Short Notes for Brother Teoh’s Thursday Talk 26 September 2019


Youtube: [Understanding Dharma Cultivation and Meditation](https://youtu.be/BRbTV46Qatk)

1. **The Awareness** nature is suchness (it is just a nature within) and there is nobody to be aware. This nature within is not a being and it cannot come out and live life. The moment one starts to perceive from this awareness nature, the mundane mind arises because perception is an aggregate of the mundane mind. But with 1st and 2nd turning initial wisdom (yonisomanasikara) borne of constant listening and contemplative reflection of the dharma, it will prompt you to have the requisite wisdom at the moment of sense experience to act wisely. Thus preventing your mind from stirring and reacting via delusion. Things are as they are, due to their conditions behind their arising. Therefore you can accept the reality of the moment. Whatever that arise within this existential world there are causes and conditions behind. So when you want things your way which is against nature’s law, you suffer. This is in line with the 1st noble truth reality of ‘not getting what you want’ is dukkha.

2. You must understand the nature’s laws that governs life and existence especially the law of karma. Venerable Assaji told Sariputta (who then became a sotapanna) that his teacher said, ‘whatever that arise, there are causes and conditions behind, and these causes and conditions have been explained by my teacher (the Buddha) through his 5 daily contemplations: 1) This body is of the nature to grow old for it has not gone beyond old age; 2) This body is of the nature to die for it has not gone beyond death, it is not a permanent unchanging entity, hence not you; 4) All that you own and hold on to dearly will one day separate from you; 5) We are all born of our karma, heir to our karma, conditioned and supported by our karma, we are what we are due to our karma.

3. Law of karma – whenever happen in life the causes and conditions for their arising are mainly due to karma from the past. Thus you should accept the reality of the moment and not stir your thought unnecessarily so that there is no fear or anxiety, no blaming others and your mind is quiet, leading to clarity of mind. With this you can resolve the problem amicably via following N8FP and move on with your life smoothly.

4. Do what you need to do via wisdom. That is, need to repent and seek for forgiveness from all beings and Triple Gem, do it via reciting, ‘whomsoever from the distant past until now, whether knowingly or unknowingly that this nature of mine has caused them any karmic negativity, misery, suffering or mislead, I would like to sincerely ask for forgiveness. May my sincere request for forgiveness, be accepted by all.’ I vow to repent via following the advice of the Buddha: to avoid all evil, do good and purify my mind through cultivating the Noble Eightfold Path. Radiate love and metta. With this, karmic obstruction can be overcome. Then Vow not to repeat all these evil, through keeping the 5 precepts. To purify mind one need to constantly listen to and contemplate the dharma and cultivate sincerely to straighten one’s views. After that, invoke power of merits (develop via your wholesome acts, thoughts and speech) for turn around and for other type of blessings like, ‘to always avoid the foolish/heedless, meet with the wise and enlightened ones, until Nibbana is realized soonest possible.

5. You can also modify the above to suite your need. For example, ‘by the power of whatever wholesomeness, that this nature of mine has cultivated since I know the dharma, may it arise causes and conditions for me (or my
loved one’s) to recover to good health soonest possible. This is the dharma way that can help you improve your life and with this spiritual understanding you can also use it to help others as well.

6. With understanding, cultivate the 5 spiritual faculties to develop the meditation. With the 5 spiritual faculties developed, the mental hindrances are gone so there is no need to train or anchor the mind using skillful means (or object of meditation) to make the mind calm, peaceful and aware within. Just relax, maintain awareness, and the mind will be silent immediately. When your mind enters sati, you are very sensitive and all your seeing and hearing etc. will be in sati. You are able to see your bodily movements, nature’s phenomena and mental flows, all in sati, all in a continuous flow. Thus no more heedless thinking (lost in thought).

7. Ignorance will condition wrong thoughts (thoughts with the evil roots) to condition your fear, worry and anxiety. On the other hand when there is yoniso manasikara (wisdom at the moment of sense experience), you are aware and able to act according to wisdom.

8. The moment there is avijja (ignorance), thinking continues. For the wise, they only use the thinking mind to contemplate, reflect and arise the right thoughts. The mind is aware when contemplating. But for those with too much knowledge they tend to use a lot of their memory to act, and that is the reason why they cannot reflect or contemplate correctly. According to J. Krishnamurti, beware of the one who says ‘I know’ because there is nothing to know. All knowing borne of your views, opinions and conditioned thoughts are just knowledge.

9. Dhamma is akaliko, beyond thought beyond mind. Therefore ‘whenever there is a meditator, there is no meditation’. The meditator here is the egoic mind, the thought. Hence the thought cannot be in state of sati or awareness. Either you are aware or lost in thought. To meditate, you must understand and use your true mind but to live life you must understand and use your mundane mind.

10. Moment to moment, life passes by, what are you doing? Most people are too busy thinking, planning and worrying about life, not being in the moment, silently aware to truly living life. This is heedless living. But with the meditative mind, you are mindful, aware and silent within. This is heedful living. Brother Teoh shared that although he is currently sharing dharma in this class, but inside (his nature) is still and empty; his ‘nature’ shares naturally (straight from the heart that has the wisdom connected to it). Once awaken, the wisdom is connected to the form and mind hence making it different (wise). It is different from the one who uses memory and knowledge to act.

11. Silent mind is able to see the birth and formation of thought. Stability of mindfulness is needed. There is an inner awareness within. Observe without the observer (objective seeing), for the ‘observer is the observed’! – Here the observer is the thought that perceives with an egoic mind (Subjective seeing). Thus the objective seeing is the pure seeing and the Buddha explained it using this words: ‘in the seeing there is only the seeing consciousness, no one to see as yet’. With this, one stays with the true mind, in pure awareness, to see things as they are and to awaken without the need for words. That is to see things as they are before the perception and without the observer, this is wisdom seeing. (‘The observer is the observed’ stated above is a J. Krishnamurti’s quote).

12. Buddha merely shows the way. Unless you cultivate yourself and awaken, you cannot understand. You will be more confused if you use the mundane mind to understand.
13. There are 3 types of seeing as taught in the Mahayana teaching: 1) mundane seeing: ‘see mountain as mountain’. 2) The direct or wisdom seeing via the silent mind, to see thing as it is, with the pure awareness/perception (without the words): thus See Mountain as not mountain 3) Suchness seeing with true wisdom: ‘Seeing Mountain as mountain again’ – as one blends into life within the existential world of convention, one must have the wisdom to accord and flow with conditions and go beyond duality (right and wrong).

14. In the Surangama sutta, it is said, ‘perception of form is consciousness, whereas its non-perception is wisdom’. When no mundane mind is involved, there is direct seeing via the silent mind, to see things as they are without words and concept borne of perception, and that is wisdom and understanding. But when you perceive form under mundane seeing (i.e. without the wisdom), the mundane mind (with delusion) arises, then one label what one see with words and concept and that is knowledge borne of mundane consciousness.

15. A very stable daily mindfulness (sati) is needed to see the birth and creation of thought. The pure vinnana (or pure awareness/perception) is the one that can allow one’s nature to see things as they are (seeing truth). With sati and initial wisdom, at the moment of sense experience (the pure consciousness before content input), feeling can remains as pure feeling. It does not lead to craving. This comes with understanding because the unwavering mind is borne of wisdom. But as your mind stirs with likes and dislikes, borne of mental hindrances conditioned by self-delusion, this mental hindrances will hinder your mind from entering the meditative state of inner peace and inner awareness.

16. The mandarin saying 心为根本 (xin wei ken pen), means you have to start your cultivation from basic, meaning start from mind (xin wei ken pen) and you must understand what this mind is all about (its 2 aspects) so that you can understand clearly who you are and what you are? If you can’t even understand that you have a self-nature and everything arises from that self-nature via creation by the mundane mind (which is dependent originating and condition arising) then you are being superficial in your cultivation and you are wasting your time. Whether wholesome, unwholesome, evil and non-evil, etc. they all arise from here, this is basic understanding.” This basic understanding of the self-nature and the mundane mind is also the reason why Sakyamuni Buddha, said “Mind is the fore-runner of all things. Mind is chief, when mind arises everything arises.” Hence Good and bad, wholesome and unwholesome, etc. – they all arise via the mundane mind’s creation. And Bodhidharma said, ‘if this basic teaching also you don’t understand, then how can you meditate? Do you follow? This basic understanding teaches you, that your mind via words and thoughts creates duality of good and bad, wholesome and unwholesome, etc. and that is why you have to start from there. Brother Teoh urges kalyanamitta to read the transcript book, lesson 75 of his 6th Patriarch platform sutra, page 13 onwards to develop the better understanding.

17. Question on how to transcend duality and the middle path is also clearly explained from Page 24 onward of the same book.

18. The zen story of Bodhidharma, states that all cultivation starts from understanding the mundane mind which creates everything is very important. It is similar to Sakyamuni’s Dhamapada sayings verses 1 and 2: ‘Mind is the forerunner of all things, mind is chief, when mind arises, everything arise. When you are heedless, you will act with delusion thus causing suffering. But when you are heedful, your mind is beautiful and happiness will follow you like the shadow that never leaves you.’ Since you hold the key to your own life destiny. To be happy or unhappy is entirely your own choice. Therefore it is important for you to choose wisely. People suffer due to their lack of understanding because they are not taught such dharma teaching.
Both mundane and supra mundane aspects of life are summarized in the 4 noble truths. With this understanding one will understand the secret of life, then one can live life beautifully and meaningfully. This 4 noble truths is so complete and unique that when Brother Teoh came to know this teaching when he was young (1971), he never turned back and cultivated it all the way through. The 4 noble truths are:

- **1st Noble truth:** concerning mundane realities of life and existence: There is this noble truth of dukkha explaining the prevalence of suffering and the realities of life and existence. All mundane happenings are part of by the 8 realities of birth, old age, sickness and death, separation from loved ones & one’s prized possessions, being with people you don’t like, when things don’t go your way, your expectation is life are not fulfilled, when you cannot get what you want and finally, ’in short it is due to your self-delusion which conditions you to grasp and cling onto the 5 aggregate of form and mind, thinking that is you, is the cause of dukkha.

- **2nd Noble Truth:** Cause of arising of suffering which is craving borne of self-delusion, conditioned by ignorance.

- **3rd Noble Truth:** Enlightenment in the here and now is possible and suffering need not be when you have the wisdom. (Supra mundane aspect).

- **4th Noble Truth:** How to end suffering through cultivating the noble 8-fold path to live the noble life of an enlightened being. This is the supra mundane aspect of life.

(The draft for this short notes were prepared by Sister Chong Phey Yuen.)