

Hello friends,

Below are a few notes that may help in our understanding and exploration of the next selection of suttas.

I took inspiration from Steve's format in his October 11 study guide. However I didn't feel up to the challenge of creating the section "Considering the text." In three suttas where the message seemed fairly obvious the section "Questions for reflection" has been omitted.

I hope this guide will aid your process by inviting in your own questions and practices.

I would also like to remind us of Steve's helpful process when investigating these suttas.

1. Read it over once.
2. Discern what the text really seems to be saying, setting aside initial reactions or preconceptions. (It may be helpful to listen to scholarly interpretations, look up key words in glossaries, or find other suttas on similar themes.)
3. Reflect on the meaning of the sutta, being aware of any thoughts or feelings that arise
4. Practice with the sutta.

with loving-kindness,  
Jim

## **12. Unremitting Effort (page 41)**

*Questions for reflection.*

The Buddha details his intention in discovering liberation. Can you put yourself in the Buddha's place and imagine an intention this strong being yours? Do you feel that liberation requires the extreme expressions of intention given in this sutta?

*Suggestions for practice.*

Do you have a primary intention? If so, have you used it as an object of focus for a recent sitting? If you don't have a primary intention what might yours be? Can you draw inspiration from this sutta?

## **13. Abandon Evil (page 41)**

*Questions for reflection.*

How would the concepts of good and evil best be described in today's culture?

*Suggestions for practice.*

What evil have you rejected as a part of or a result of your practice. What good have you cultivated as a part of or as a result of your practice.

## **14. Tranquility and Insight (page 42)**

*Questions for reflection.*

Tranquility leads to abandoning desire, which leads to a developed mind. Insight leads to abandoning ignorance. Are these two statements presented in this sutta dependent on or independent of each other? Can one find freedom through abandoning desire alone? Freedom through insight alone?

*Suggestions for practice.*

What part does samadhi play in your practice? What part does insight play? Do you use them together or separately?

## **15. Repaying One's Parents (page 42)**

### *Questions for reflection.*

The Buddha implies that the dharma path brings us up, feeds us, and guides us through the world. Do you find the correlation between the dharma and your parents to be true? Do you have the impression that the dharma guides, nourishes and matures you?

### *Suggestions for practice.*

Reflect on how your spiritual path has shaped who you are.

## **16. Causes of Conflict (page 43)**

### *Questions for reflection.*

The Sutta states that desire and clinging to views are responsible for conflict. Do you find this to be true in your experience? Are there other habitual patterns in your life that lead to conflict?

### *Suggestions for practice.*

What role does dukkha play in driving your practice? How big of a part does dukkha play in your practice?

## **17. Two Kinds of Happiness (page 44)**

### *Questions for reflection.*

The sutta describes the lesser happiness of form and the ultimate happiness of freedom. Can you get a sense of both types of happiness pointed to here?

### *Suggestions for practice.*

Can you distinguish between or imagine the happiness of the relative world compared to the happiness derived from the ultimate? Sit with one of the brahma viharas as the object of your meditation, letting it arise, noting it, and bringing awareness to it? (This is not the same as doing, for example, a traditional loving-kindness meditation.) Can you verbalize the differences in this meditation experience and traditional happiness?

## **18. The Fool and the Wise Person (page 45)**

### *Suggestions for practice.*

In what ways does your conduct through body, speech, and mind reflect your practice?

## **19. Dhamma, the Co-regent (page 45)**

### *Questions for reflection.*

The sutta states that a leader that bases his/her decisions on the law of justness and righteousness will not be overthrown. Is this a metaphor or is this true in today's world? The sutta states the same is true of the Buddha's dharma, that the wheel of the dharma cannot be turned back. Do you feel this is true?

### *Suggestions for practice.*

Can you imagine a time in your remaining lifetime where your dharma practice will not play a part? A time when you will reject the dharma?

## **20. Cause for Shame (page 46)**

*Questions for reflection.*

The sutta seems to be saying that striving for a pleasant future is comparable to bad conduct of body, speech, and mind in the present. Do you read a different message within this sutta?

*Suggestions for practice.*

Is your motivation to practice in order to obtain a better future? Is it wrong to desire a better future? Can you find the rewards of your practice in the present moment? Is that reward enough?

## **21. Three Types of Patients (page 46)**

*Suggestions for practice.*

Which of these three types of person are you?

## **22. Three Mentalities (page 47)**

*Suggestions for practice.*

Reflect on what it means to you to have had the dharma come into your life. How do the Four Noble Truths inform your practice?

## **23. Free of I-making (page 48)**

*Questions for reflection.*

The Buddha speaks of I-making (wrong view), mine making (craving), and conceit (deluded imaginings based on the notion of a real I). He tells Sariputta that those who understand his teachings are hard to find. Do you presently find the teaching of not-self (anatta) a difficult truth to understand? Do you feel you are able to frame the concept of anatta in a way that can be understood by others?

*Suggestions for practice.*

To what degree does anatta inform and/or drive your practice? Is anatta important to your understanding of what the Buddha taught?