

The Dharma, Part 2 (3 of 5) In the Looking

September 7, 2022

Summary Keywords

awareness, mindfulness, look, looking, see, seeing, *ehipassiko*, *sandiṭṭhiko*

Gil Fronsdal

I am happy to be here with you this morning for this third talk on the qualities of the Dharma. Today I offer the simplest way of understanding these five qualities. The first quality is that the Dharma is here. The second quality is that the Dharma is now. Then the Dharma is looking. Next, the Dharma is flowing along, and finally, the Dharma is to be experienced. Today the topic in a simplistic way is that the Dharma is looking.

As I said last week, the Pali *ehipassiko* is a very common, ordinary expression that suggests this kind of simplicity. It means “come look, come see.” Some people have translated it as “inviting inspection.” There is a wonderful Chinese Buddhist saying: “Awakening beckons us within everything. Awakening invites us within everything.” Everything we see and touch is

inviting us, “Come, be awake, wake up.” What a great idea that that is how it is. The idea is to come and look, come and see.

The first of these five characteristics of the Dharma is *sandiṭṭhiko*. The *diṭṭhi* does mean to come see. It means visible; it is visible, here. Some people say it is in this very life that we can see and live, here. Some people will translate it as “visible here and now.” It is visible here.

The third characteristic is to come look. The first and third characteristics have “to see” in their meaning. Then the fifth characteristic, which I will talk about on Friday, is to know, to experience. The Pali word means both things: to know, to experience. So this idea of seeing and knowing is really deep in the Dharma. The Buddha throughout his teachings keeps emphasizing seeing and knowing – seeing and knowing.

We are cultivating or developing our capacity to settle into the here and now, to discover a way of being here and now that is not in conflict, fighting, running away, escaping, or afraid of the here and now. We are not putting layers of interpretation, wishes, or expectations on the here and now. We are coming into a simplicity of being with here and now. A lot of what we are discovering in this meditation practice is here and now, here and now.

Practicing with the here and now gives us an opportunity for the looking and the seeing to be relatively simple and uncomplicated. Not a lot of baggage comes along with it. It is easy to have baggage come along. One of them is to look and be mindful with a self-consciousness, with performance anxiety, or with a measuring of oneself: “How am I doing? I am not doing well enough. I should be further along. It is too difficult for me.” All those forms of self-consciousness take us out of the simplicity of here and now and out of the simplicity of this seeing – seeing what is here. They take us out of just looking, just being mindful and aware here.

One of the challenges for some people is that this simplicity of mindfulness in the here and now is boring. It is unpromising. It is not going to provide us with rich, special, and wonderful things. But maybe the price for coming into a wonderful state of being is a willingness to be very simple without expectations or wanting anything. Then we can put down the activity of boredom, of selfing, or wanting something and building the self up. It is very simple.

To be able to look from that point of view – to see, to be mindful, to be aware in a very respectful way of whatever is happening in the present moment – allows each thing in the present moment to be itself without

our interference and desires. We allow the pristine, primordial appearance of whatever is happening in the moment. *This* is allowed to be here. Our emotions are allowed. There is an art to allowing them all to be here without becoming entangled, reactive, pushed around, or influenced by them.

In some ways, this simplicity of being might not seem so interesting, but it is a radical alternative to being influenced by our inner life – by our desires, wishes, and emotions. Something different can happen.

As we begin to look more, at some point, what becomes interesting is not what we see and not that we can see clearly, but it is the looking itself. We begin appreciating more and more the mindfulness itself. We appreciate the way we are aware – the awareness itself, the inner perception – the perception itself. Maybe this is where the treasure is. This is where we find freedom, awakening. To turn around and look at perception perceiving itself, look at the inner eye seeing itself, awareness aware of itself in such a way that we begin shedding all the extra baggage – attachments, clinging, stress – that comes along with being aware, of being mindful.

This is one way in which mindfulness opens up to a deep equanimity. As mindfulness and awareness begin shedding the complexities that we add on top of it, it

becomes simpler and simpler. Awareness and looking become simpler and simpler. The simplicity of it becomes the guide. “Oh, this is where non-clinging appears. There is a bit of stress in how I am aware. As I become aware of that stress, something opens, something relaxes. As I become aware of the stress in mindfulness, I notice that the awareness has no stress in it.”

So we are stepping back. We are going through these layers and layers to find that place where awareness has no stress or tension associated with it. And then stay close to that. Let how we are aware of the world come from that place of no tension, no stress, no pushing, no straining, no resisting, no pulling away, and no leaning forward.

That is why it is powerful to realize or to have this attitude or understanding that what we are looking for is in the looking. We are being attentive to how we are attending. I use attention and attending together. In having attention, we are attending to the attending itself.

In mindfulness, we are being mindful of how we are mindful. In looking, we are mindful of how we are looking. In attending to anything, we are giving attention to how we are attending. This is where we can understand a lot about what is going on in our life. We begin shedding all the different activities within

associated with attention, with the practice, that involves stress, strain, tension, discomfort, *dukkha*. We practice with this until we find the equanimity of simplicity, the simplicity of equanimity.

So this idea of the Buddha: come and look, here and now, in the here and now, with the here and now, come and look, come and look.”

As you go about your day, periodically, take some time and try to become more aware of the characteristics and the quality of your awareness itself, of your attention itself, of your mindfulness. Turn around and see how much extra there might be there. See how simple you can allow your attention to be. If there is any kind of extended time with this simplicity of awareness, I suspect that you will discover that your breathing shifts and changes. It might become more easeful.

So, I hope that it is a wonderful day of exploration, and I look forward to our time tomorrow. Thank you.