

SEVEN FACETS OF INSIGHT



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Introduction

The following pages are called the Seven Facets of Insight, although their subject matter is more commonly referred to as the “Seven Factors of Enlightenment” (*satta sambojjhaṅga*). Factors are constituents (*aṅga*) which form the make-up, whereas “facets” seem to indicate their various aspects.

It is a point of controversy, whether enlightenment or realisation is a gradual process of evolution (and that seems to be the predominant view of present Theravāda in Sri Lanka, though far from exclusive), or whether the knowing and seeing of the truth is not an evolution at all. To many, (orthodox as well as independent thinkers) it is rather a revolution than an evolution. There will be, of course, the necessary ground conditions, but the factual moment of enlightenment or realisation is a point of seeing (not a point of view!) which cannot be taught, although it would be possible to pin-point the obstacles to seeing.

For some, these obstacles appear as help; their danger lies in our attachment to those crutches. We note a thorn in our flesh; then we make use of another thorn to remove it. Having succeeded, what are we doing with the two thorns? Do we throw them away? Or do we keep them for further use on another occasion? That would be like preserving them as relics, and enshrining them in a dagoba!

The seven facets are not to be seen as a system of evolution in emancipation; but each aspect provides a more complete view as

from a different approach and thus they do not constitute a gradual course of enlightenment, but rather different sights, till in the end the picture is complete. Each facet reflects the light and thereby sheds new light, allowing the light to shine through. Each one gives more freedom; yet, there is no freedom till all obstacles have been removed. Thus these factors are facets; they do not lead to the light, but they allow the light which is within each one of us to shine through and brighten our understanding, if we care and dare to look.

Such is the revolution of the mind, when thought ceases and insight takes over.

Seven Facets of Insight

It is clear from the Pāli word that the seven factors to be discussed here are not seven steps or stages which gradually lead up to enlightenment. They are the constituents of enlightenment (*bojjhaṅga*), the members (*aṅga*), the components so to say, which contribute each and all to the full realisation of enlightenment (*bodhi*). Enlightenment is not, however, something dependent on those factors, or separate from them. They constitute and are enlightenment. And thus one may say that enlightenment, although not produced by them, as Nibbāna is the unconditioned (*asaṅkhata*). It contains them, comprises, includes those constituents. Without them there would be no enlightenment, no realisation.

To understand this clearly one should be very pure in conscience and in consciousness, that is innocent and unprejudiced. Without such purity of virtue, which is non-attachment to property and views, without such clarity of intelligence, unbiased and unconditioned, there can be no penetrating insight which alone can see and understand the reality of things as they are (*yathā-bhūta-ñāṇa-dasana*). This “seeing” has no special object and no intention of purpose; and thus truth is not a goal to achieve, enlightenment is not a destination, realisation is not an ideal to become real; but it is a total revolution in living, a complete freedom from all restrictions, an awakening of intelligence, which cannot revert to a dream-state of memory and imagination, while seeing what is.

The constituents of this supreme enlightenment (*sambojjhaṅga*) are seven, and they are included in another set of 37 factors which form the culture and the development of wisdom (*bodhipakkhiya dhamma*). Here we are interested in the seven constituents (*satta sambojjhaṅga*) which form the penetrating insight of the four Noble Truths, which is the realisation of the deliverance of Nibbāna.

The seven are mindfulness (*sati*), investigation into the nature of things (*dhamma-vicaya*), energy (*virīya*), delight (*pīti*), tranquillity (*passaddhi*), concentration (*samādhi*) and equanimity (*upekkhā*). It is the harmony of these seven which constitute enlightenment, and are thus the seven conditions which conduce to full comprehension and the complete ending of all conflict. Individually, however, they seem to have characteristics which are more suitable to some states of mind than others on different occasions. Thus, investigation into the nature of things together with energy and delight are more profitable when a sluggish mind needs exertion, while tranquillity, equanimity and concentration assist in subduing an over-enthusiastic mind. Mindfulness on the other hand is essential in providing food for all.

Mindfulness

And so it is mindfulness (*sati*) which is indispensable, and which, therefore, heads the list of seven. The root-meaning is derived from (*smṛti*), remembrance, and hence it is frequently interpreted as memory. However, as a constituent factor of wisdom it is an alert awareness in the present rather than a flash-back to the past as memory. Memory is essential for the continuance of existence, because without memory there is no recognition, no knowledge, and hence no possibility of striving, it is then in memory that the 'I' can find itself, can make itself secure, and in projection thereof can continue. But that, of course, is the very source and cause of all conflict, namely the conflict between the ideal and the actual. And so, while memory secures the ideal, it is mindfulness which is alert in watchfulness over the actual.

For alertness there must be purity of conscience and clarity of consciousness, When there is attachment either to property or to opinions, there is no purity of mind, and in this cloud of possessiveness it is not possible to be detached and free from conditioning. When there is pre-occupation of thought through prejudice or fear, there is no contact possible with that which is real. Alertness avoids both, by being mindful of that which is. Thus an alert mind will be aware of the mind's inclinations, objects of thought, purposes of will, intentions of desire; and in that mindfulness it will not be influenced by memory, nor conditioned by ideals.

Mindfulness then leads to insight, because it is awareness of the true nature of an action. Awareness is knowledge without assertion or comparison, without denial or acceptance; for all these judgments are the expressions of the reflecting ‘self’, which distorts the view in isolating itself from the conditioning environment. It is the delusion of ‘self’ which approves or disapproves of certain feelings, But by mere attentiveness, watchfulness, awareness and mindfulness those feelings will be perceived as sensuous reactions to the environment. The understanding of this action-reaction-process will overcome all misconception about individuality, whereby the root-cause of the conflict will have been removed. Then, no thoughts will arise such as: “I feel pain or pleasure”; but simply: “this is feeling”; no thoughts as: “I am freed”; but simply: “this is a liberated thought”; no thought as: “this is my body”; but simply: “such is matter, its origin and dissolution”.

Thus, mindfulness solves the problem of conflict, just because it has no purpose of its own. For, while it is through purposeful volition that opposites are created as the cause of all conflict, pure mindfulness avoids all such complications by merely seeing things as they are.

Mindfulness is real meditation, in which the object-matter is not a chosen object, but the actual operation of the mind itself. In actual meditation of insight (*vipassanā*) the problems of conflict cease to have any meaning. Here the conflict between being and becoming is not dissolved in a search for a solution, but it is seen as the working of thought, of ‘self’ in isolation and in opposition, Here, the motive of the search becomes the object of awareness, not with a view to achieving control of mind or attaining the goal of an ideal, but as being the actual working of thought. Then, without appropriation or rejection, without method or purpose, it will be seen that the working of thought in actuality is the search for survival of a thought, an experience in the past, a thought in which the ‘I’ continues, and which the mind, that same ‘self’, tries

to project in order to become in the future as an ideal, an abstract thought, which can exist for ever as a spiritual soul in the security of being.

It is only mindfulness which can be aware of every movement of thought, of every experience of volition. And in seeing without distortion, without reference to the memory of experience, there is the realisation of the void of the 'self', and hence of the void of conflict.

Investigation

This is a research into the nature of things (*dhammavicaya*) in its widest sense. Not only the doctrine (*dhamma*) of the Buddha is here the object of discernment (*sallakkhaṇa*), but even the general phenomena as they appear, either in one's own conditioning (*ajjhatta-dhamma*), or as external phenomena (*bahiddha-dhamma*) which become the objects of one's reactions.

It is referred to as a critical analysis, which would provide the necessary knowledge required for action. And as action is life, it is obvious that this research is of very great importance. The spirit of enquiry is, of course, far removed from the unskilful doubt or perplexity (*vicikicchā*), which is a wavering state of indecision. Research as a factor of enlightenment, is very much decided as regards its motivation, even if the object of research has not been fully analysed and understood. This decisiveness of investigation may, on the other hand, prove to be an obstacle—in so far, as there may be prejudice involved in the search. A search, of course, is always in the dark, even if there is some indication of direction in which investigation should take place.

Such indications are provided by those who are experts, who have the knowledge and the experience, and who, therefore, can be of help in showing the way. In this regard, the teaching of the Buddha is a most valuable help, just because the Buddha refused to be a saviour, but only showed the way to go, to investigate, to find

out for ourselves. If therefore our reliance on the teaching (*dhamma*) becomes such as to result in the attachment to blind faith, then all research will have come to an end, and with it the possibility of understanding.

Now, in investigation it is natural to draw up a plan of action; and in following that plan one expects to reach the desired destination. And therein lies the flaw and the danger against which the Buddha himself warned us, namely the reliance on authority, which is the retention of the past through memory. True investigation, to be an actual analysis and research, cannot start with presuppositions and working hypotheses. An open mind without attachment to the past (which includes even the words of the Buddha) and without desire for the future (which includes also one's own interpretation of those words to suit one's own convenience and prejudice)—only such an open mind may observe the phenomena which are, which arise, which cease. And thus, this research is very closely linked with the alertness of mindfulness (*sati*), which watches and sees, and in seeing understands.

Now, perception (*saññā*) in the mind can see the conception of an idea (*viññāṇa*), while the full understanding of this process constitutes the insight (*paññā*) which is enlightenment, of which investigation (*dhamma-vicaya*) is a factor. As long as perception is guided towards a preconceived notion, there will be distorted knowledge, aimed at achievement and attainment of virtue or possession. And that aim of action will naturally give colour to the idea conceived in the mind. Then the aim will be seen, and knowledge will be interpreted in that light; but that is not the understanding of what is, not insight into the real nature of things.

This real nature of things, whether they are one's own conditioning or one's reactions thereto, is now the object of investigation. When this research is begun without any motive beyond the understanding thereof, the mind is open and innocent, is not attached and not averse. Then any activity of thought will at once be bared.

The mere opening up is a revelation: and that is the truth; that is enlightenment.

There can be knowledge without insight. Knowledge can be acquired through books, through hearing, through learning, through remembering, through inference, through authority; it is an acquisition which strengthens the 'I'-concept which provides a further goal, a purpose in existence, a means of continuance, a projection of 'self'.

But, insight has no goal in the future, it has no base in the past, it is just seeing things now, as they are. Insight is seeing one's actions as reactions to a motive; and in understanding this process, the motive which is the continuation of a delusion ceases. That means that action as a reaction ceases; thought as memory ceases; will as an ideal ceases. For, none of those is real, now, in the present. Thus, in insight there is freedom of understanding and that is enlightenment.

Energy

At this stage of moral evolution the actuality of the factors of enlightenment are functioning on a ground, which has sufficiently been cleared of obstacles and impediments, so that the out-going force of effort (*āyama*), which was so important on the Noble Eightfold Path, can function as the inner strength of energy (*virīya*).

Thus, where right effort (*Sammā-vāyāma*) is restricted as a four-fold endeavour to remove the obstacles which have arisen, or to prevent them from arising, or to bring about favourable conditions, or to improve the existing ones, there is now operating an inner energy (*virīya*), which is the positive contribution to the arising of an intelligent awakening, as a factor of enlightenment. Both aspects, of course, are equally important; and hence one finds this factor not only mentioned as a step on the path (*magg' aṅga*) and a factor of enlightenment (*bojjh' aṅga*), but also among of the group of five powers (*pañca bala*) and again among of the group of five controlling faculties (*pañca indriya*). In all of these classifications there is a slight difference of aspect: the outgoing effort on the path, the inner energy towards awakening, the power of overcoming obstacles, and the faculty of culture, of evolving.

Energy (*virīya*) is then the capacity, the inner force, the latent ability which only requires a suitable environment, such as an impelling condition to become an active operation. It is not activity itself, but the power to act. Hence one can speak of static or latent

energy, which, however, is merely potential and not actual. Energy is, therefore, more of the nature of a characteristic, and as such it is classified as a mental factor (*virīya cetasikā*).

Methodical effort is directed towards a goal. There is in it the element of purposeful striving, of desire for attainment, of protection of an ideal to be achieved. Such effort has nothing vague or experimental about it, as the goal of the ideal has already been fixed. Hence, in right effort (*Sammā-vāyāma*) there is no doubt, no indecision, no wavering, no hesitation, no perplexity. Such is the effort required on the path (*magg'aṅga*) and is therefore always right effort (*Sammā-vāyāma*), directed towards an object which will produce a skilful effect.

But energy as mental factor (*virīya cetasikā*) is one of the six particular ones (*paṭiṇṇaka cetasikā*), or miscellaneous ones which do not occur in all classes of thought, such as the seven general mental factors (*sādhāraṇa cetasikā*). It is not exclusively good or skilful (*kusala*), such as right effort on the path (*Sammā-vāyāma*); and thus it derives its significance from its association with other skilful or unskilful mental factors. Hence it is called “either one or the other” (*añña samāna*). It gives vigour to the action of its concomitants, it supports them for better or for worse; and thus it has a double function, unlike the fourfold function of effort. By supporting it prevents the other factors from falling away, and thereby makes them persevere; its other function being the taking of initiative (*uṭṭhāna virīya*) which has exertion as its characteristic (*ussahana-lakkhaṇa*).

Energy is always mental (Atthasālinī I, iv, 2). Hence it does not arise through any of the five bodily senses, neither does it arise or associate with investigation of an incomplete thought (*santīraṇa*), which must not be confused with the investigation (*dhamma-vicaya*), the spirit of enquiry, which is another factor of enlightenment.

The investigation (*santīraṇa*) which is part of the process of cognition, is a reflex idea which brings about recognition (*viñānana-*

lakkhaṇa), which is the result of an earlier mental act of registration (*tad-ārammaṇa*) or memory. Energy (*virīya*), on the other hand, which is found together with investigation, the spirit of enquiry as a factor of enlightenment, is therefore absent in the investigation (*santīraṇa*) which follows the simple perception or the acceptance of an impression (*sampañicchana*), which is a perception (*saññā*) without conception (*sañkhāra*), a presentation without representation,

This digression was necessitated by the need to avoid possible confusion in the word “investigation” as research-analysis (*dhamma-vicaya*) and as the reaction following a mental impression (*santīraṇa*), the first being a factor of enlightenment, the latter being the seventh thought-moment (*cittakkhaṇa*) in a single thought-unit (*cittuppada*).

Delight

The exuberant joy (*pīti*) which is a mental exultation is not a sensational feeling but an emotional exuberance of zestful delight in various degrees of intensity. It is either accompanied by directed and sustained thought (*savitakka-savicāra*), in which case it is directed by the discursive process of logical application, and has similarities and dissimilarities as its objects in view; or it is dissociated from those mental activities (*avitakka-avicāra*), which brings delight to a higher plane and a more refined development which is no longer dependent on the logic of thought, as is evidenced in the second stage of mental absorption (*jhāna*).

It is the exuberance of this emotional experience which prevents the mind to become sluggish. Concentration on, and recollection of, the good qualities and virtues of the Buddha, his order and his teaching, the efficacy of right conduct, especially of generosity, leading to the bliss of rebirth in happy spheres, are some of the factors contributing to the development of this zestful delight, which can be experienced even without sensory satisfaction. It is much more intense than the happiness of well-being, because it has the thrill of expectation, because it does not have the fear of loss and because it is entirely intellectual. Thus, it is an ideal factor leading up to wisdom, as long as the zestful interest is not centred on a desire for self-satisfaction. This danger is not imaginary, for the element of expectation in its anticipation may well inspire some

forms of desire, which then would open an escape route for a mind in conflict, leading away from insight.

Although delight could be experienced, having a wish for gratification as its object, that would, of course, never be a factor of enlightenment. Thus, great satisfaction is sometimes derived from the compassion of others, which then becomes a clinging to one's misery being the source of that satisfaction. Such attitude would be found in a mind which finds delight in morbidity. It is then that delight (*pīti*) combines with the unhealthy disposition of sloth (*thīna*).

In the chain of dependent origination and cessation, which shows the evolution of ignorance into conflict, and the solution of conflict into understanding, there the experience of conflict (*dukkha*) leads one to confidence (*saddha*) in a teacher or physician, whose prescription may provide a turning point of misery into joy (*pamojja*), which in turn will become sheer delight (*pīti*). This delight itself will then be the factor which through serene tranquillity of mind (*passaddhi*) becomes the factor of wisdom (*bojjh'āṅga*) which is enlightenment.

And so it will be seen that this delightful interest has to be handled with extreme care, as it can lead on in a search for self-gratification, as well as to the realisation of no-self (*anatta*), which is the freedom of emancipation. Thus it is of great significance to note that the karmically inoperative state (*kriya-citta*) which can arise only in one "who is purged of the intoxicants" (*khināsavā*), that is, in an arahant, is yet accompanied by joy (*somanassa sahaḡata*), for he alone can have delight and yet be not affected by it.

It is only in the fourth stage of mental absorption in the spheres of pure form (*rūpa-jhāna*) that delightful interest (*pīti*) is replaced by the predominant factor of well-being in the harmony of ease (*sukha*). When thus the excitement of rapturous joy, which is so natural in the process of acquisition within the sight of the goal of achievement, has given way to intelligent awareness (*sampajāna*), it

is then that the three final factors take over which constitute the experience of emancipation in enlightenment.

A final note on the place of joy in Buddhism, which is sometimes regarded as pessimistic owing to the stress laid on conflict, will not be out of order here. Out of the 121 different mental states composed of numerous mental factors (*cetasikā*), there are only two which are accompanied by melancholy (*domanassa saḥagata*), owing to their being yoked to repugnance or aversion (*paṭigha-sampayutta*), but there are 62 which are accompanied by joy in its different manifestations of delightful interest (*pīti*), ethical well-being (*sukha*), mental joy (*somanassa*), as pleasurable investigation (*santīraṇa*) or aesthetic pleasure (*hasituppāda*).

Tranquillity

Composure of mind is that serenity (*passaddhi*) in which both the concomitants of consciousness, namely, reception of contact (*vedanā*), perception of cognition (*saññā*) and conception or formation of concepts (*sarikhāra*), as well as consciousness itself as recognition (*viññāṇa*), are free from the disturbances of defilements (*kilesa*).

It is the calming down of the searching mind, the coolness of the passions of love and hate the pacification of conflict, the repose of agitation. And in that atmosphere of tranquillity it is possible for a state of utter calm to arise, a state of mind in which there is no attachment to the past, no veneration for tradition merely because it is ancient, no fear of consequences, no hope of ideals, no escape from the unknown and no projection of imagination, of the image-forming mind (*sarikhāra*). Thus, there is a calming down of the restlessness of a mind in search, in doubt, in conflict. It is from the zest of delight (*pīti*) that the tranquil mind passes on to the sense of security which is bliss (*sukha*) in the absence of conflict (*dukkha*), leading to insight and final release (*vimutti*).

It is only the tranquil mind which is not conditioned, not motivated, not dependent; and thus in its freedom there is a direct understanding in perfect equilibrium without opposition. This tranquillity is due to an un motivated approach, which is not a search, but which is seeing without choice, without distortion, which is act-

ing without craving, which is understanding through direct insight, and which is, thereby, a factor of enlightenment.

Insight is prevented and obstructed by fore-sight, when the ideal is chosen as the object for surviving and attainment. This striving is the self-projection which disturbs, distorts and disfigures the present moment, which can only be seen in the tranquil reflection of a calm mind and cool emotions. When thought, which is memory, has ceased to function with its clinging to the past, when thought, which is a self-projected ideal, has ceased to function with its craving for the future, then there is only the present moment, which can be seen and understood in the tranquillity of a mind which has ceased to think and project. That is the atmosphere in which there can be direct perception of what is, of the activity of thought and the reaction of volition, a direct experiencing without interpretation, direct understanding without purpose or desire, without comparison or distortion, without desire or aversion. That is the light, in which there is truth and the realisation of truth, which is enlightenment.

Concentration

The tranquillity (*passaddhi*) of mind and mental factors provides the proper setting for mental concentration (*samādhi*) which is the culture of calm (*samatha-bhāvanā*). It is the unification of the activities of the mind, the balancing of the faculties of the mind, the focussing of the factors of the mind on one centre. Thus it excludes distraction and leads to one-pointedness of mind (*ekaggatā*).

Concentration (*samādhi*) is a means and an end. It is a means of recollection (*anussati*) and hence of gathering one's thought. That alone, of course, is not enough, even if it prevents distraction. For, gathering is always a tendency of collecting; and that is also true of recollection. Here it is the bringing together of what is remembered of what is selected, of what is thought profitable.

And thus, basically, recollection (*sati*) and concentration (*samādhi*) are very close. They are mentioned as it were in one breath in many groupings. In the Noble Eightfold Path they are found together as right mindfulness (*Sammā-sati*) and right concentration (*Sammā-samādhi*). Here concentration is said to be another name for one-pointedness of mind (*citt'ekaggatā*); and under that name concentration is also found as one of the seven general mental factors (*sabba-citta-sādhāraṇa-cetasikā*), though not necessarily "right" (*sammā*), as even a wicked thought needs concentration to produce its evil effect.

It is the faculty of bringing together (*samannāhara*) which ultimately constitutes consciousness and without which there would be no contact and no cognition. It is in concentration that the mental hindrance (*nīvaraṇa*) of sensual desire loses its attraction. Thus, concentration is an application of the mind, focussing its attention, selectively and intentionally; for which reason it is a form of mind-culture (*bhāvanā*) and a means to calm (*samatha*). The methods of concentration are the spiritual exercises, enumerated and explained by Buddhaghosa at great length in his *Visuddhi Magga*. It is in this monumental work that the commentator approaches the deliverance of mind (*vimutti*) along with the three channels of virtue (*sīla*), Concentration (*samādhi*) and insight (*paññā*). And so concentration becomes the link between virtuous conduct and the insight of enlightenment.

As a method, concentration is not important, and it may be used according to one's temperament. But in a way, it is also the end, being in the centre of all movement. Leading to, and constituting the peace of mind in which truth can be discerned without distortion, it is concentration (*samādhi*) which leads to insight (*paññā*). It is not through reason and intellect that the truth can be seen, for in logic there is only the deduction of a conclusion from pre-arranged premises. Scholastic speculations have been able to devise analytical methods of a gradual realisation in sixteen stages based on discovery, cognition, comprehension and realisation of each of the four Noble Truths in succession, thus making of mind-culture a sum in arithmetic. Opinions in various schools of Buddhism have differed, as they differ up to this present time, each one quoting some text to illustrate or prove his own contention of a gradual or an instantaneous realisation. All these are mental exercises, but not concentration. In fact, they prevent concentration, as the focus is placed on the method rather than on deliverance. The Buddha's simile of the man wounded by a poisonous arrow, refusing the arrow to be removed before his knowledge were satisfied about its compo-

sition, etc., would be very applicable here too. In searching for the means, the end is lost sight of.

And that makes insight-meditation the end instead of the means. There is no difference of opinions about the end, because the end is not something on which one can have opinions. Opinions arise when there is lack of understanding. When there is insight, that is, when one sees and understands, one has no more opinions: one sees what is. If there is anger, one sees that there is anger, that anger has arisen, not in itself, but in the 'I' which has separated itself in isolation, in opposition, which is conflict. Then the 'I' is understood to be that anger in its opposition. When it is seen and understood, that this 'I' is only a creation of thought to maintain its existence and continuance in isolation and opposition, in craving and in hate, in self-love and in anger, then the basis of this delusion will have gone, and with it all conflict. That is the end of concentration and meditation. The end is the ending, the cessation of purpose, of aim, of volition. This is not only a concentration on the non-substantiality of objects and phenomena, but insight which abandons even the subject of the meditator.

Equanimity

Equanimity (*upekkhā*) frequently sums up and completes a series of psycho-analytical and ethical qualities and is also found in synonyms such as even-mindedness, none-pointedness (*ekaggatā*), balance of mind (*tatra-majjhataṭṭā*), with various shades of difference. Thus it is not only the culmination of the seven factors which constitute enlightenment (*sambojjhaṅga*), but it is also an important mental factor (*cetasikā*) found in all wholesome mental states (*kusala citta*). It is one of the four illimitables, (*appamaññā*) or boundless states which form the four sublime states (*brahmavihāra*), namely, loving kindness (*mettā*), compassion (*karuṇā*), altruistic joy (*muditā*), and equanimity (*upekkhā*). It is the culmination in the practice of the ten perfections (*dasa pāramitā*) by a being, aspiring to the supreme enlightenment of the Buddha, summit of the perfection of a bodhisatta.

But it is not a hedonic indifference, which is a sensation of neither pain nor pleasure, a natural aspect of feeling the zero point between joy and sorrow (*adukkha-m-asukha*). Such total indifference might ultimately amount to criminal negligence, in which case it will be a help (*upekkhā-sahagata*) in unskilful, undesirable mental states, associated with greed or with aversion, or with perplexity and utter delusion. But, that of course is not the equanimity which results from the peace of understanding, as a factor of wisdom.

As balance of mind, it is more intellectual than emotional; as equipoise more ethical in its detachment; as even-mindedness it is the perfect detachment which is beyond good and evil; as one-pointedness it is the attainment of the highest absorption in states of mental concentration, preventing distraction and scattering of energy. And so it manifests itself as peace of mind (*samatha*) and mental balance (*avikkhepa*).

It keeps the process of thought well balanced, and is, therefore, always preventing the mind to lose its equilibrium by going to extremes. Hence it is called the neutral middle (*majjhattā*). In the realisation of the sameness of all beings it reveals itself in the calming down of tendencies, both of aversion and of fawning¹. As a factor of enlightenment it is dependent on detachment². As a characteristic element of the fifth state of mental absorption (*jhāna*), it is described as “Utter purity of mindfulness, which comes of disinterestedness³”.

In comparison with the other three sublime states (*brahmvihāra*) the simile is given of a mother’s love to her four sons, one a baby whom she loves with tender affection (*mettā*), desiring his happiness and growth; one a boy suffering from a serious illness, whose distress she feels in her own heart with compassion (*karuṇā*); one a promising youth whose good qualities constitute the mother’s joy (*muditā*) and pride; and a young man who can manage his own affairs, for whom the mother need not feel any more anxiety, for her mind is set at rest (*upekkhā*).

The factor of equanimity is indeed a factor of wisdom (*bojjhaṅga*) which has replaced not only discursive thought and sustained application (*vitakka-vicāra*) together with the ensuing zest (*pīti*), but even the ease (*sukha*) experienced in the higher grades of mental absorption (*jhāna*) in the spheres of pure form. Perplexity (*vicikicchā*)

¹ *Paṭigh’ anunaya-vūpasama-paccupaṭṭhana*: Atthas. I. v. 13.

² *Viveka nissita*: Samy. N. IV. 367.

³ *Upekkhā satiparisuddhi*, where “no ease is felt, nor any ill” (Dhs, § 175).

and indolence of body and mind (*thīna middha*) were set aside in the first trance with the ending of thought. Spiritual joy (*pīti*) overpowered all hateful tendencies (*vyāpāda*). The agitated mind (*uddhacca-kukkucca*) was calmed by the ease of well-being (*sukha*). And now that the urge of the senses (*kāmacchanda*) is brought face to face with the even-mindedness of equanimity (*upekkhā*) it is clear that here there is no confrontation, however, no subjection of the passions, no mortification of the flesh, no sublimation by the spirit. There is just one-pointedness which does not admit any thought of condemnation or indulgence, which does not attempt an escape, long for salvation, build up a defence, or strive for attainment, a realisation of an ideal. There is just seeing this one thing, this one problem, this one conflict, which is approached in an unbiased attitude of mind with the faculty of insight (*pañc'indriya*).

What is the problem? Why is there conflict?

There is no fight for victory, no attempt at conquest, no search for a solution, no striving for acquisition, no desire for achievement. Thought has ceased, and so has feeling. There is just a fact, the fact of impermanence (*anicca*) which becomes a conflict (*dukkha*) because there is no security for a 'self' (*anatta*). When that fact is seen and understood, it is also seen and understood that this search for the ideal 'self' is the basis and the source of conflict. Thus, the problem is simple, the fact is clear, and the conflict is in the mind. Only when the mind refuses to move away from its problem, when there is no biased thinking, no conditioned striving, no idealised action, then thought must cease its agitation; then its action is lost in equanimity, even-mindedness, balanced awareness, intelligent understanding.

In understanding that there is no conflict when there is no fear of memory and no agitation for the achieving of an ideal—when hope and fear are seen as the factors which make the 'I'—in that balance of equanimity there is peace and truth.

These are the seven factors of enlightenment (*satta sambojjhaniga*). They do not lead to enlightenment, as learning may lead to knowledge. They are enlightenment; they constitute wisdom which is now perfected as insight (*paññā*). Just as seeing is understanding, so these factors are the constituents (*aṅga*) of enlightenment. One cannot, practise equanimity in order to become enlightened, But if the mind is enlightened, it will be evenly balanced at ease and in peace.

Seeing is understanding; but there is so much distortion and conditioning, that seeing things as they are is one of the most difficult things to do, although it does not require any effort or instigation. The obstacles which prevent seeing have been conditioning man's outlook for many thousands of years within this world-cycle. It needed a Buddha to show the way out of this jungle. The jungle is in our own entangled way of thinking and projecting; it is the delusion of 'self', which refuses to leave that jungle, out of fear that it will not survive. And that fear is very real, for it is on the outcome of such speculation that depends the continuation and hence the very existence of that 'self'. The 'I' is that hope for continuance; it is also the fear of discontinuance, the fear to let go that past which is but a memory, which is all that the 'I' can project into an ideal.

Seeing this without hope or fear is understanding what is now in the present, in which there is no continuance but an ever new insight, which is enlightenment and freedom from conflict.

About the Author

Henri van Zeyst was born in Utrecht, the Netherlands, in 1905. Educated throughout in Catholic schools and colleges, he spent his final years of studies in philosophy and theology and his first year his priestly ordination in an Italian monastery near Florence. At the age of 31 he was sent to London to be in charge of a new foundation of his Order, where he was also teaching Dogmatic Theology to the scholastics of Christus Rex Priory in North London. An intensive course of comparative religion brought him in contact with Buddhism. Within a year of his coming to Sri Lanka he was ordained a Buddhist monk there in 1938 under the name of Bhikkhu Dhammapala. From 1956 to 1968 he worked at the Encyclopaedia of Buddhism at the University of Ceylon in Peradeniya of which he was in the final years of that period the Senior Assistant Editor and Administrative Officer. During the last stages of his life he was residing in a meditation centre at Nilambe, Kandy, giving instructions to those who came to him for guidance on meditation.

He died on 15 September, 1988.