



THE FIVE ESSENTIAL ASPECTS OF VIPASSANA MEDITATION

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ABSTRACT

The Buddha introduced the concept of the khandhas in his first sermon in response to the first of these questions. His short definition of suffering was "the five clinging- khandhas." This fairly cryptic phrase can be fleshed out by drawing on other passages in the canon.

The Buddhist approach to ending this clinging, however, is not simply to drop it. As with any addiction, the mind has to be gradually weaned away. Before we can reach the point of no intention, where we're totally freed from the fabrication of khandhas, we have to change our intentions toward the khandhas so as to change their functions.



KEYWORDS: *The Component of the Meaning of Vipassana, Definition of Level of Vipassana Meditation, The Characteristic of Samatha and Vipassana Meditation.*

INTRODUCTION

One of the essential concepts most central to his teaching was that of the khandhas, usually translated into English as "aggregates." Prior to the Buddha, the Pali word khandha had very ordinary meanings: A khandha could be a pile, a bundle, a heap, a mass. It could also be the trunk of a tree. In his first sermon, though, the Buddha gave it a new, psychological meaning, introducing the term "clinging-khandhas" to summarize his analysis of the truth of stress and suffering. Throughout the remainder of his teaching career, he referred to these psychological khandhas time and again. Their importance in his teachings has thus been obvious to every generation of Buddhists ever since. Less obvious, though, has been the issue of how they are important: How should a meditator make use of the concept of the psychological khandhas? What questions are they meant to answer?

The most common response to these questions is best exemplified by two recent scholarly books devoted to the subject. Both treat the khandhas as the Buddha's answer to the question, "What is a person?" To quote from the jacket of the first:

"If Buddhism denies a permanent self, how does it perceive identity?... What we conventionally call a 'person' can be understood in terms of five aggregates, the sum of which must not be taken for a permanent entity, since beings are nothing but an amalgam of everchanging phenomena... Without a thorough understanding of the five aggregates, we cannot grasp the liberation process at work within the individual, who is, after all, simply an amalgam of the five aggregates."

"The third key teaching is given by the Buddha in contexts when he is asked about individual identity: when people want to know 'what am I?', 'what is my real self?'. The Buddha says that

individuality should be understood in terms of a combination of phenomena which appear to form the physical and mental continuum of an individual life. In such contexts, the human being is analysed into five constituents — the *pañcakkhandhā* [five aggregates]."

THE COMPONENT OF THE MEANING OF VIPASSA

The Buddha teaches that there can only be holding or clinging to one or more of five things he designates as the five khandas. We can render khandas as aggregates; other suitable translations would be group, mass or totality. The five aggregates (khandas) are:

- Matter or form (*rūpa*)
- Feeling (*vedanā*)
- Perception (*saññā*)
- Determinations (*saṅkharā*)
- Consciousness (*viññāṇa*)

These five are the "things to be held" or clung to (*upādaniyā dhammā*). In the case of the puthujjana, his reflexive experience is fundamentally one of clinging. Thus his aggregates are with clinging (*sa-upādāna*). For example when he is experiencing feeling (*vedanā*), that feeling would be in combination with the consideration that the feeling is „for me“; similarly with the other four aggregates therefore of the five clinging-aggregates (*pañcupādānakkhandhā*). Thus the experience of the puthujjana is always a case of the five clinging-aggregates. His entire „being“ is comprised of these five clinging-aggregates. His „world“, or opportunity set of possibilities of consciousness, experience and action, is bounded by the totality of the five clinging-aggregates.

Then the first phase in this process is to use the khandhas to construct the factors of the noble eightfold path. For example, Right Concentration: Each of the four jhānas and the first three formless attainments, are called perception-attainments, for they are based on maintaining a steady perception of the object of meditation. In the first jhāna, for instance, we maintain a steady perception focused on an aspect of form, such as the breath, and used directed thought and evaluation — which count as fabrications — to create feelings of pleasure and refreshment, which we spread through the body. In the beginning, it's normal that we experience passion and delight for these feelings, and that consciousness follows along in line with them. This helps get us absorbed in mastering the skills of concentration.

Once we've gained the sense of strength and wellbeing that comes from mastering these skills, we can proceed to the second step: attending to the drawbacks of even the refined khandhas we experience in concentration, so as to undercut the passion and delight we might feel for them: "Suppose that an archer or archer's apprentice were to practice on a straw man or mound of clay, so that after a while he would become able to shoot long distances, to fire accurate shots in rapid succession, and to pierce great masses. In the same way, there is the case where a monk... enters & remains in the first jhāna: rapture & pleasure born of seclusion, accompanied by directed thought & evaluation. He regards whatever phenomena there that are connected with form, feeling, perceptions, fabrications, & consciousness, as inconstant, stressful, a disease, a cancer, an arrow, painful, an affliction, alien, a disintegration, a void, not-self. When the Buddha first introduced the concept of not-self in his second sermon¹, he also introduced a way of strengthening its impact with a series of questions based around the khandhas. Taking each khandha in turn, he asked: "Is it constant or inconstant?" Inconstant. "And is what is inconstant stressful or pleasurable?" Stressful. "And is it fitting to regard what is inconstant, stressful, subject to change as: 'This is mine. This is my self. This is what I am'?" No.

The unfashioned, the unbent, the fermentation-free, the true, the beyond, the subtle, the very-hard-to-see, the ageless, permanence, the undecaying, the featureless, non-elaboration, peace, the deathless, the exquisite, bliss, rest, the ending of craving, the wonderful, the marvelous, the secure, security, unbinding, the unafflicted, dispassion, purity, release, attachment-free, the island, shelter, harbor, refuge, the ultimate. down to no purpose. The questions keep piling on. But if you use them to put an end to suffering, your questions fall away and you're free. You never again cling to the khandhas and no longer need to use them to end your self-created suffering. As long as you're still alive, you can

employ the khandhas as needed for whatever skillful uses you see fit. After that, you're liberated from all uses and needs, including the need to find words to describe that freedom to yourself or to anyone else. "There are some cases in which a person overcome with pain, his mind exhausted, grieves, mourns, laments, beats his breast, and becomes bewildered.

DEFINITION LEVEL VIPASSANA MEDITATION

There are two methods of instruction in Buddha's teachings, namely, the ultimate teaching *and the* mundane teaching. The former being concerned with abstract knowledge while the latter with ordinary or conventional knowledge appealing to perception by which objects are known by their names. When we discuss about impermanence, suffering, truth, establishment of mindfulness, and sense-spheres, we are concerned with ultimate subjects. When we talk about men, women, devas, brahmins, etc., we are concerned with everyday subjects that one mentions by name.

Though, *Khandha* means a group or an aggregate. All phenomenas; past, present, and future are grouped into the *five aggregates*. This statement calls for further explanation. When a phenomenon arises, the body is involved. This body existed in the past, and it is still here at the present. It will continue to exist in the future, and it is within us as well as without. It may be coarse or refined, inferior or superior quality, and proximate or remote. All such distinctions can be grouped into an *aggregate*, and we name the group *aggregate of material body*; the assemblage of the material elements and properties that constitute what we call the body.

When feeling, perception, volitional activities, and consciousness are similarly grouped or classified, they are respectively called *aggregate of feeling*, *aggregate of perception*, *aggregate of volitional activities*, and *aggregate of consciousness*. But there is one single dhamma which cannot be grouped or classified in the manner specified herein, and it is *nibbāna*.

It is one, and has no past, no present, and no future. It is also limitless.

From ignorance as a requisite condition come fabrications. From fabrications as a requisite condition comes consciousness. From consciousness as a requisite condition comes name-and-form. From name-and-form as a requisite condition come the six sense media. From the six sense media as a requisite condition comes contact. From contact as a requisite condition comes feeling. From feeling as a requisite condition comes craving. From craving as a requisite condition comes clinging/ sustenance. From clinging/sustenance as a requisite condition comes becoming. From becoming as a requisite condition comes birth. From birth as a requisite condition, then aging and death, sorrow, lamentation, pain, distress, and despair come into play. Such is the origination of this entire mass of stress and suffering.

"And what is feeling? These six are classes of feeling: feeling born from eye-contact, feeling born from ear-contact, feeling born from nose-contact, feeling born from tongue-contact, feeling born from body-contact, feeling born from intellect-contact. This is called feeling. "And what is contact? These six are classes of contact: eye-contact, ear-contact, nose-contact, tonguecontact, body-contact, intellect-contact. This is called contact. "And what are the six sense media? These six are sense media: the eye-medium, the ear-medium, the nose-medium, the tongue- medium, the body-medium, the intellect-medium. These are called the six sense media. "And what is name-and-form? Feeling, perception, intention, contact, and attention: This is called name. The four great elements and the form dependent on the four great elements: This is called form. This name & this form are called name-and-form. "And what is consciousness? These six are classes of consciousness: eye-consciousness, ear-consciousness, noseconsciousness, tongue-consciousness, body-consciousness, and intellect-consciousness. This is called consciousness. "And what are fabrications? These three are fabrications: bodily fabrications, verbal fabrications, mental fabrications. These are called fabrications. "And what is ignorance? Not knowing stress, not knowing the origination of stress, not knowing the cessation of stress, not knowing the way of practice leading to the cessation of stress: This is called ignorance."

"From consciousness as a requisite condition comes name-and-form.' Thus it has been said. And this is the way to understand how from consciousness as a requisite condition comes name- and-form. If consciousness were not to descend into the mother's womb, would name-andform take shape in the womb?"

"No, lord." "If, after descending into the womb, consciousness were to depart, would name- &-form be produced for this world?"

"No, lord." "If the consciousness of the young boy or girl were to be cut off, would nameand-form ripen, grow, and reach maturity?"

"No, lord." "Thus this is a cause, this is a reason, this is an origination, this is a requisite condition for name-and-form, i.e., consciousness. 'From name-and-form as a requisite condition comes consciousness.' Thus it has been said. And this is the way to understand how from nameand- form as a requisite condition comes consciousness. If consciousness were not to gain a foothold in name-and-form, would a coming-into-play of the origination of birth, aging, death, and stress in the future be discerned?"

"No, lord." "Thus this is a cause, this is a reason, this is an origination, this is a requisite condition for consciousness, i.e., name-and-form. "This is the extent to which there is birth, aging, death, passing away, and re-arising. This is the extent to which there are means of designation, e

"Just as if there were a roofed house or a roofed hall having windows on the north, the south, or the east. When the sun rises, and a ray has entered by way of the window, where does it land?"

"On the western wall, lord." "And if there is no western wall?" "On the ground, lord." "And if there is no ground?" "On the water, lord." "And if there is no water?" "It does not land, lord."

"In the same way, where there is no passion for the nutriment of physical food, consciousness does not land or grow, That, I tell you, has no sorrow, affliction, or despair¹²." "Monks, there are these five means of propagation. Which five? Root-propagation, stempropagation, joint-propagation, cutting-propagation, and seed-propagation as the fifth. And if these five means of propagation are not broken, not rotten, not damaged by wind & sun, mature, and well-buried, but there is no earth and no water, would they exhibit growth, increase, and proliferation?"

"No, lord." "And if these five means of propagation are broken, rotten, damaged by wind and sun, immature, and poorly-buried, but there is earth and water, would they exhibit growth, increase, and proliferation?" "No, lord." "And if these five means of propagation are not broken, not rotten, not damaged by wind and sun, mature, and well-buried, and there is earth and water, would they exhibit growth, increase, and proliferation?"

"Yes, lord." "Like the earth property, monks, is how the four standing-spots for consciousness should be seen. Like the liquid property is how delight and passion should be seen. Like the five means of propagation is how consciousness together with its nutriment should be seen. "Should consciousness, when taking a stance, stand attached to form, supported by form (as its object), established on form, watered with delight, it would exhibit growth, increase, and proliferation. "Should consciousness, when taking a stance, stand attached to feeling, supported by feeling (as its object), established on feeling, watered with delight, it would exhibit growth, increase, and proliferation.

THE CHARACTERISTIC OF SAMATHA AND VIPASSANA MEDITATION

Clusters of craving that beings cling to as self; Form, Sensations, Perceptions, Mental formations: (Thinking, Planning, memory etc) and Consciousness of seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting, touching, and thinking The five aggregates, monks, are impermanent; whatever is impermanent, that is unsatisfactory; whatever is unsatisfactory, that is without self. What is without self, that is not mine, that I am not, that is not my self. Thus should it be seen by perfect wisdom as it really is. Who sees by perfect wisdom, as it really is, that person's mind, not grasping, is detached from taints; and is liberated.

Then, the five khandhas are the components of a person or being. They are: matter, feeling, perception, consciousness and mental formations. In truth, a person is nothing more than this collection of aggregates. These five phenomena are impersonal, unsatisfactory and impermanent.

Materiality is the first khandha. It is called 'rupa.' A human body contains twenty-eight kinds of matter. The rupa-khandha includes the four elements earth, water, fire, and air (pathavi, apo, tejo, vayo). Each element has four characteristics: color, smell, taste, and nutriment (vanna, gandha, rasa, oja). Every part of the body possesses the four elements, along with their four characteristics. Even a

single hair contains the air, earth, fire and water elements. A single hair also has the attributes of color, smell, taste, and nutriment. It is the nature of rupa, corporeality, to change or disappear according to conditions. For example, when the temperature is too hot or too cold, certain types of matter cannot survive.

Feeling-group (Vedana-Khandha) moment of consciousness. Others appear only occasionally. Some are wholesome, some, unwholesome. The wholesome mental-formations include: mindfulness, compassion, and wisdom.

Unless we practice mindfulness, in daily life we have unwholesome mental formations most of the time. After perceiving an object and judging it as desirable or not, attraction or aversion takes over, causing you to describe the form further. (Attraction and aversion are but milder forms of greed and hatred.) In judging the object as pleasant, you feel excited and you cling to it. If the object is unpleasant, you feel aversion toward it. Thereafter, every time you think about that object, your liking or disliking grows stronger.

The mental descriptions, and the resulting attachment and aversion, are a kind of pollution in the mind that prevents you from seeing reality as it is. That pollution accumulates all the time unless you practice mindfulness. The khandha of mental formations is different for all beings because the amount of mental pollution varies with each person.

But the hair never knows that it's hair. The teeth and skin are not aware of themselves. We cling to these things, believing that they belong to us. But in fact they simply exist according to the laws that govern physical phenomena. Eventually they disappear, separating into the elements earth, air, fire, and water. In the conventional sense, we know that our own hair and skin differ from someone else's. But in the ultimate sense, hair, teeth, skin and so forth do not belong to any individual but only to cause and effect and natural, physical laws.

Meditating on hair, fingernails, teeth and skin develops concentration. When contemplating the parts of the body (the rupa-khandha that results from past karma), we can't be said to be practicing mindfulness, because the various body parts are not meditation objects for destroying greed, hatred and delusion. In order to eliminate those mental impurities, a deep understanding of impermanence, unsatisfactoriness or nonselfness is needed. And that depends on the direct insight gained from mindfulness practice.

The Khandhas of the Present: Objects of Mindfulness. If you want to develop mindfulness and eliminate mental pollutants, you have to observe the khandhas as they arise in the present moment. Unless you're trying to develop concentration, it won't be useful to contemplate the khandhas that are already formed. Although you can't use the thirty-two parts of the body for developing mindfulness, you can use the material-khandha that arises in the present moment. That khandha is a correct object of mindfulness. The material- or rupa-khandha in the present moment refers to the movement and posture of the body. Sitting is rupa, standing is rupa, walking is rupa, lying down is rupa. Whichever posture your body is adopting now is rupakhandha in the present moment. You are never without bodily posture. The agent that knows that the body is sitting is nama, which means mind. The mind is the faculty that knows an object. It is nama, the mind, that knows when you are standing, walking or lying down. A rupa (material form) is always known by nama.

CONCLUSION

The Buddha, according to the above passage, knows their result and the effects on the future conditions (evam gatika bhavissanti evam abhisamparayanti) of those who have taken hold of these speculative views. It convincingly proves that all these by-paths lead the travellers on them back to the Samsaric Circus. There is but one path that leads out of the Circus, and as we saw in the allegory, one has to go round the Tree of Sensations to get on to it.

The Mahanidana Sutta and the Brahmajala Sutta, as shown above, make it quite clear that the comprehension of the sensations play a leading role in the realisation of deliverance according to the Buddha's teachings. 'Once the three sensations are comprehended (tisu vedanasu parinnatesu), a noble disciple has nothing further to do.' This comprehension of sensations, and the eradication of the tendencies that become latent as a consequence of entertaining them, is an essential factor in the

realisation of freedom. 'That he, brethren, not getting rid of the tendency of attachment to a pleasant feeling, not driving out the tendency of repugnance to a painful feeling, not rooting out the tendency of ignorance concerning a feeling that is neither painful nor pleasant, not getting rid of ignorance, not making knowledge arise, should here and now be an end-maker of anguish-this situation does not exist.' The vital importance of comprehending the three sensations is then very well established.

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