

Tapping the Mind's Bright Potential

I. General comments: the 37 aids to enlightenment (seven groups)

II. The Five Spiritual Faculties

A. From the Indriya-Samyutta

8 To Be Seen

"Bhikkhus, there are these five faculties. What five? The faculty of faith ... the faculty of wisdom.

"And where, bhikkhus, is the faculty of faith to be seen? The faculty of faith is to be seen here in the four factors of stream-entry.

"And where, bhikkhus, is the faculty of energy to be seen? The faculty of energy is to be seen here in the four right strivings.

"And where, bhikkhus, is the faculty of mindfulness to be seen? The faculty of mindfulness is to be seen here in the four establishments of mindfulness.

"And where, bhikkhus, is the faculty of concentration to be seen? The faculty of concentration is to be seen here in the four jhānas.

"And where, bhikkhus, is the faculty of wisdom to be seen? The faculty of wisdom is to be seen here in the Four Noble Truths.

"These, bhikkhus, are the five faculties."

9 Analysis (1)

"Bhikkhus, there are these five faculties. What five? The faculty of faith ... the faculty of wisdom.

"And what, bhikkhus, is the faculty of faith? Here, bhikkhus, the noble disciple is a person of faith, one who places faith in the enlightenment of the Tathāgata thus: [197] 'The Blessed One is an arahant, perfectly enlightened, accomplished in knowledge and conduct, fortunate, knower of the world, unsurpassed leader of persons to be tamed, teacher of devas and humans, the Enlightened One, the Blessed One.'

"And what, bhikkhus, is the faculty of energy? Here, bhikkhus, the noble disciple dwells with energy aroused for the abandoning of unwholesome states and the acquisition of wholesome states; he is strong, firm in exertion, not shirking the responsibility of cultivating wholesome states. This is called the faculty of energy.

"And what, bhikkhus, is the faculty of mindfulness? Here, bhikkhus, the noble disciple is mindful, possessing supreme mindfulness and discretion, one who remembers and recollects what was done and said long ago. This is called the faculty of mindfulness.¹⁹³

"And what, bhikkhus, is the faculty of concentration? Here, bhikkhus, the noble disciple gains concentration, gains one-pointedness of mind,

having made release the object.¹⁹⁴ This is called the faculty of concentration.

"And what, bhikkhus, is the faculty of wisdom? Here, bhikkhus, the noble disciple is wise; he possesses wisdom directed to arising and passing away, which is noble and penetrative, leading to the complete destruction of suffering. This is called the faculty of wisdom.

"These, bhikkhus, are the five faculties."

10 Analysis (2)

"Bhikkhus, there are these five faculties. What five? The faculty of faith ... the faculty of wisdom.

"And what, bhikkhus, is the faculty of faith? Here, bhikkhus, the noble disciple is a person of faith, one who places faith in the enlightenment of the Tath>gata thus: 'The Blessed One is ... teacher of devas and humans, the Enlightened One, the Blessed One.'

"And what, bhikkhus, is the faculty of energy? Here, bhikkhus, the noble disciple dwells with energy aroused for the abandoning of unwholesome states and the acquisition of wholesome states; he is strong, firm in exertion, not shirking the responsibility of cultivating wholesome states. He generates desire for the nonarising of unarisen evil unwholesome states; he makes an effort, arouses energy, applies his mind, and strives. He generates desire for the abandoning of arisen evil unwholesome states; he makes an effort, arouses energy, applies his mind, and strives. He generates desire for the arising of unarisen wholesome states; he makes an effort, arouses energy, applies his mind, and strives. He generates desire for the maintenance of arisen wholesome states, for their nondecay, increase, expansion, and fulfilment by development; he makes an effort, arouses energy, applies his mind, and strives. This is called the faculty of energy.

"And what, bhikkhus, is the faculty of mindfulness? Here, bhikkhus, the noble disciple is mindful, possessing supreme mindfulness and discretion, one who remembers and recollects what was done and said long ago. He dwells contemplating the body in the body ... feelings in feelings ... mind in mind ... phenomena in phenomena, ardent, clearly comprehending, mindful, having removed covetousness and displeasure in regard to the world. This is called the faculty of mindfulness.

"And what, bhikkhus, is the faculty of concentration? Here, bhikkhus, the noble disciple gains concentration, gains one-pointedness of mind, having made release the object. Secluded from sensual pleasures, secluded from unwholesome states, he enters and dwells in the first jh>na, which is accompanied by thought and examination, with rapture and happiness born of seclusion. With the subsiding of thought and examination, he enters and dwells in the second jh>na, which has internal confidence and unification of mind, is without thought and examination, and has rapture and happiness born of concentration. With the fading away as well of rapture, he dwells equanimous and, mindful and clearly comprehending, he experiences happiness with the body; he enters and dwells in the third jh>na of which the noble ones declare: 'He is equanimous, mindful, one who dwells happily.' With the abandoning of pleasure and pain, and with the previous passing away of joy and displeasure, he enters and dwells in the fourth jh>na, which is

neither painful nor pleasant and includes the purification of mindfulness by equanimity. This is called the faculty of concentration.

"And what, bhikkhus, is the faculty of wisdom? Here, bhikkhus, the noble disciple is wise; he possesses wisdom directed to arising and passing away, which is noble and penetrative, leading to the complete destruction of suffering. He understands as it really is: 'This is suffering.' He understands as it really is: 'This is the origin of suffering.' He understands as it really is: 'This is the cessation of suffering.' He understands as it really is: 'This is the way leading to the cessation of suffering.' This is called the faculty of wisdom.

"These, bhikkhus, are the five faculties."

51 At S>1>

"Bhikkhus, just as among animals the lion, the king of beasts, is declared to be their chief, that is, with respect to strength, speed, and courage, so too, among the states conducive to enlightenment the faculty of wisdom is declared to be their chief, that is, for the attainment of enlightenment.

"And what, bhikkhus, are the states conducive to enlightenment? The faculty of faith, bhikkhus, is a state conducive to enlightenment; it leads to enlightenment. The faculty of energy is a state conducive to enlightenment; it leads to enlightenment. The faculty of mindfulness is a state conducive to enlightenment; it leads to enlightenment. The faculty of concentration is a state conducive to enlightenment; it leads to enlightenment. The faculty of wisdom is a state conducive to enlightenment; it leads to enlightenment.

"Just as, bhikkhus, among animals the lion is declared to be their chief, so too, among the states conducive to enlightenment the faculty of wisdom is declared to be their chief, that is, for the attainment of enlightenment."

B. From the Visuddhimagga

[According to the *Visuddhimagga*, the balance of the faculties (*indriya-samatta*) is one of the ten kinds of skill in absorption (*appana-kosalla*), and it is one of the seven things that lead to the arising of the enlightenment factor "investigation of (material and mental) phenomena" (*dhammavicaya-sambojjhanga*).]

Imparting balance to the faculties is the equalizing of the controlling faculties of faith, energy, mindfulness, concentration and wisdom. For if the faith faculty is strong and the others weak, then the energy faculty cannot perform its function of exerting, the mindfulness faculty its function of attending to the object, the concentration faculty its function of excluding distraction, the wisdom faculty its function of seeing. So the (excessive) strength of the faith faculty should be reduced by reflecting on the phenomenal nature (of faith and its objects), and by not paying attention to what has caused the excessive strength of the faith faculty. Then if the *energy faculty* is too strong, the faith faculty cannot perform its function of convincing, nor can the rest of the faculties perform their several functions. So in that case the excessive strength of the energy faculty should be

reduced by cultivating (the enlightenment factors of) tranquillity, concentration and equanimity. So, too, with the other factors, for it should be understood that when any one of them is too strong the others cannot perform their several functions.

However, what is particularly recommended is the balancing of faith with wisdom, and concentration with energy. For one who is strong in faith and weak in wisdom places his confidence foolishly in an unworthy object. One strong in wisdom and weak in faith errs on the side of cunning and is as hard to cure as a sickness caused by medicine. But with the balancing of the two, faith and wisdom, a man has confidence only in a deserving object.

If there is too much of concentration and too little of energy, the mind will be overpowered by indolence to which concentration inclines. But if energy is too strong and concentration too weak, the mind will be overpowered by agitation to which energy inclines. But concentration coupled with energy cannot lapse into indolence, and energy coupled with concentration cannot lapse into agitation. So these two should be balanced; for absorption comes with the balancing of the two.

Again (concentration and faith should be balanced). One working on concentration needs strong faith, since it is with such faith and confidence that he reaches absorption.

As to (the balancing of) concentration and wisdom, one working on concentration (i.e., who practices tranquillity; *samatha*) needs strong one-pointedness of mind, since that is how he reaches full absorption; and one working on insight (*vipassana*) needs strong wisdom, since that is how he reaches penetration of (the phenomena's) characteristics; but with the balancing of the two he reaches full absorption as well.

Strong mindfulness, however, is needed in all instances; for mindfulness protects the mind from lapsing into agitation through faith, energy and wisdom, which tend to agitation, and from lapsing into indolence through concentration, which tends to indolence. So it is as desirable in all instances as a seasoning of salt in all curries, as a prime minister in all the king's business. Hence it is said (in the commentaries): "It was declared by the Exalted One that 'mindfulness, indeed, is of universal use.' Why? Because the mind has mindfulness as its refuge, and mindfulness is manifested as protection, and there is no exertion and restraint of the mind without mindfulness."

III. Four Things Leading to One's Benefit in the Future Life

"Four things lead to a family man's welfare and happiness in the future life. What four? Accomplishment in faith, moral discipline, generosity, and wisdom.

"And how is a family man accomplished in faith? Here, householder, a family man has faith; he places faith in the enlightenment of the Tathagata: 'So the Blessed One is an arahant, perfectly enlightened, accomplished in true knowledge and conduct, sublime, knower of the

world, unsurpassed leader of persons to be tamed, teacher of devas and humans, the Enlightened One, the Blessed One.' In this way a family man is accomplished in faith.

"And how is a family man accomplished in moral discipline? Here, householder, a family man abstains from the destruction of life, from stealing, from sexual misconduct, from false speech, and from wines, liquors, and intoxicants which are a basis for negligence. In this way a family man is accomplished in moral discipline.

"And how is a family man accomplished in generosity? Here, householder, a family man dwells at home with a mind devoid of the stain of stinginess, freely generous, open-handed, delighting in relinquishment, one devoted to charity, delighting in giving and sharing. In this way a family man is accomplished in generosity.

"And how is a family man accomplished in wisdom? Here, householder, a family man possesses the wisdom that sees into the arising and passing away of phenomena, that is noble and penetrative and leads to the complete destruction of suffering. In this way a family man is accomplished in wisdom.

"These four things, householder, lead to a family man's welfare and happiness in the future life."