transcription were done were split up into three baskets: the Vinaya (or monastic rules); the sutras (lectures from the Buddha); and the Abhidamma (or classifications). The Vinaya and Sutras are the direct teachings of the Buddha. The Abhidamma was added 100 – 200 years after the Buddha's death, and were classifications, summaries, compendiums, and enumerated lists of the Buddha's teachings.

Like the Abhidamma, Tony's talk for tonight is a collection of classifications of the teachings.

Papanca (Self Reflexive Thinking)

action • speech • thought

In the Western Tradition, we have the concepts of original sin, the inner critic, or self-judgment. In the Eastern tradition, the natural state of the mind is luminous and pure, however, mind states can arise that are impure.

What one feels, one labels. What one labels, one thinks about. What one thinks about, one proliferates conceptually. Conceptual Proliferation refers to the deluded conceptualization of the world through the use of ever-expanding language and concepts, all rooted in the delusion of self; it is intended to elucidate reality although it has the unexpected result of distorting it and/or creating a false perceptual reality.

As we meditate, the coming back to the breath is the practice. It helps conquer mind chatter. Mind chatter is shameless – it will think of anything.

If you want to know how the mind works, sit down and watch it.

For instance, we may hear children playing outside while we meditate. This leads us to think of the children on our block, who are so totally out of control that someone ought to call social services. But anything that involves the government will get screwed up – just look at Hurricane Katrina or the Gulf oil spill, etc. This is conceptual proliferation, and the self reflexive thinking of mind chatter.

Upadana is clinging, grasping, or feeding.

Think of *upadana* as the want monster. We rarely notice the want monster, but only see the things we want. We tend to miss the process of what our mind is doing that makes us want.

Nivarana are hindrances. Hindrances keep us from seeing things as they are. They are negative mental states that interfere with meditation. They prevent wholesome mental states from arising, and do not allow arisen wholesome states from enduring.

The hindrances are:

- Desire
- Aversion
- Sloth/torpor
- Restlessness/worry
- Doubt

As an example of how the hindrances work, ask a ten year old to clean up his room – you see sloth and torpor appear. He doesn't feel well; is too tired to do it now; didn't sleep enough last night, etc. But suggest we go for ice cream, and the sloth and torpor will disappear and be replaced with energy and eagerness. "Oh boy! Yeah, let's go for ice cream!!!!" Isn't it amazing?

Except for doubt, all the hindrances take place in the body. If you are having a repetitive thought that is interfering with meditation, check out what is happening with the body.

An example of doubt is the negative feeling that meditation doesn't really work (even though it has a 2,500 year history of success). It is a self-defeating belief, or conviction that you are going to fail anyway, so why bother trying?

Anusayas are underlying tendencies. These are latent, and do not happen except when the conditions are right. For example, right after we eat a full meal, hunger is not likely to arise – but if we haven't eaten all day, hunger will manifest. If the conditions are right, the underlying tendencies become an obsession of thought.

The seven underlying tendencies are:

- The obsession of sensual passion.
- The obsession of resistance.
- The obsession of views.
- The obsession of uncertainty.
- The obsession of conceit.
- The obsession of passion for becoming.
- The obsession of ignorance.

We have an underlying tendency to believe our views – we are attached to them.

Conceit is the underlying tendency to believe in our own existence because of something we feel. I'm cold, therefore I exist. I have a toe, therefore I exist. This is the reflexive "I am". Is your toe you? Is your elbow you?

I'll live forever or die trying.

The underlying tendency for ignorance is delusion, or wanting things to be other than what they are.

Asavas are taints or defilements.

The word asava means literally that which flows out. In Pali, the word denotes both pus oozing from an abscess and intoxicants which have been fermented a long time. The defilements classified as taints are called asavas because they are similar to oozing pus and to fermented intoxicants.

- A Comprehensive Manual of Abhidamma, by Bikku Bodhi

The main taints are:

- Pleasure
- Becoming
- Ignorance
- Views

The uprooting of taints leads to enlightenment. Feeling pleasure at skillful actions taints them. For Becoming, if we envision a future and want to become it, we are tainted. Ignorance is the cause of suffering. That something is right or wrong, or the view that something shouldn't be, is not accepting things as they are..