

A Great Man

Mahāpurisa



Chanmyay Sayādaw
U Janakābhivaṃsa

Chanmyay Yeikthā Meditation Centre
55A, Kaba-Aye Pagoda Road
Rangoon, Burma

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by

Chanmyay Sayādaw

U Janakābhivaṃsa



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© Latest Edition July 2015

Bhikkhu Pesala

Association for Insight Meditation

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A Great Man

Today our topic is: a great man with a liberated mind.

The so-called person or being is composed of *nāma* and *rūpa*. *Nāma* and *rūpa* (mentality and materiality) are divided into five aggregates. The physical phenomenon is only one aggregate, called rūpakkhandā. *Nāma* (mentality) consists of four aggregates:

1. *Vedanakkhandha* — the aggregate of feeling.
2. *Saññakkhandha* — the aggregate of perception.
3. *Saṅkhārakkhandha* — the aggregate of mental formations.
4. *Viññāṇakkhandha* — the aggregate of consciousness.

Sometimes the Omniscient Buddha gave a discourse summarising these five aggregates as two processes — *nāma* and *rūpa*, mental and physical phenomena. Thus *nāma* and *rūpa* must be thoroughly realised by the meditator so that he can liberate the mind from all defilements.

To realise mental phenomena (*nāma*) is much more important than to realise physical phenomena (*rūpa*) because it is mental phenomena that create the world. Here ‘the world’ means all living beings in the world. The Buddha said:

*“Mano pubbaṅgamā dhammā, mano seṭṭhā manomayā,
Manasā ce paduṭṭhena, bhāsati vā karoti vā,
Tāto naṃ dukkhamanveti, cakkam ‘va vahato padaṃ.”*

“The mind is the leader, the mind is dominant,
all things are made by the mind.

If one should speak or act with a corrupt mind,
suffering (*dukkha*) caused by that follows him,
as the wheel of a cart follows the ox’s hoof.

So when you do an unwholesome deed, the cause is unwholesome mentality, unwholesome mental states. Unwholesome mental states are called ‘*akusala*’ in Pāli. Wholesome mental states are called *kusala*. A wholesome mind brings about wholesome speech and deeds.

The root cause of good deeds and good speech is a wholesome mind. The root cause of bad deeds and bad speech is an unwholesome mind. When the mind is unwholesome, deeds and speech become unwholesome, and this produces suffering. When the mind is wholesome, then deeds and speech are wholesome, which produces happiness and peace.

A Liberated Mind

So the mind is the most important thing of all. The mind is much more important than the body. That is why the Buddha says *'vimuttacitto.'* He doesn't say *'vimuttakāya.'* *'Vimuttacitto'* means 'liberated mind'. If we said *'vimuttakāya'* it would mean 'liberated body'. The Buddha never said *'vimuttakāya,'* liberated body, he always said *'vimuttacitta,'* liberated mind. Why? Because when the mind is liberated from defilements and suffering, the body also becomes liberated from suffering.

As you may know, Venerable Moggallāna had a liberated mind, completely liberated from all defilements through to the final stage of enlightenment, arahantship. When he was about to pass away, he was killed by robbers, because of his past kamma. The robbers thought that the Venerable One was dead, but actually he was not yet dead as he had entered into phalasamāpatti, which protected his life against any killing. He was beaten to 'a sack of chaff,' but he did not feel any mental suffering because his mind was liberated from defilements — he was not attached to his body. He saw unpleasant physical sensations as arising and passing away, just as a natural process of feeling or sensation.

Though his body was injured and beaten very badly, he didn't feel any painful sensation, he didn't feel any suffering because his mind was liberated from all defilements. He didn't take his body to be himself, he saw it as ever-changing mental and physical phenomena. Then he was liberated from physical suffering too. If his mind was not liberated from defilements, he would have suffered a great deal, but he didn't take any mental and physical phenomena to be a person or a self, a being or a man.

That is why the Buddha said the mind should be liberated from defilements. When the mind is liberated, you don't have either mental or physical suffering. That's why the Buddha teaches us to see things as they naturally are, by means of mindfulness meditation. That is why we have to practise mindfulness meditation so that we can liberate the mind from defilements.

How Can We Liberate the Mind?

How can we liberate the mind from defilements and suffering? One day the Venerable Sāriputta went to the Omniscient Buddha and asked Him a question. "Venerable Sir, 'A Great Man', thus people

speak. How far is one a Great Man?" The Buddha said: "With mind liberated is one a Great Man. With mind not liberated, one is not a Great Man."

'Great Man' is '*Mahāpurisa*' in Pāli. In scripture, the word '*Mahāpurisa*' refers to the Buddha. In some cases, it means 'noble man.' 'With the mind liberated' is '*vimuttacitto*' in Pāli. '*Vimutta*' means liberated, '*citto*' means mind. Then the Buddha continued to explain how the mind can be liberated:

*"Idha Sāriputta bhikkhu kāye kāyanupassī viharati ātāpī
sampajāno satimā vineyya loke abhijjhādomassaṃ."
(S.v.158)*

"Sāriputta, a bhikkhu abides contemplating on the body as body, contemplating on feeling as feeling, contemplating on consciousness as consciousness (or mind as mind), contemplating on phenomena as phenomena, ardent, clearly comprehending and mindful, having abandoned covetousness and grief concerning the world."

Because he practises contemplation of body, feeling, mind, and phenomena, his mind becomes detached from everything, then it is liberated from all kinds of *āsava*. '*Āsava*' here refers to all kinds of mental defilements. Thus his mind is liberated from defilements and he is a Great Man with a liberated mind. If a man does not practise contemplation of body, feeling, mind, and phenomena, he is not a Great Man because his mind is not liberated from defilements.

The Four Foundations of Mindfulness

Here the Buddha says, "To liberate one's mind, one should contemplate on the body as body, feeling as feeling, consciousness as consciousness, and phenomena as phenomena." Here the Buddha teaches the four foundations of mindfulness or the four types of mindfulness.

1. Mindfulness of the body (*kāyānupassana satipaṭṭhāna*).
2. Mindfulness of feelings or sensations (*vedanānupassana satipaṭṭhāna*).
3. Mindfulness of mind or consciousness (*cittānupassana satipaṭṭhāna*).
4. Mindfulness of phenomena (*dhammānupassana satipaṭṭhāna*).

The Buddha said, "If he practises this mindfulness, his mind will be detached from everything. Then it will be liberated from defile-

ments.” So the mindfulness meditation you are now practising is the way to be a Great Man with the mind liberated from defilements.

Here a Great Man refers to an arahant, but what we must note is that the Buddha didn't say '*vimuttakāya*' — liberated body. He said '*vimuttacitto*' — liberated mind. So the most important thing is to be aware of any mental states that arise from moment to moment.

Contemplation of Mind

In the Mahāsatipaṭṭhāna Sutta the Buddha teaches us mindfulness of thoughts in some detail:

“Sarāgaṃ vā cittaṃ 'sarāgaṃ cittaṃ'ti pajānāti. Vītarāgaṃ vā cittaṃ 'vītarāgaṃ cittaṃ'ti pajānāti.”

This means, “When the mind is with lust, you should observe it as with lust.” When lust happens to arise in your mind, at that moment you should note 'lust, lust,' 'greed, greed,' 'desire, desire,' and so on. Here the Buddha uses the word '*rāga*.' The word '*rāga*' (passion) covers all senses of lust, love, greed, desire, craving, attachment, and grasping. So when there is desire in your mind you should observe it as 'desire, desire, desire.' When greed arise, you should observe it as 'greed, greed, greed.' When there is attachment, you should observe it as 'attachment, attachment, attachment,' and so on.

In the Buddhist scriptures, these mental states, together with mind, are sometimes called '*citta*.' So mentality is the most important thing to be aware of, to be mindful of, in the world. Why? Because it is the mind that must be liberated from all kinds of defilements and suffering.

Then again:

“Sadosaṃ va cittaṃ 'sadosaṃ cittaṃ'ti pajānāti.”

When you have anger in your mind, you should observe it ('anger, anger, anger') as it is. Here also the word '*dosa*' covers all senses of anger, hatred, aversion, and ill-will. All of these are called '*dosa*.' So when you have anger in your mind, you should be mindful of it, noting, 'anger, anger, anger.' When you have hatred, note 'hatred, hatred, hatred.' When you have aversion, observe it: 'aversion, aversion, aversion.' When you have ill-will, observe it: 'ill-will, ill-will, ill-will.'

All these mental states are included in the word '*citta*.' So *cittānupassana* is the most important factor in the four types of mindfulness.

However, some meditators do not understand the importance of consciousness or mind, so they do not try to watch when there is any mental state arising. If a meditator is able to be aware of, to be mindful of, any mental state arising at that moment, then he is sure to liberate his mind from defilements while he observing that mental state. That mental state (awareness of defilements) is free from defilement.

When he realises the arising and passing away of a mental state, anger for example, then he doesn't take the anger to be himself. He doesn't identify that anger with himself, with a person, a being, a self or soul. Because he realises anger is just a mental state, he comes to realise the impersonal nature of the anger. He comes to realise the non-self nature of the anger. Then he won't be attached to the anger, or he won't be attached to his mind, because he sees it as impermanent, or as arising and passing away.

The Buddha continued to teach us:

"Saṅkhiṭṭaṃ vā cittaṃ 'saṅkhiṭṭaṃ cittaṃ'ti pajānāti."

That is from the chapter on contemplation of mind (*cittānupassana satipaṭṭhāna*). *'Saṅkhiṭṭaṃ cittaṃ'* means sloth and torpor — reluctance to practise meditation, and laziness. If you have laziness in your mind, you must observe it: 'lazy, lazy.' If your mind is depressed, note: 'depression, depression.' If your mind is reluctant, note: 'reluctant.'

Whatever mental states arise must be observed as they are. This is contemplation of mind to liberate the mind from defilements and suffering.

Mindfulness of Wandering Thoughts

Then again, the Buddha said:

"Vikkhiṭṭaṃ va cittaṃ vikkhiṭṭaṃ cittaṃ'ti pajānāti."

Here *'vikkhiṭṭaṃ cittaṃ'* means dissipating thought. It covers all the senses of thinking, wandering, planning, visualising, and so on. When the mind is wandering, you must observe it, 'wandering, wandering.' When your mind is thinking, you note: 'thinking, thinking.' When your mind is planning, you note: 'planning, planning,' and so on.

To observe or to be mindful of wandering thoughts, thinking mind, or imagination, is the most important factor to make progress

in Vipassanā meditation. So when you have these thoughts you should not fail to note them. When thoughts are noted, when they are observed, they diminish, and concentration develops. When thoughts are not noted, concentration is wavering, and becomes weak. Sometimes you are not aware of thoughts, though they are going on and wandering. Your mind is wandering, stealthily planning something in the future. You think you are observing rising/falling, or an object of mentality or physicality, but actually you are recollecting something in the past and so on. However, you are not aware of it because you think that the mind is with an object such as rising/falling, or lifting/dropping. Why? Because you do not observe thoughts when they arise.

Thoughts are Impermanent and Not Self

When you observe any thought that arises in the sitting or the walking, you come to realise the true nature of thought — if your concentration is good enough. Thought is a mental state which is impermanent, it arises and then passes away. However, sometimes you think that thought continues for a very long time. Actually, it is not only one thought. A series of thought-moments arise one after another. It is a thought-process, not only one thought-moment. A thought-moment doesn't even last a millionth of a second, it arises and instantly passes away. After a previous thought-moment has disappeared, another one arises and passes away.

However, we are not able to discern the thought-moments. We think that only one thought is continuous and lasting. We thus identify that thought with me or mine, a person or a being. "It is 'I' who thinks," or "I am thinking about something." This is how the wrong view of a person or self arises.

So thought is taken to be a person, a being, or a self. Then the wrong idea of that person or being gives rise to many different defilements such as greed, desire, hatred, and so on. Your thought or mind is not liberated from defilements because you do not observe it. When you observe it, you will come to realise thoughts as natural processes arising and passing away one after another, then you won't identify this process with yourself, with me or mine, a person or being, because you will rightly understand this as a process of mentality that arises and passes away, incessantly. Then you won't

have any defilements in your mind because you will be realising or rightly understanding the thought as it really is.

It is very interesting to watch the thought-process when it arises. When our concentration is deep enough, we see the thinking process as one thought after another, appearing and disappearing. We see the impermanence of the thought, the suffering of being oppressed by arising and passing away. Then we don't have any mental defilement in our mind. In this way the mind is liberated from defilement.

When our insight into the impersonal nature of the thought becomes mature, we realise or experience one insight knowledge after another until we have attained the final stage of insight knowledge. After that, the mind changes into enlightenment — path knowledge (*magga ñāṇa*). That enlightenment eliminates some aspects of defilement. Then the mind is liberated from some of its defilements. In this way, one stage of enlightenment after another uproots the defilements. Eventually, the final stage of enlightenment (*arahatta magga*) uproots all mental defilements completely. Then the mind is completely liberated.

That is why the Buddha says that when a man practises mindfulness meditation, contemplation on body as body, contemplation on feeling as feeling, contemplation on mind as mind, and contemplation on phenomena as phenomena, his mind becomes detached from everything, liberated from all mental defilements. Then he is a Great Man with a liberated mind.

So I urge you to observe or watch, without fail, thoughts that arise in the sitting or walking — whether they are good or bad, significant or insignificant. Observe them energetically, attentively and precisely. Then you will be able to liberate your mind from defilements and become a Great Man with a liberated mind.

Excerpt from a Dhamma talk by Sayādaw U Janaka at a retreat in Sāsana House Blue Mountains Insight Meditation Centre near Sydney, Australia in March 1998

Mahāpurisa Suttaṃ

“Atha kho Āyasmā Sāriputto yena Bhagavā tenupasaṅkami; upasaṅkamitvā Bhagavantam abhivādetvā ekamantaṃ nisīdi. Ekamantaṃ nisinno kho Āyasmā Sāriputto Bhagavantam etadvoca: ‘Mahāpuriso, mahāpuriso’ti, bhante, vuccati. Kittāvātā nu kho, bhante, mahāpuriso hotī’ti?

“Vimuttacittatā khvāhaṃ, Sāriputta, ‘mahāpuriso’ti vadāmi. Avimuttacittatā ‘No Mahāpuriso’ti vadāmi.”

“Kathaṅca, Sāriputta, vimuttacitto hoti? Idha, Sāriputta, bhikkhu kāye kāyānupassī viharati ātāpī sampajāno satimā, vineyya loke abhijjhādomanassaṃ. Tassa kāye kāyānupassino viharato cittaṃ virajjati, vimuccati anupādāya āsavehi. Vedanāsu ...pe... citte ...pe... dhammesu dhammānupassī viharati ātāpī sampajāno satimā, vineyya loke abhijjhādomanassaṃ. Tassa dhammesu dhammānupassino viharato cittaṃ virajjati, vimuccati anupādāya āsavehi. Evaṃ kho, Sāriputta, vimuttacitto hoti. Vimuttacittatā khvāhaṃ, Sāriputta, ‘Mahāpuriso’ti vadāmi. Avimuttacittatā ‘No Mahāpuriso’ti vadāmi’”ti.

(Saṃyuttanikāya, Mahāvagga, Nālandavaggo)