

## Equanimity Cultivates Different Faculties

(Excerpt from Wednesday chat, May 2024)

Tahn Pamutto: The Buddha talks about “equanimity based on diversity” and “equanimity based on unity.”

There's a way that you can arrive at understanding through following a crisscrossing, zigzagging kind of trail through the weeds of a topic. You can start out and be like, “Hey, what is *sammāsamādhi*?”

And then you read one person's take, and then you read another person's take, and you read this sutta that seems just like this. And then you read the commentaries that say, no, no, it's something totally different.

And this is “equanimity based on diversity.” You arrive at an understanding based on gathering up a bunch of different pieces of data. You have a bunch of different viewpoints, a bunch of different perspectives. Your understanding is going to be in the middle. Your understanding will be an average of all of the things that you just read. Most of these make sense and it's somewhere in between all of them.

But then you have “equanimity based on unity.”

There is a way of arriving at understanding that cuts through all of it. It's like a maxim, like "all beings experience suffering," and you think about all the diversity of all the different people in the world. You have a woman, you have a man, you have somebody who's older, somebody who's younger, somebody's of this ethnicity...that's diversity. Then you're like, they're all human. And it just slices right down the middle.

And you realize you don't need different points of data.

And in some way, there is an understanding of samadhi where you're taking all of these different points of data...

and you're trying to understand based on what your teachers are saying...

But say you happen to find yourself in a place where the power's gone out.

And so you go out to a park and you sit down and you're in the shade of a tree, and it's really peaceful, and you start to follow your breath, and you suddenly feel a lot of peace, and your mind suddenly becomes composed and stable and kind of happy, and you don't know where the happiness is coming from, but you're not going to ask too many questions because this is nice. At that point, you're cutting through it all.

At that point, who cares what *sammāsamādhi* is?

It's this.

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...There can be a little bit of a tendency to encounter a teaching that says you have these two: “Equanimity based on diversity” and “equanimity based on unity, and that “equanimity based on unity” is superior.

There's a tendency, at least in me, and I can feel it, to say, well then, why don't I just skip the equanimity based on diversity? Why don't I just skip taking in all these different viewpoints and focus on just having the experience, just having the understanding, just cutting through it? But it's really to see these as developing different faculties.

The first one is like equanimity with suffering. It's equanimity with the components of suffering, with the aggregates, with stuff happening. There's a lot of stuff happening. There's a lot of opinions. There is a tendency or a possibility to get stuck, to get confused, to get attached, to get annoyed. There is that possibility.

But this really exercises your wisdom. You're seeing all of these different viewpoints, and you're seeing the different ways that you could get caught on them, and you're catching yourself and you're not getting caught. Yeah. And that develops your wisdom. It develops your ability of discernment, which is an important, vital part of the path.

In order to really overcome views, you need to work your wisdom a bit to see that views aren't a “good thing”, that views are best left alone. They're best abandoned because they lead to complications. They lead to arguments, they lead to confusion, they lead to missing the point, but you never get there unless you've worked with views and you've seen the suffering of views and you've jostled them around in your mind.

So taking in a bunch of different viewpoints really will help you understand the dhamma better. It'll help you understand what's going on better.

But then you have this other track, which is how you develop the faculty of faith. And this is where you do it. And you actually just sit down and do it. And when you develop faith, what you tend to develop is that sort of straightforwardness that says, “okay, that's happening over there, but I'm still going this way. That's happening over there. I'm still going this way.”

You have this equanimity that completely can't be shaken. There's no possibility that it can be shaken. Because you're focused on what you have confidence in. You're focused on truth. And so there isn't any diversity. It's not, “There's that kind of person, that kind of person, that kind of person...” It's just like, “There's persons.”

(indicates a reproduction skull on nearby shelf)

Like the body contemplation. It's like you all have a skull. It's a broad brush. I don't even need to focus on all the different kinds of heads to know that you all have skulls. And so in that way, I just focus straightforward.

So both of them are useful, but we say that the second one is superior in that that gives you the taste of liberation. You don't experience liberation until you have cultivated the second one, but you really don't have the motivation to experience the end of suffering until you really understand suffering. So the way the Buddha presents it is to start with equanimity based on diversity, because then it makes a lot of

sense when you switch over to just, “Oh, it's all this.” Then you see the difference. The difference is really clear.

And we're often using both modes. You study, but then you meditate, and if you're still trying to study when you're sitting and calming your mind, you won't experience peace. You might think of some interesting thoughts, but you won't get that experience of release.

...taking in the different viewpoints, but having the wisdom to be like, “yeah, we're both deluded.”

I'm not positive on getting the whole message here, just that knowledge is part of the wisdom faculty saying, like, “Look, there's room for misinterpretation here. So no matter what somebody says, I'm not going to take it to be the truth.” And the Buddha categorically says, “Don't believe something just because somebody said it.” And teachers for thousands of years have been saying, yeah, if you do that, that's dumb. Arrive at your own conclusions. But it's not like you don't take in other data, because the world is full of these seeming paradoxes.

Say, Ryan and I are having a conversation about the Dhamma. Ryan has delusion and I have delusion. So therefore, whatever we come up with has to be his delusion plus my delusion.

It's got to have more delusion than truth. That's one way of looking at it. And that would be in the first channel.

And that's not wrong. That helps you let it go. It's like, yeah, we had a good conversation, but at the end of the end, it was just talk.

Until I can apply it, it was just talk.

The other channel is to say, yeah, but Ryan has done practice and I have done practice. So sometimes Ryan may have said something with delusion, and I responded with non delusion. Or I said something with delusion, and he responded with non delusion.

In those cases, his non delusion subtracted from my delusion. So we got closer to the truth because both of us are working on it together.

And this way it generates faith. And this is what the Buddha says. It's a blessing for people to get together and talk on the dhamma, to compare what they know and what they've understood, to work together towards an understanding. Two heads really are better than one (as long as they're not on the same body).

And that's the other channel where you have this experience of truth. He says something and something clicks for you and you're like, “Yeah, exactly.” You can't really explain what it is that just made sense. But the thing is, you know that something just made sense. You knew that you had an insight.

And so it's really whatever you were talking about kind of falls away in light of the understanding you just arrived at, which is reductive. It simplifies things.

A really good conversation on the Dhamma tends to exhaust itself.

Like, I get it.

Yeah. Say, this is great.

Yeah, I get it.

It's like, you want to go meditate?

Yeah, let's go meditate.