

Insight Pentad (1 of 5) Things As They Come To Be

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Today we start a new theme. In some ways, this week continues last week's theme, which was the gladness pentad. The five qualities of the gladness pentad – gladness, joy, tranquility, happiness, and concentration – also appear in a longer list that continues the pattern, continues the flow, of the practice for five more qualities. These can be called the insight pentad, the five factors that arise in the wake of insight.

This is insight meditation that we practice. In the teaching last week, the idea is that preparation is done for real deep insight: the insight into suffering, the insight into the constant nature of our experience. It is some deep kind of paradigm shift that the first insight of the insight pentad is seeing things as they've come to

be, knowledge and vision of things as they've come to be.

There is the Pali expression, *yathā bhūta – yathā* means as. This is a past participle. The expression means not things as they are, but things as have come to be. The focus here is not insight into things as things, but rather, the focus is on things as processes, things as dynamic and changing.

It's very easy for us to be concerned with particular things, ideas, and experiences. Sometimes we hang on to an experience for a long time, carrying our resentments, desires, or regrets around it. We may carry a fixed (somewhat fixed) idea of what happened. We're focusing on that as opposed to the process of thoughts arising, memories arising, thoughts of regrets arising.

If we're settled enough, we see that this is actually a relatively inconstant process in the sense that it's repetitive. It keeps reappearing and reappearing. It's not a static, flat preoccupation we are concerned with. The mind is constantly regenerating itself in terms of what it focuses on and what it thinks about. But we get enamored and caught in our ideas of things being a certain way. They're fixed – this is how it is.

The alternative offered by the Buddha is that everything is a process of becoming, everything is unfolding, so there's always a possibility for change, always a possibility for something new. Our suffering, our personality, are not big, static icebergs that don't change. They are more like water that is constantly moving.

To the degree to which we live as an iceberg, the gladness pentad is a process of thawing and relaxing the places of tightness and holding, the places where we're caught, the places where we're fixated on things. The practice of the gladness pentad is to free the fixations of the mind and heart so that we're ever available for what's happening now, what's happening next, what's happening in this moment.

If we are able to see the constant arising and passing, the constant things as they come to be, then we live in a world that is full of potential and possibilities that grow the less we fixate. The possibilities and potential of how we meet any situation become not only more creative and more varied, it becomes meeting reality with freedom. A fixation, focusing really tight on "This is how it is; it has to be this way," is not a space where there is freedom of the heart – an openness, availability, and readiness for something.

But if we see it as, “Oh, this is not how things are; this is how it’s coming to be,” then there can this be fascinating and powerful question. Given that it’s coming to be this way, let’s see how we can shape it, how we can let it become something next, be something else. How do we respond creatively? How do we respond with newness to allow things to keep unfolding in a good way, to take everything that appears as not a fixed thing, but as a platform, a means, or a condition for responding in a new way?

For example, if someone offends you, it’s easy to get upset and angry. Then this person has offended you, and that offense has become a static thing. But if we see it as an ongoing process, then we ask ourselves: “Oh, that seems offensive, that hurt. Given the flow, like the flow of water, how do I now navigate this to make it better? How do I navigate this to understand it better, be better with it, and maybe respond to the person in a better way?” If I meet it with resistance, then I might become stuck. There’s less flexibility. But if I meet it with something fluid, then maybe something different can become and arise.

I cannot do this well, but I know people who will meet offense with humor, and it deescalates it quickly. It changes the whole nature of the situation. I know people who will meet offense with curiosity. What’s really going on? What’s happening here with this

person? I know people who meet offense with letting people know: “Well, that’s happening to you. Let me tell you what’s happening to me. I feel hurt. I feel afraid. I feel concerned. I feel angry, given what’s happening.”

We are expressing and talking about what’s happening in the moment as it comes to be. We may say: “Wow, this is a difficult situation that has come to be here. Given what’s come to be, what’s next for us? What you said was difficult to hear. Given that, what should be next? How do we go forward from here?”

So there is always this movement – how do we go forward? Where’s the dynamism? Where’s the movement? That is less likely to happen if we’re fixating on “this is how it is.”

Meditation becomes a dynamic place of change. Everything is coming into being moment by moment. We don’t dwell anywhere. In Buddhism, this is sometimes called non-dwelling awareness, non-abiding, where we kind of float on the river of change and time being the change. Being the changing flow of the present moment – we become it as opposed to thinking about it, being something, or stepping apart from it.

Is this easy? Not necessarily, but the ability to be in the flow of the dynamism of things coming into being is built on the continuity of the gladness pentad, the teaching

from last week. And if we can't do that, we go back to the beginning where practice is. We may go all the way back to the place where we're fixated, suffering, and challenged. And we hold that with kind nonreactive awareness, maybe feeling glad that we have a practice to do so.

Then with that gladness, we can engage in the practice of really trying to see more clearly, to practice more nonreactive awareness, which may bring a kind of warmth to it all – some ease and tranquility. Maybe this begins to thaw the iceberg of how we're frozen in some concern or preoccupation.

When the whole iceberg has melted, then we're resting in this wonderful pond of water, a lake of *samādhī*, in which we can be with the fluidity of the water, the changing nature of it, meeting the currents and the changes as they come to be, as they flow.

So this is one way of talking about the insight into impermanence. In the Buddha's language, he literally said, insight into inconstancy, how things are in constant motion, constant change. One of the purposes of this deep insight is to begin letting go – to begin letting go of resistance, letting go of clinging, letting go of the fixation on this is how things are. Nothing is this is how things are. It's always this is part of a process of change – this is a part of things coming into being.

When we see it that way, it may be easier to be interested in – “Given how this is coming into being now, how do I participate in this for the greater good? How do I step into this changing river of phenomena and contribute something wholesome, valuable, wonderful, and beneficial into the mix?”

Our job is to let go and contribute what is good, let go of our clinging and flow along, letting the current be an expression of our goodness.

So this is the insight pentad. As we start having this insight into change, shifting the orientation from things as they are to things as they change, as they come into being, this has an impact. That’s a condition for something to begin to thaw, to change, to move. And that will be the topic for tomorrow – how we are affected by the deeper and deeper insight that comes from this practice. So thank you very much, and I look forward to our time together tomorrow.