

Citta (2 of 5) Greed, Ill Will and Delusion

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SUMMARY KEYWORDS

mind state, disposition, absence, mood, know, reactivity

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This will be the second talk on the third foundation of mindfulness. The third foundation of mindfulness is that of becoming aware of the general state of our mind, the state of our heart, the mood, or the disposition. In some ways, the state of mind is more enduring than the particular sensations we have in the body that come and go, the thoughts we have that come and go, or the feeling tones (pleasant and unpleasant) that come and go.

Certainly, mind states can also come and go, but they tend to be more enduring. The mind state tends to be a disposition through which we sometimes see, experience, and interpret the world. The quality of the mind through which we're aware has a huge influence on our lives. It's also intimate and closer in than the

changing details of the moment that might be here fleetingly. It's closer in to who we are in a sense.

The general instructions around mindfulness of the *citta* (mind state) are to simply know it as it is – to know the mind state in regard to the mind state. What this means is that we don't have to add stories, ideas, or interpretations. We don't have to connect it to a lot of things. Just know it in the simplicity of how it is in the moment right now. Then, it begins by knowing mind states that are characterized by greed or the absence of it, with ill will or the absence of it, and delusion or the absence of it.

In August, we spent three weeks on greed, hatred, and delusion. In part, that was in preparation for this teaching on the third foundation of mindfulness. Perhaps you're now more sensitized and ready to be mindful of greed, hatred, and delusion, and the absence of it. The idea is to become aware of it, not as a fleeting moment or a few moments of greed, but how it can appear sometimes as a disposition, a general state, or a mood that we're in. The mood is that of desire. The mood is that of ill will or aversion. The mood is that of being confused, bewildered, deluded. So it is a little more persistent. The mood is like a veil or a filter through which we see the world.

What's very interesting is that when the Buddha gives instructions here, he uses "with." "With," in Pali, is not a word, but a prefix. The Buddha says:

When the mind state is with greed, know that it is with greed. When the mind state is without greed, know that it is without greed.

And the same for ill will and delusion. So the prefix "with" is there. The idea is to be mindful, to know that it's there. The marvelous thing about when we're clearly practicing mindfulness – we're mindful, we know what's happening, really conscious of what's happening – part of the mind is not caught in what is known. Part of the mind is not defined by what is known.

If we get preoccupied by the thoughts, fantasies, and concerns that go on in the mind, we can be so involved in it that it kind of becomes who we are. There's no outside of it. Everything is seen through that lens; everything is related to it. That becomes the be-all and end-all occasionally. Sometimes when there's desire, desire takes over and we become the desire, and "you know, get out of the way." Occasionally, I can get famished. I come home and my wife says, "You have that look in your eyes." I'm looking around the kitchen for food. Maybe I'm hunting or something. It is kind of like my disposition is wanting.

So the Buddha uses this idea of "with." As I did in the guided meditation, it's possible to be aware, to know,

when what we know doesn't make up the whole experience of what is happening. It is only part of it. Because of that, we can make room for it. We can allow it to be there because we're not defined by it. We're not collapsed into it; we're not leaning into it. The knowing is free of what is known. The knowing has space to feel and experience what is known.

I very much like this idea of space for things. We have a capacity to hold things. We have a capacity to allow and to know. Part of what we're doing in mindfulness practice is increasing that capacity to know things. This is not knowledge of things, but rather the capacity to be present for our experience, be conscious of it, without reactivity – without becoming it, without resisting it, without being defined by it, without entering into it and becoming it.

We have capacity so we can really hold and feel. Practice really becomes different if we have things like desires, greeds, hatreds, delusions, and fears, and we've learned how to open up, how to relax, how to make space to know it in and of itself. For example, we simply know there is greed without a story, without justification, without putting a value on it even, without saying: "I'm a bad person because I have it. This is wrong. It's embarrassing. I should feel shame." Without justifying it: "I'm supposed to have desire. This is important. This is the time of my life to have desire." It's

just desire, just greed, just lust – whatever it might be. Anger, hostility, irritation, frustration – all the different flavors of hostility or ill will that might be there – is just known in its simplicity.

This is not necessarily easy to do, but it is the direction the practice is going. This is the *third* foundation of mindfulness, and one very wonderful way of practicing is to build towards it. The teachings of the Four Foundations of Mindfulness begin with mindfulness of breathing (with *ānāpānasati*, the first tetrad): breathing in, breathing out, experiencing the whole body, breathing and relaxing the body. It's such a great place to begin and to get settled, to get stable, to relax. It continues with mindfulness of the body and mindfulness of feeling tones – how we react and respond to pleasure and pain, and learning how to be with that in a simple way and not be so reactive.

As we learn the skills, the stability, the steadiness, and the clarity of knowing, then at some point we can become aware of greed, hatred, and delusion – that the mind is *with* it, not that the mind is it. If there's clear mindfulness, there's more to the mind state than greed, hatred, and delusion. We've created space. We've created a healthy sense of distance or independence from whatever it is we know.

This is something you can experiment with. The next time that you have a really good bout of greed, hatred, or delusion stand still (or sit down) and see if you can come back into mindfulness of it, where there's space for it and room for you to be this way. You're not trying to stop it necessarily, but you're not participating in it. Mindfulness is not participating in it, not reacting to it. Just know: "Oh, here's a mind state with greed. And here is mindfulness that is independent from it, is free of it." It might take some experimentation to see what is it like to have a knowing, have an awareness, be conscious of something, where that consciousness is not caught by it or reactive to it.

The same thing for the absence of greed, hate, and delusion. Here it gets a little bit more interesting because the absence of greed is not quite the same thing as the presence of greed. If the absence of greed is generosity, if the absence of hatred is love, if the absence of delusion is wisdom – then yes, that can be a mind with generosity, with love, with wisdom. The same freedom, spaciousness, and openness can be there and discovered. However, if the absence of greed is simply the absence of greed, if the absence of hatred is simply the absence of hatred, if the absence of delusion is simply the absence of delusion – then that absence overlaps or shades into or merges with the state of mind, the quality of awareness, that's open and receptive and there.

So to experience the goodness of the absence of greed, hate, and delusion, to experience the spaciousness, the freedom that's there – allows us to more and more develop or grow in this capacity for the mind to hold experience, including the ability to hold the suffering of the world. I'd like to think that one of the tremendous potentials of this practice of mindfulness is that it doesn't keep us aloof, distant, or unaware of the suffering of the world. It actually increases our capacity to experience it without having it weigh us down.

This is the beginning of the instructions on mindfulness of the mind states. I'll continue with this theme for the rest of the week, and it develops and grows from here. And as it grows, we enter into more wonderful qualities or states of mind that are available when the mind is no longer identified or caught in what is known. Thank you.