

NOTE ON SOLITUDE/INWARDNESS

Malcolm Hudson

‘Sensuous objects are the cause of calamity, excrescence, danger, disease, a dart and a fear to me.’ Observing this danger resulting from sensuous objects let one live alone like a unicorn’s horn. (*Sn.* v. 51)

Detachment, loneliness, separation, seclusion, scission, aloofness,—*viveka* has two main descriptive divisions: *Kāyaviveka* is the initial environmental and physical condition, the physical (bodily) separation from sensuous objects; it is the abiding at ease in conditions suited to growth in the Dhamma—‘If no-one is found in front or behind, it is very pleasant for one dwelling alone in the wood.’ (*Theragāthā* v. 537.). *Cittaviveka* is that very growth in the Dhamma, the inner, mental, detachment from sensuous things—‘Herein, Elder, whatever is past, that is abandoned, whatever is yet-to-come, that is relinquished, and the desire-and-lust for the present modes of personality is well under control. It is thus, Elder, that lone-dwelling becomes fulfilled in all its details.’ (*S.* II, 282). This solitude is not loneliness of lack (*tanhā*), the craving of the crowd, it is abiding in strength and ease, independent and aloof. This solitude becomes the path and the goal to the one with clear vision who apprehends *saṃsāra*, and his own being as *saṃsāric*, who thus develops estrangement (*nibbidā*) to *saṃsāra*—‘...pushed to the extreme this feeling (estrangement) becomes even, at times, not only the resort but also the goal of philosophy: *to exile*,’ (Grenier).

One seeks solitude because one seeks truth, and the crowd is untruth: ‘But the thing is simple enough: this thing of loving one’s neighbour is self-denial; that of loving the crowd, or of pretending to love it, of making it the authority in matters of truth, is the way to material power, the way to temporal and earthly advantages of all sorts—at the same time it is the untruth, for a crowd is the untruth.’ (Kierkegaard). And this is very important for the way of the crowd is the way of *saṃsāra*, and the cultural political social constructs of society can never lead from *saṃsāra*, for *saṃsāra* is their origin, their meaning and goal. Cultures are particular to time and place, there are ‘Buddhist’ cultures but these are not the Dhamma, though inspired by, for culture is within time—the residue of the historic process—the Dhamma is *akāliko*, not involving time. One does not obtain *sīla* (the ethical) let alone the Dhamma from the historical process, from majority opinions. The Dhamma is approachable by the wise (*pañḍita*) and each for *himself* (*paccattaṃ*:

separately, individually, that is in *solitude*). Therefore the Dhamma is not 'progressive' within the historical process, within the mass of human kind. Real progress (of the individual) is linear, but *saṃsāra* is a revolving about, a repetition, the wheel of birth and death that merely reflects the inner revolving (*vaṭṭa*)—the centripetal vortex of name-and-form (*nāmarūpa*) about consciousness (*viññāna*). The Dhamma is not involved in the illusory 'progress' of *saṃsāra*—the politico-economic ideals of a linear advancement within *saṃsāra*; there is no linear progress within *saṃsāra* this straight line of 'progress' is a result of myopia, a viewing too closely a particular section of curvature of the historic cycle. Real progress is against the centripetal attraction of *saṃsāra*—against the stream—a tangent directly away from the enveloping vortex into calmness and this is *kāyaviveka*. *Cittaviveka* is that gradual journey from the *saṃsāra* within that fuels the outer—the revolving about of *nāmarūpa* (feeling, perception, intention, contact, attention and matter) with *viññāna* (consciousness)—the progress through *nibbidā* (estrangement) to Nibbāna. These two vortices are the 'tangles within and tangles without' (*antojaṭā bahijaṭā*—S. I. 13) the solution and unravelling of which is the Buddha's teaching and the two tools for this process are *kāya* and *cittaviveka*. This progress is only to the individual in his subjective solitude cut off from the crowd and the process of history—for between the historic process and the ideal of social progress the individual is dissipated and confused. Only by solitude, a cutting-off and estrangement, can one truly approach the Dhamma in its immediacy as having meaning only to the individual who has become subjective—and thus aware of anguish (*dukkha*) as personal and existential and the problem of existence as an individualization of the process of *taṇhā* (lack/need). Only within this subjective solitude does one realize the problem and start toward ultimate solitude—Nibbāna: the cutting-off of all factors of existence.

'Flee society as a heavy burden, seek solitude above all.'

(M. 3)