

Directions for Insight

A Collection of Talks on Centering the Mind in Non-attachment

by

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(Upasika Kee Nanayon)

The above title, *Directions for Insight*, was published in a famous book of dual-authorship as Part Two, following Part One, entitled: *To the Last Breath* — by Acharn Maha Boowa. (Searchable at <accessstoinsight>)

edited by
Bhikkhu Ariyesako
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An unnamed bhikkhu who helped with the proofing and editing of both these books has said that the second part of this collection, *Directions for Insight*, fits well with the general approach of *To the Last Breath*. In fact, both have the same flavor — the taste of freedom — which is the true *liberation* of heart, without regard to gender, race or age, as anyone who has read them both will agree.

Note: Upasika Kee Nanayon, also known by her penname, Kee Khao-suan-luang, was arguably the foremost woman Dhamma teacher in twentieth-century Thailand. Her teaching is still highly respected and practiced by monks, nuns and laypeople.

Preface by the Author: Upasika Kee Nanayon

My Dhamma talks given to those practicing at Khao-Suan-luang on the weekly Observance Day have regularly been printed, and this book continues the series. They aim to encourage and support Dhamma practice following the Way of the Lord Buddha and his Noble Disciples whose brilliance dispels the darkness of every age and time. Devotion to practice always brings great benefit in leading to the end of suffering.

I wish to acknowledge the generosity of all those who have joined together to make merit by printing this book to be given away freely as a pure gift of Dhamma to anyone interested in practice. Other books in this series have already been widely distributed to various monasteries and libraries, and as opportunity allows we hope to continue this service.

Kor Khao-suan-luang

Usom Sathan

Khao-suan-luang

Rajburi.

23rd April 1972

1. Training in Renunciation

1st November, B.E. 2506 (1963)

As you steadily develop your self-inspection, carefully note where it is heading so that any lapse or imprudence in your daily life can be corrected. Failing to uphold a high standard will cause a continuous deterioration in the mind due to selfishness. You must persevere with the self-inspection because any lapse will cause this disease of selfishness to spread its infection everywhere. Whenever you become neglectful, make sure that you then purge any selfishness that has arisen. This is especially necessary when it flares up in force, but, even when it manifests more subtly, it still needs to be thoroughly searched out. If you do not eradicate this virulent disease, your practice cannot be considered to accord with the Lord Buddha's Teaching.

It's therefore imperative that your self-inspection becomes comprehensive, and that it is based on and develops out of the Five or Eight Precepts. Generally, the precepts can reduce selfishness at one level, and, then, our mind-development can come in and remove it at a medium level. This is something you should all understand quite well. Finally,

however, mindfulness and wisdom will need to become engaged in eradicating the selfishness that results from overlooking the truth about impermanence, suffering, and not-self. With repeated attention, your concern will deepen and the defilements — craving and clinging — and *self*, in its various manifestations, can be disposed of. It's not seeing the impermanence and deception of things that permits desire to grasp hold and cherish them. This disease is made even more difficult to treat by our predilection in examining other people before ourselves.

To be able to turn within and apprehend *self* with its machinations, concealed deep in one's nature, does indeed require potent mindfulness and wisdom. Yet, also, actually, to get rid of them isn't so simple, and one really only manages to view *self's* deceptions and desires.

These multifarious schemes of greed are worthy of great attention and need to be carefully examined. Any shortcoming will force the practice to veer off course and may end by actually facilitating and increasing one's sense of self.

In the beginning, we should be content with what we already have so as not to feed and inflate this sense

of self. Greed for anything — however coarse or refined, no matter how attractive — must be put aside. This is something each one of us must see and understand for ourselves; but because it can be all so misleading and deceptive, that isn't so easy. The predicament is compounded because 'self' is always looking out for distractions to involve us in. Should we enquire what it is grasping for, what it is in turmoil over — it just pretends not to have heard. It is only interested in wanting more and more, without end.

A basic feature of human beings is the enterprise they apply when acquiring things. The defilements possess a certain cleverness in procuring, but not in giving-up or forgoing. If only this could be transposed so that, instead, we became creative in bestowing and giving away.

The benefit would be great because the grasping at things would stop and gradually, with intensive contemplation, the basic attachment would be destroyed. Blocking the defilements from taking their fill by cutting off their nutriment is following the Way of the Noble Disciple. But the other way, the way of deception and sponsoring self, makes one a firm follower of *Maara*, the Evil One, who

personifies the defilements. Instead of dispensing things, one then endlessly acquires and consumes them.

There are, therefore, two possible ways to go. You have to discern in yourself the existence of the acute disease of selfishness, with its 'getting-cleverness'. Yet, if you aren't sharp enough, you'll be fooled by *self's* duplicity: "The more [things acquired] the merrier," as *Maara* would say.

Ask yourself, "Am I really following the way to enlightenment or is it the way of *Maara* and selfishness? On which path does my proficiency really lie?" This is something to always question.

The household stores in this area have been donated for the use of those who come here to practice Dhamma. Be careful never to appropriate such communal property to yourself and always ask about such things first. Grabbing this and that [so as] to make yourself as comfortable as possible, even if it may have been done unthinkingly, is still the same as theft. These communal household utensils should, therefore, not be requisitioned as your own; even those things donated specifically for your use should, on occasion, be brought out and shared.

In that case there is no attachment and one does not plan just for one's own convenience. Otherwise, the instinct of 'self' — which needs to appropriate things to itself — is too manipulative and cunning, and its villainy is so difficult to see. One then mistakenly endorses the dictum, *the more I can get the better*, and such selfishness puts one under the domination of *Mara*.

Now that we have become disciples of the Lord Buddha, how can we possibly be like that? If we should see that the greed arisen in ourselves becomes particularly grasping, then the only way out is to give up the thing (that we're grasping at). Let go of it! Under no circumstances should you quietly appropriate it on the side. Absolutely not! I will tell you plainly, anyone living in a religious community who behaves in such a way will only go from bad to worse, because there is no sense of shame or fear of doing evil. Without these two fundamental principles as a foundation, how can Dhamma possibly be built up? Though one might be knowledgeable and skilled in reciting the scriptures, one can't even put right such an underlying character defect.

A personality that knows no bounds to its greed really seems disgusting, or rather the disease that infects that mind does. What can we do to cleanse such a mind? Anyway, to associate with extremely selfish people will inflame the disease still more and its infection will penetrate deep into the mind.

All this remains a hidden subject which people don't wish to speak about. It's not pleasant talk, for it disturbs and disconcerts with its sinister implications. It's only through mindfulness and wisdom examining within yourself that you'll be able to know the deceit of the defilements and greed. How can they all be eradicated? This is not a matter about which you can be halfhearted. You'll have to disavow and give away as much as possible. Anything that is involved in upholding such selfishness must be relinquished.

Don't agree amongst yourselves that everyone may grab as much as they can, but rather encourage one another to give as much as possible. Failure to do this will cause the mind to fall into anguish, because you twist round and infect yourself with the dirt and disease of selfishness. Who else can possibly come and treat you?

When you decide to examine this malignant disease, you'll have to recall all this for yourself, because nobody else will want to discuss it with you. Even though they too are saturated with the same infection, they prefer to talk of other matters.

The occasional giving away of various things is relatively easy, but to relinquish *self* is both recondite and extremely difficult. Nevertheless, the effort is worthwhile because this *self* is the sole source of all suffering. Should this root not be destroyed, it will continue to sprout and flourish, so we must turn and apprehend this *self*.

The Lord Buddha has laid down the *Recollections of the Four Requisites [of life]*, which, for the monks, are: robe material, alms food, shelter, and medicine. He said that if they weren't considered merely as material exigencies, as elements,¹ free of all ideas of self, then the yellow robe, the lump of rice, the hut and medicines would all burst into flame. Even though we may not be monks and only beginners in Dhamma practice, if we really have the determination to be rid of the defilements and *self*, then there's no loss in trying to follow a similar basic rule. If we don't, imagine how the defilements,

craving, clinging, and *self* will relentlessly proliferate.

So we have to make our choice: simply to follow the old way, or to strive towards the ending of self. Each one of you should take this to heart. Turning to examine internally is difficult, but even modest application will result in great benefit. Actually catching the deceit of self in the act of plunging one still deeper into suffering, and being able, there and then, to wipe it out — this is truly a reward beyond price.

The failure to implement this eradication, this giving up of self, lays the basis for the intensification of suffering. For, by not bringing it in for examination, it is able to grow freely. You may be able to quote and recite the scriptures — and even skillfully teach others — yet the mind remains impure and confused. By clearly seeing this you will feel revulsion for everything involved with this craving and desire. You will start to give generously and to make sacrifices, no matter how difficult it seems, and thereby suffering can no longer secure a hold. Each small renunciation builds its own reward in the mind until there is complete victory.

Anyone having a strong tendency towards stinginess — which is a particular defilement — seems unable to give up anything. They are reluctant to examine themselves or admit that they can possibly harbor a disease as severe as selfishness.

If they would frequently make an inspection, that sort of defilement wouldn't dare to show its face. But by being negligent the defilement grows strong and bold, and is capable of the most selfish and despicable acts. Such people will then be able to appropriate the property of a community, such as we have here, for their own selfish purposes.

By turning to a constant probing of your mind, you'll be able to succeed in the giving up of unworthy attachments. Whatever you do will then become Dhamma, and will be of assistance to our companions in [this world of] birth, sickness, old age and death. The getting rid of selfishness will also allow you to come to the aid of others, without caring about the hardships involved. Without self we are truly on the noble way.

The practice of Dhamma needs orderliness in daily life. Any slackness is inappropriate. Another point here is that any shortcomings in behavior allow defilements a chance to come forth more easily.

Orderliness helps to arouse mindfulness, which may in its turn forestall the defilements. Disregard for rules-and-regulations brings nothing, whereas conscientiously abiding by them can bring benefit. They give one a sense of how properly to respond to any situation, and this is necessary because we still can't completely understand by ourselves. The Lord Buddha knew the situation from every side, whereas we are surrounded by darkness and ignorance.

This means we can't be sure of ourselves — either externally or internally — and so must depend on Dhamma and the Way it points out to us. The decision — to follow Dhamma or to wander away — remains with each one of you.

Anyone who wishes to be rid of their defilements and suffering, will need vigilance as an asset of mind and must then be diligent and persevere. Forever encountering the scorching fire of suffering, they will finally have to stop, turn and set themselves the task of struggling to be free. Without a clear and thorough understanding about oneself, the defilements will thrive and spread their virulent infection, which can only bring more and more suffering. We must therefore reinforce our

mindfulness and wisdom, for no other instrument can fight and destroy the defilements.

The persistent quest to train the mind needs mindfulness and wisdom to point the way. Half-heartedness merely wastes time and one remains the same unmitigated fool. When you come to realize this, the benefits from the resulting effort are immense.

Eventually, you will be able to destroy the defilements, relinquish all attachment and the mind will transcend suffering. But any failure to achieve this will see you swept away by the power of craving and defilements. Negligence and carelessness will allow them to lead you away by the nose; they'll pull you here and drag you there. This is why the Lord Buddha emphasized, in so many ways, the necessity of letting go, sacrificing and disentangling yourself. This is the way to excise the cancer from the mind.

This kind of malignant disease is very insidious and though it may reveal a few symptoms, it's usually not enough to alert one to the situation. Eventually, it will usually triumph and, sometimes you may even submit to its terms with alacrity.

Your examination, therefore, must be circumspect and alert; otherwise, it's like plugging one hole in a

leaking boat only to find it's leaking elsewhere. There are six holes or apertures — the eyes, ears, nose, tongue, body and mind — and if you have no control over them, they are left open to follow after emotional objects. And this causes great suffering. You must use mindfulness and wisdom to seek out and review the true situation present within yourself, and this must become the most important activity throughout the day.

Our life is for working on the elimination of the defilements, not for anything else. Yet the defilements and suffering continue to hover about, and if we aren't equal to their threat we'll surely get burnt. We need to pull ourselves around and question how to deal with this, for, then, we'll be heading for great success. While we still have breath and our body isn't yet rotting in its coffin, we must take counsel and search for a way to eradicate the root infection of this terrible disease, the germ of defilements and craving.

This cancer, which has gnawed deeply into the mind, can only be remedied with Dhamma. The Lord Buddha prescribed his Dhamma medicines with their various properties. Each one of us must carefully select from them and blend what is correct and most

suitable, and then use it to destroy the root infection. All this necessitates great circumspection.

Should your self-inspection remain insufficient to destroy the defilements, they will grow stronger and burn like an unseen fire inside the mind. Introspection is the extinguisher to use, so that when you notice greed arising for an object, you can snuff it out and let go of it. Now, look at the mind, is it free or entangled in turmoil? If you don't persevere, it can only end in your getting burnt. No matter how smart you think you are, you always seem to succumb to greed.

Greed seizes the commander's position and you make no attempt to dislodge it — and even go out to receive it in with compliments. The mind is then the oppressed slave of desire, and has fallen into delusion, with the grasping of this and that. There's no obvious way out of such wretched entanglement; we just don't know how to escape the dilemma that viciously encircles our mind.

We are trapped by our lack of true resolve and finally, when we are at our wit's end, we become slaves to the defilements just as before. The more often we submit to them the more their power grows.

The only true way to overthrow them is strenuously to bring mindfulness and wisdom to bear. We can then examine, from all angles, the suffering they bring until the mind refuses to stay a slave any longer. It's no use just making an external show of it, because the greater the fuss the more stubborn the defilements become. Yet, we can't be halfhearted about it either.

You must have the appropriate response for whatever the situation brings. You can't rush in with massive good intention to wipe them out, but must first carefully focus and enhance mindfulness and wisdom. This will all require great circumspection, and all these points will need to be remembered.

To genuinely understand, the mind will have to investigate in every posture, with every breath. It will then be equal to the task of stopping those moods and tendencies that continually fabricate notions, without reason or value, under the compulsion of delusion.

Without true determination, practice becomes halfhearted. This leads to distraction and a waste of valuable time, with it all being nothing more than delusion. We must turn our vision within and persevere until we see clearly. Once we are adept,

it's actually more enjoyable to look inside than out. Externally there is just the dissolution of things seen — why be so engrossed in that?

But the inner eye can penetrate to the clear light and, then, to the Truth of Dhamma. By seeing the nature of the dissolution of all *determinations*,² new insight will arise as to that nature that doesn't deteriorate, a nature that can't be altered but just *is*.

If your all-round mindfulness and wisdom remain insufficient and weak, the defilements will be overwhelming. However, if you can persistently build up mindfulness and wisdom, the strength of the defilements will proportionally decline. You'll notice that, though the mind was previously confused, it has now become resolute.

It's able to see the impermanence of things more clearly, so that they can be let go of. This insight into impermanence empowers mindfulness and wisdom to move towards an even deeper discernment. Yet this penetration must be truly focused; otherwise, the slightest inattention will be disruptive.

If it doesn't wander off target, even for a moment, then this is truly the way to control the defilements.

Negligence, however, means that they can never be threatened and they'll regroup stronger than ever.

Mindfulness and clear comprehension must be developed in every posture, with every breath. We must make the effort so that the mind is attentive and doesn't drift away following various emotional objects, or lose itself in the confusion of concocting thoughts. You should be forewarned, here, about the tendency to think, "*I know!*", when you don't really know at all. Until the mind penetrates to true insight there must always be doubt and uncertainty; but when you begin truly to see, such doubts fall away and speculation is no longer necessary. One truly knows. How can you be certain that you have true insight? When the mind truly comprehends, the defilements and suffering are really eliminated. However, if one just thinks that one sees — whilst having no real insight — then one can't possibly destroy the defilements and suffering.

This insight penetrates into the mind, for this is where the desire for things is activated and that which blocks out Dhamma resides. When this concocting stops, one sees through to the nature of mind that is without the fire and anguish of desire. This can be seen anytime, when one focuses

properly and with determination. One can see other things, why not this? Just truly look and you will certainly see!

But you must look correctly to be able to penetrate, otherwise you won't see anything. If you grasp at things — which goes against the basic principles of developing true knowledge — and then try to go straight on to the truth, it's probable that you'll get all twisted and an element of pride, or something similar, will insinuate itself.

The only way is to see the arising and ceasing of things, merely seeing and understanding without grasping. See! This is the way to freedom from attachment. It has been said, "*See the world as if it were empty,*" and we must similarly see our moods, as they arise and cease, as empty.

When the mind truly realizes the transience of things, the deceit of the world and our moods, it doesn't grasp at them anymore. This is the free mind. There are many levels to this, but even a temporary experience is still of benefit; just don't go and grasp after anything!

The free mind that is called *vimokkha* — attaining to true and final release — we find described in one of the scriptures³ we chant: "*vimokkha* is not subject to

change." Those levels of freed mind that change are not true *vimokkha*, so we must continue to examine each level and press for the fruit, which is always freedom from attachment. It doesn't matter how many levels one has to work through until it finally doesn't change, which is when it is without any aim or attachment for anything. This is the true way to penetrative insight.

May all of you who practice Dhamma, work tirelessly to see and know this truth.

Notes

1.*dhaatu*

2.*sa.nkhaaras*

3.*Solasapanyha Sutta*

2. Making Dhamma Your True Concern - 16th November, B.E. 2506 (1963)

We all have suffering, and the most important task of our life is to let go and be rid of it. The mind is besieged by defilements and is left helpless owing to its deficient study of Dhamma.

It is continually scorched with suffering and unless we turn to Dhamma it will be consumed throughout this life and on into the next. Only Dhamma practice can extinguish and release us from suffering.

This practice of Dhamma is precisely a constant self-examination, because body and mind are the basis of our existence. The condition of changing, which they naturally exhibit, needs to be correctly examined. Otherwise, you will follow the unthinking so called 'normal' course, understanding nothing and grasping after things which only go to compound your suffering more. This, however, is difficult to see and will require your full attention and concern. In examining the unrest and anxiety of the mind, you'll find it emerges from the disease of greed, hatred and delusion.

The desire for things can only bring turmoil to the mind and it's like a virulent infection has taken hold. It's normal to be afraid of bodily disease, but the affliction of the defilements, which disturb and depress the mind, doesn't concern us at all. We choose not to recognize the seriousness of this infection and sometimes, in our ignorance, even to aggravate matters. To actually get down to eliminating the defilements is, therefore, difficult and unattractive, especially with the myriad outside distractions that stir up desire.

The indifferent, common person just spins with their desires, leaving the mind dizzy and unbalanced all

the time. This is plainly suffering and torment, yet if we don't concern ourselves with this affliction, don't struggle to overcome the tendency to follow our desires, then we must abjectly submit to it. It's our ignorance concerning the defilement's successful infiltration and infection of the mind that makes this disease so difficult to see.

You must turn your attention away from external things and set it on your own body and mind. Whether mind or body,¹ it's all subject to impermanence and change. Yet this is difficult for the ordinary person to comprehend. It's like what we think of as the growth of people; from their mother's womb onwards there is continual change and transformation so that this growth really refers to change. Nothing remains immutable in this world.

The decline and decay of either the body or material things shouldn't be so difficult to notice, and yet it still somehow escapes our attention. The mind and mental states are constantly changing, but instead of seeing this, we grasp at the sight or sound of any object experienced, and this drops us into even more suffering.

If we could penetrate to the actual experience of sights, sounds, smells, tastes, tangibles and mind

objects, we would find a continual change, a constant arising and passing away. How does the old emotional object pass away; how does a new one arise? How is it that the mind is overpowered by the defilements into conceivings and imaginings that proliferate out of hand?

But we pay no interest to such matters and are consequently overwhelmed by suffering, which extends into actions and speech full of intense greed, hatred and delusion. This incessant torment of the defilements — hotter than the hottest fire — can only be relieved through the practice of Dhamma. Yet the ordinary worldling, though being roasted alive, behaves as if she is immune to the fire and pays it no attention to it.

She even smiles and thinks herself content in habitually grasping at transient things as 'me' and 'mine'. She doesn't realize that whatever she reaches out to, and falls in love with, is forever out of reach, edging towards dissolution. This all needs the deepest examination, so as to see the truth and not fall into attachment and delusion.

People learn from the scriptures of such diseases as the *fetters*² or *underlying tendencies*,³ but they don't turn to check them out in themselves.

One takes up words and translates their definitions, yet one doesn't see that the *wrong view of holding to personality*⁴ is the direct source of all one's suffering and torment. One not only fails to comprehend this plain truth, but, then, one turns and unthinkingly submits to upholding such wrong view. This is why the mind is in such a state of profound ignorance.

It is normal for people to have knowledge about many things, sometimes to the extent that they can't relax and must be forever researching new matters. They know what's good, what's right — they know it all! Whatever the subject, they manage to concoct an answer, thus finally spiralling out into wild conceptualizations. They simply know too much! This style of knowledge is that of the defilements and craving; its antidote is the knowledge arising from mindfulness and wisdom that penetrates to the truth of the mind.

If we should give free rein to this obsession with wild imaginings, the mind will exhaust itself and we will eventually suffer a nervous breakdown. If we allow ourselves to get into such a state then we'll end up insane. Some cases may stay deluded until their death and, on being reborn, they will return to that same delusion.

This transpires from a lack of critical examination and from not trusting in the application of Dhamma. Tranquilizers and similar drugs for the mentally ill merely relieve the external symptoms but do not get to the root cause. A radical cure depends on the control of one's own mind, using mindfulness and wisdom to brake and critically check, enabling the mind to free itself from its delusions. This is the complete cure of Dhamma.

That Dhamma practice should be able to cure every kind of illness should merit some thought. Each stage in your understanding of Dhamma will depend on mindfulness and wisdom. Those who show no interest in Dhamma — no matter how great their knowledge of worldly matters — will fall under the domination of the defilements and become subject to birth, old age, sickness and death. Once you come to understand Dhamma, following the Lord Buddha, the mind will become bright, calm and pure. This knowledge is of far more value than that which you have acquired for your livelihood's sake, or that which you obtained by being pleasurable — but temporarily! — engrossed in various entertainments. When you come around to constantly examining your mind, you'll see that when anxiety arises the

mind is not free and will not accept the truth of the Lord Buddha's words: "*Go out from desire in happiness.*" Being burned alive in the maw of desire through indulging in the five sense strands — sight, sound, smell, taste, touch — is hardly 'going out from desire with happiness'.

But if you correctly see that the penalty of desire is suffering, it will cease to gratify, and the mind will be freed from desire. At that moment, when the mind is unattached to sense objects and is free of desire, you can penetrate to more profound levels and truly know whether it is really happiness. The free mind will know of itself that happiness is not being overwhelmed by suffering or aroused to passion.

The mind without passion will immediately incline solely towards freedom. Is this what you want, or are you satisfied with lust and insatiable desire? Consider carefully and make your choice.

Inclining the mind towards freedom and release from the entanglements of passion and lust brings a natural state of purity and calm. Surely, compared to this freedom and happiness, the turmoil of sense desires will seem loathsome and repellent. If you don't reflect upon this, you'll become absorbed and

lost in never-ending desires and passions, caught and confined in the cage of craving. Held in the grip of this disease, so difficult to cure, isn't it high time you turned to radically curing it by destroying its root infection?

When the mind fixes on a desired object, you must reflect and see the harm and suffering that arise and compare it with the happiness of the mind freed from desire. You must constantly examine this suffering and the freedom from suffering in your own mind, attending to it with every in- and out-breath.

The principle is set down in the scriptures in the Foundations of Mindfulness, which describes many different ways to examine and reflect. But if you don't actually apply them in your practice, no matter how many of the texts you read, it will be of no benefit. You will continue merely groping along in the dark without understanding anything. To detect this insidious disease requires mindfulness and wisdom, and these must be nurtured and applied so that they become well established.

If you only do this sporadically and irresolutely, you will always end in laxity and make no progress in Dhamma practice. It is just this progress that leads to

a lessening of suffering and a decline in desire — as you will see for yourself. You'll realize that the most direct way of practice is constant reflection and examination, and will see how best this can be applied in your daily life. Those of us here who devote our lives to Dhamma through following the training rule of *chastity*⁵ must especially consider this carefully.

This way of Dhamma practice needs an earnest application of mindfulness and wisdom, persevering with them until true knowledge arises. But, initially, how should one investigate so that new understanding may arise where, previously, there was ignorance?

When the mind is possessed by ignorance and delusion, you can't relax or be indifferent but must concern yourself energetically with escaping from that which brings harm and suffering. You must discern what it is that brings brightness and clarity to the mind.

If this isn't done, the mind will tend to be seduced by surrounding sense objects and you are left with just scholarly knowledge and talk. In fact, your mind doesn't truly know what is what, and any scrap of

insight that does genuinely arise will not be followed up.

You'll relax, become preoccupied with things, and neglect the practice. It is, therefore, important to be very careful about this and bring mindfulness and wisdom to bear so that they can be steadily trained and perfected.

When you can penetrate to the truth of impermanence, of suffering and of not-self, [even if just for a moment], you'll see that this is truly the perfect way to extinguish all suffering.

Whatever remains un-discerned must be earnestly investigated and related to what one already knows. This leads to dis-attachment from self and others, from 'mine' and 'theirs'. Just a momentary insight gives value to your life; otherwise, you'll remain in the continual darkness of ignorance and ceaseless imaginings. The mind being caught in constant turmoil is truly a wretched state of affairs.

Meditation must, therefore, be steadfastly developed. You must build it up as an asset of the mind and not be concerned only with eating, sleeping and other bad habits.

You must watch over the mind so that it stays under the direction of mindfulness and wisdom, always

pulling it back and never leading it out to other concerns that are a waste of time.

A first step in the practice is the code of conduct, necessary because, otherwise, things only slide into distraction and confusion. You must, therefore, place yourself under precepts and discipline, for it's this that can bring great benefit.

You'll then come to see that this life is meant only for training yourself towards the elimination of defilements and suffering; and doing it before the body itself is laid-out in its coffin. Without this concern for practice and for finding a suitably quiet place, the mind will tend to over-extend itself with notions of conceit.

Therefore, you must all decide on the way to go, blocking the wandering of the mind after sense objects and moods, and bringing it back to investigate within yourself so as to steadily develop calm and tranquillity.

The Lord Buddha rightly set down various methods for developing meditation, including mindfulness of breathing.

If we don't take up one of these methods as a basis for practice, even though it may still be possible to gain results they will be unsteady and fleeting.

But with a basis of practice to aid one, the mind can be brought under the control of mindfulness and clear comprehension, without fading into distraction. How should each of us go about this to obtain the desired results? In your daily life, how can you improve your practice? These questions warrant great concern and consideration. Don't be careless and forgetful.

Whatever you do in your practice — including the *guarding of the sense doors*⁶ — must be followed through steadfastly without vacillation or distraction. Otherwise, time flies by, your life ebbs-away, and you achieve nothing. Inattentive and halfhearted, how can you expect to escape from suffering? What a waste — be earnest!

Such concern, when it arises authentically, enables you to correct and right yourself. It steadily wears away at your distraction. Your investigation should center on impermanence, the suffering involved in such change, and the lack of self in all of it.

You then must focus on the central point of 'knowing' and penetrate through to clearly understand impermanence, suffering, and not-self in both body and mind.

When you succeed in clearly realizing this, you can truly be called wise, awakened and happy through Dhamma.

If it is genuine insight, you'll no longer feel any attachment or involvement with anything. You will be free of feelings of 'me' and 'mine'. Does this sound appealing? I'm not talking about trivial matters. This is serious — I tell you plainly — and you must concern yourselves seriously. Halfhearted listening to what I say is no use; you must really try to gain insight within yourself.

This brings such great rewards that it deserves your special attention. Above all things concentrate your attention on this.

May Dhamma be the guiding light in your life.

Notes:

1.*naama* or *ruupa*

2.*sa.myojana*

3.*anusaya*

4.*sakkaaya-di.t.thi*

5.*brahmacariya*

6.*indriya sa.mvara*

3. Establishing a Foundation of Mindfulness -

6th November, B.E. 2513 (1970)

Concern for Dhamma practice is of the greatest value because it leads on to wisdom. Its steady development will allow you to '(inwardly) read yourself,' by using a careful examination of suffering and the harm caused by the defilements. Occasionally, you'll be able clearly to discern the situation and resolve to get free. The mind is then calm and serene, without those agitating thoughts that, through one's negligence, had previously been allowed a free rein.

The principle of self-examination is a tool of vital importance and requires regular and specific development. It brings the mind to stability [and] by securing it with mindfulness is essential. Otherwise, the mind will waver and vacillate following contact with various objects, which will eventually lead to proliferating imaginings and turmoil.

By controlling the six sense doors — which means having mindfulness constantly in attendance — one lays a deep, immovable foundation. This can be compared to driving piles into firm ground rather than mud, where they would sway under any external force. Mindfulness is, therefore, necessary for controlling the mind, so that it is stable and can

withstand contact with objects, neither craving them nor being repelled by them.

This firm mindfulness must be maintained in each posture and with every breath, and this will effectively check the mind's wild chasing after sense objects.

Otherwise, the mind will be like a rudderless ship, battered by wind and waves (which are the sense objects) and drifting helplessly. Mindfulness is therefore essential in securing the mind, allowing it to stabilize and investigate for insight.

Initially, in order to establish a foundation of mindfulness, you'll have to concentrate on centering and balancing the mind in impartiality.

At this stage, there's no need to speculate or be concerned about any matter. *If you can fortify and hold this centeredness, it will become the base and standard for your investigation.*

But this impartiality needs careful checking to make sure that it's not just a state of indifference and inertia, or absent-minded preoccupation. You must be neither scattered nor engrossed in things.

Sitting straight-backed in meditation; maintaining mindfulness and centeredness is all that is required. There's no need to think of anything. The mind is

firm, un-swayed by whatever may arise, be it pleasant or painful feelings. One's attention is locked onto the stability of mind, and excludes all feelings (and moods) and it's this that leads to equanimity.

Guard against any inclination towards either absent-mindedness or infatuation with some object. So that if you're sitting in meditation, after thirty minutes of the hour's session the mind is established and continues to be so for the remaining time.

When changing posture to standing, walking or lying down, notice that though the body has shifted, the mind is still centered and unshaken.

Mindfulness, which must be sustained with every breath, is the kingpin in this, forestalling the imaginings and concoctions of mind. Then, with the mind centered and neutral, the intense concentration on the in- and out-breath can be relaxed to a suitably moderate level. In the hour's session, the mind will then, be without worries and distracting thoughts. Afterwards, you'll start to notice that in whatever you do or say, the mind has a natural 'poise with knowingness'.

When the mind is thus stationed, it will have all-round protection so that contact with external objects will not affect its stability. Even if it should

be drawn out for a moment, it will quickly and without coercion return to maintaining its base. What had previously stimulated attraction or repulsion, a pull to this or that side, is rendered ineffectual because the mind is now centered and neutral again. Any wandering or distraction can be countered by a critical examination of the virtues and attributes of the centered, stable mind.

The foundation of mindfulness must be deeply laid within every posture and constantly developed in every action.

Once the base is set, the mind becomes compliant, calm and free of imaginings and turmoil. It steadily grows more refined and is able to penetrate and examine, *knowing* both its stability and its disinterestedness in those brief external contacts. Any craving can thus be disposed with. When changing your position — perhaps in response to painful bodily feeling — the mind will neither fix on the pain, nor on the new pleasant feeling (with the improved circulation), but will be intent in itself. This stability permits you comfortably to avoid the cravings involved with feelings.

The ordinary untrained mind on the other hand will be irritated into pursuing pleasant feelings. With

repeated practice, the foundation's piles are driven deeper and deeper, so that there is no swaying under the impact of sense objects and moods. No longer are you restlessly drawn out after sights, sounds, smells, tastes and tangibles; no longer indulging in meaningless thought fabrications because of your lack of mindfulness.

This stability of mind needs constant attention and strengthening.

Then, the examination of impermanence and not-self, which usually deceive the mind, can be set up. The mind, like a mischievous monkey, tends to wander away. Yet even monkeys can be caught and trained, and so it is with the mind. It must be first caught and tied with mindfulness, then tamed and disciplined.

The training of the mind can neither be excessively forced nor abandoned to complacency. Everyone must find out for themselves exactly what brings results. If you are only casually mindful, the mind will lack a foundation and be easily distracted by sense objects and moods. It will, then, be impossible to brake, to calm down and free yourself. The firm establishing of mindfulness in every posture — standing, walking, sitting or lying down — becomes

essential so that the monkey is tethered and can only circle its post, without being able to get into mischief.

Once the mind is trained, it will be calm and capable of self-examination. However, any obsessive imaginings show up a deficiency, and you'll have to train yourself further, because it's precisely this lack of firmness that underlies all your turmoil. Why should the mind be so wild and disobedient? Practice — so that it calms down and rests in stability.

At this stage, the mind is stabilized and supported by mindfulness in all postures. Any distraction occurs for only a moment and without attachment. You'll now have to perfect this so that all distractive imaginings and moods, arising from contact with external objects, are subdued and completely cease.

This training isn't so very difficult. The vital point is being aware of the mind's centeredness in whichever of the various meditation subjects you choose to use. If attention wanders, always bring it back to the established mind, and the foundation will continue to be laid. Such mindfulness is then always available for investigation, *because the firmly settled mind is also able to see clearly. It can discern the truth and*

falseness within oneself, whereas the unsettled mind can only swing around to haunt and jumble everything up to fool you. The established mind can therefore get rid of the defilements and suffering from every side.

This way of practice depends very much on diligence and perseverance in establishing the mind. Then, just as a firmly anchored post isn't shaken in a storm, so the various defilements with their resulting anguish and distress can no longer afflict the mind. When this is realized, you'll no longer go out with 'fondness' for this thing or 'aversion' for that. Such equanimity can then become a basis for investigation and insight. But, initially, in stabilizing the mind to a deeper level, there's no need to involve yourself with any thinking processes.

Preoccupations and absent-mindedness must both be guarded against, for it's at this point that delusion and the machinations of craving take over. The firmly settled mind might waver a little, but it will quickly correct itself, so that the basis of mindfulness can be used for examining impermanence, suffering and not-self.

In the beginning stages, though not absolutely essential, it's better to concentrate on stabilizing the

mind. If you try to focus the mind without such stability it's liable to fly off into uncontrolled imaginings. Therefore, settle your mind, steadily focusing it so that it develops to the profound level imbued with freedom.

The torment of the defilements with their domination of the sense-doors will then be overthrown.

This is because with such firm control over the mind, the eyes and ears, the nose, tongue and touch will also be guarded. Without a firm foundation of mindfulness there is no restraint of the senses, for the eyes want to look, the ears want to hear and come into contact with the myriad sense objects. With the mind centered, it's already protected, and so there's no need to guard the actual senses themselves. Then, whatever you say, the mind is settled without harking after notions of: "That's good — I like it" ; or "That's bad — I dislike it; That's pretty... That's ugly..." The mind is no longer fixed on externals, but keeps to the principle of being centered and uninvolved.

Every experience is now received with impartiality because five of the six sense doors have been closed, and the mind is centered and steady. When sights,

sounds, smells, tastes, or tangibles arise, the mind isn't attracted but remains centered, controlling all. Just like that. Try it.

It is now the end of the Rainy Season. During this week, you should all make an extra special effort to establish the heart with mindfulness. In the Lord Buddha's time, it was during this period — when the lotus and water lily bloom — that a meeting was arranged between the Lord Buddha and his senior disciples. They had just finished training newly ordained monks and novices during the Rains. As in other years, I want to stress this again to encourage you to make the mind steadfast. When this is achieved, the mind will bloom, un-withered by the defilements, heat and myriad afflictions. So you should all try for this during the coming seven days. Watch over the firmly centered mind so that it receives constant support. Except, that is, for when you're asleep and even then the mind should be centered right up to the last wakeful moment. Try it, and you'll find on Awakening that the mind has remained centered. It will be free of craving and all the suffering this involves. Then, you'll be able to see for yourself how the mind gently blooms.

With the mind established it is naturally cooled and soothed without effort. *You can be assured that this mind will neither be scorched by the defilements nor led into self-inflicted craving and torment.* The fires of lust, hatred and delusion can't touch it. But please understand that this can only be achieved with genuine exertion and constant mindfulness. Playing about and being irresolute will only hand you over to the torments of the defilements.

Dhamma practice is one of restraint and steadfastness, clear of any mischievous pursuits after sense distractions.

Whatever you do, whether eating or excreting, make sure the mind is established within. When you realize this state, the mind will be unshaken by turmoil and free of weakness. It will be established in a freedom beyond harm from those things that had burnt it. It is free, for through introspection, it no longer grasps and embraces such things, and is, therefore, constantly protected.

In such a state there are no thoughts of *self*, there's just the stabilized mind. Sustain it for seven days and you will know the results for yourself. So please persevere!

Each day keep a check and record of your progress. Don't become lax and erratic. Keep the mind steady and don't weaken in your resolve — really try to make an end of suffering! If you are irresolute, you will fall for the provocations of wanting things and doing things, and, thereby, you'll enslave yourself to suffering.

Your daily life should give good opportunity for self-examination. Enter the battlefield. Firmly center yourself. The uprising feelings and moods should be seen as neutral without involvement in notions of good or bad. Everything is halted in centeredness because, without intention there is no *good* or *bad* or *self*.

Sustain this centeredness and freedom from self, and know exactly how the lotus blooms. If it doesn't bud and flower, know that it's withering and rotting in the heat of the defilements and your inattention. Please apply yourselves to establishing the mind, and do your best to bring the lotus to bloom.

Make sure it doesn't become scorched in the fire of the defilements.

4. Struggling against the Defilements' Hordes - **13th November, B.E. 2513 (1970)**

We are meeting here again today and some of you have already spoken to me of your practice. I would like further to emphasize that your development of mindfulness and self-inspection requires a suitable basis in effort and perseverance.

We have all heard about the mind being enshrouded in defilements, and we can only falter and slip back by not pressing on with practice.

If the mind lacks energy, it's time to increase and maintain the pressure of practice, thereby enabling us to break through with insight.

Such insight isn't merely a matter of 'thinking it out', for it's an examination based in the concentrated mind, which is calm and stabilized to a sufficient degree.

This calm, centered mind, without imaginings or thought fabrications, without positive or negative reactions to emotional objects, requires a careful and subtle investigation into its various conditions without disturbing its balance. A cursory understanding is hardly true knowledge, for one knows merely the external calm or those characteristics of mind that still sway under the defilements, without any lucid insight.

Make the effort to analyze and examine within, searching for the understanding to help you along and constantly sharpening your investigation. If you aren't at this investigative stage, true knowledge won't arise because your knowledge and mindfulness are still at a relatively superficial level. Taking the physical body up for examination, you can analyze it as either made up of the various elements — earth, water, fire, air — or inspect aspects of its loathsomeness. This will lead to an understanding about the body, which can be advanced in each posture, so that your thoughts never wander off course.

Your work is meticulously to focus on and destroy the defilements in whatever guise they appear. And the qualities of heedfulness and non-distraction will advance your practice along smoothly. It's as if one becomes experienced and proficient in treating and eradicating the subtle disease within the mind — which is the malady of nescience and delusion. Normally, we can't comprehend even the grosser aspects of this condition, but when it's been stilled by firmly establishing the mind we'll be able to penetrate through to the deeper levels and discern the deceit and cunning of the defilements.

With this seeing and understanding you'll be ready to renounce them as they swerve away to find a sight or sound, a delicious taste or smell. Whether it's aimed at the relishing of bodily contact or pleasant mental contact, you must be wise to it all. But this is difficult to perceive because we still have so many desires for pleasure at a very coarse level, involving pleasant feeling together with perception, thought and awareness. Thus, we are infatuated by their guiles, fall into negligence, and end up understanding nothing.

This is a subtle affair because such alluring pleasures are really only concerned with lust, sexual desire and craving.

These instigate the mind to swerve out through the five senses after delightful objects remembered from before. Long past impressions — whether good or bad — are conjured up, which we deludedly grasp at and sink ourselves in anguish and total sorrow.

To understand these myriad disease-carrying germs within yourself is difficult. Although you may well discern and dispose of some of the more external problems, overall it's of little help. Wherever they are concentrated together, this master-problem is stubborn and determined to remain master, however,

much you may try to overcome it. Remember that if your mindfulness and wisdom aren't yet strong enough, the battle will also upset the basic calmness of mind.

Dhamma practice requires a careful balancing — neither too tense nor too slack — so that you always strive with the appropriate response, which is the Middle Way. *You will have to notice in yourself the state of mind that is controlled by mindfulness and wisdom, and constantly support and sustain it with diligent attention.* This allows calm and stability to arise for longer periods until you become intimately acquainted with it.

At times you will recognize the need to put on extra pressure to force the results because, even though it may be hard to do, you can't just give up halfheartedly. Weakness means there's no way to stop the mind drifting back into its old willful ways, so you must apply force: strong mindfulness and wisdom, vigorous exertion to the point of sacrificing life if need be. When the time comes to battle it out you'll have steadfastly to fight on, sometimes using a vow to fortify your resolve, until you can vanquish the mind's stubborn obsession with coarse pleasure and desire for things.

Otherwise, the mind scrambles distractedly after whatever attracts and lures it through the senses. Unable to resist, it becomes increasingly frantic and agitated.

The easy-going acceptance of whatever 'comes up' means that when it is desire that arises, you go overboard for it. This then becomes a habitual attitude of giving free rein to your desires, because the defilements now know your weak spot and will continually tempt and provoke you. It's like breaking an addiction to betel nut or cigarettes, or indulgence in meat eating.

Even though it's on a very coarse level such habits are still very difficult to break because craving constantly waits for its chance to tempt you. "Just a little bit," it invites, "it doesn't really matter... just a taste."

They entice like the bait on the hook, for as soon as the fish is bold enough to take one nibble, and then another, it's sure to be caught. So whenever we fall for a pleasant taste, the defilements are waiting to draw in the line while we struggle helplessly, impaled on the baited hook.

You must realize that the overcoming of the defilements isn't a trivial affair, but requires

steadfast practice. Weakness won't do, but you must also consider and gauge your strength in this battle because the defilements have the power of a demon, yet lie hidden deep within your personality. How can you harass them to force them out? In some cases, for instance, in breaking an addiction, you can have a full-blooded fight and complete victory without also killing yourself in the process. But an all out battle isn't always called for — especially in those deeper, more refined aspects that require a more subtle, gradual approach and need careful thinking out.

You must learn how steadily to undermine the defilements' roots so that they gradually weaken. When your base of mindfulness and wisdom is strong enough, you'll then be able to turn the tide against them. However, if you still find yourself outmaneuvered you'll need to carefully analyze the situation. Otherwise the defilements will frustrate your every effort, for when they decide they want something they'll brush mindfulness and wisdom aside and insist, "*I must have that! I won't listen to any objections!*" They really are that stubborn.

So this isn't a trifling matter. It's as if you are face to face with your enemy, confronted by a man-eater of a wild beast. What will you do?

This confrontation with the defilements needs very careful handling. If they should appear right before your eyes, are your mindfulness and wisdom sufficient to counter them? This is the horde of the enemy¹ come to offer battle, to burn and destroy. How should we handle them?

What stratagem can we use to overcome them right there and then? Confronted with bodily or mental pain or, worse still, with desired bodily or mental pleasure — what to do?

The pleasant feeling is a much more treacherous affliction because of its insidious ability to mislead us, without our even realizing it. But you can be sure that nobody is seduced by unpleasant feeling because it's just too painful!

So how can you find in this present, existing confrontation a means of disengaging yourself from both the pleasant and the unpleasant? It's not a matter of practicing and accepting the pleasant but rejecting the painful. It's not like that at all.

You must see through to both characteristics and realize that both pleasure and pain are impermanent and therefore unsatisfactory.

If you don't discern this, you will fall for the deception of craving that is only interested in pleasure, whether it's of the fleshly variety or whatever. In every posture isn't there always an obsession with finding pleasure?

By trying to lose yourself in pleasure with its multifarious forms — it doesn't matter what as long as it gives *only* pleasure — you'll fall unaware into the mire of suffering. You'll be stuck there because of a lack of investigation into impermanence, suffering and not-self.

You will be deceived into welcoming bodily and mental pleasure as beneficial, whereas on careful examination they are found to be suffering. By understanding all of this, you'll start really to comprehend the truth of impermanence.

When the mind no longer continually insists on pleasure, your suffering and anguish will lighten. Furthermore, you'll see that in reality there is no pleasure to grasp hold of anyway — but only suffering. Your grasping should, therefore, start to come under control.

When we have chanted the scriptures together, it has been about this: "*rupa, vedanaa, sanyaa...*" — "*form, feeling, perception... are all suffering*".

Yet you still fail to penetrate to the truth of this within yourself — which is made up of just these things.

Without a new perspective on true knowledge, you must fall into delusion, trying to attain pleasure, always pleasure. When, in fact, all you get is suffering. You shut your eyes and ears, and refuse to understand anything. If you really did understand, the mind would become much more peaceful, calming down from its wild chasings after nonexistent pleasures.

Craving is an initiative that startles and frantically agitates the mind. It arises from the desire for pleasure, so you will have to investigate to see that: such pleasure doesn't really exist; that the natural state is one of suffering; and that it isn't 'me' or 'mine'. You will need to analyze and differentiate. First, take the integrated body apart into its separate elements without allowing any of them to be seized on as being 'me' or 'mine'. Continually go over and over it in this way, until you realize its truth.

The same idea is contained in the *Recollection of Using the Requisites of Life* (which are robes, food, shelter, and medicine) that we chant together. If we don't analyze and understand this properly, then we must fall into the delusion of loving and pining after this body — "*it's me, it's mine!*" We repeatedly seize upon it without quite realizing what we're doing, even though Dhamma teaching is ready and waiting and complete. We may have tried in a cursory way to consider it all, yet only achieved a very vague understanding that tended to wander away into distraction.

Such investigation does not penetrate because the mind has no foundation and is not based in calm. The mind chases after and fabricates various agitating concerns, yet never catches anything of real importance. It's like a half-blind man seeing a blur and managing, as time flies by, just to snatch the odd idea or two.

Those who are unconcerned with pursuing Dhamma, who are indifferent about what is right and wrong, remain unquestioning and have no uncertainty or doubt. They are enveloped in the darkness of ignorance.

When you start to examine Dhamma, any points not yet fully understood must naturally arise as doubts or queries: "*What's this? How should I understand that? How can I dispose of this?*" These questions need to be taken up and worked at. If you don't, it plainly shows your lack of mindfulness and wisdom. However, a cursory investigation, picking it up and then leaving it unfinished, means you will never be able to penetrate to the root principles of practice. You'll know a little — and that's all.

With mindfulness and wisdom still underdeveloped and an exertion effort that's inadequate, you will lack the courage to penetrate into the Noble Truth.

Trying to estimate for oneself about what's right in one's practice may become self-deception, which will then make it impossible to overcome suffering. If you happen to understand something, don't go out and brag about it or else it will turn and befuddle you in many inextricable ways.

Wise people and sages have always been careful to press on with their investigations — even if they *really* have gained some insight — never getting stuck and satisfied with their present level of practice. They never boast about their

accomplishments, for that would surely be the mark of a fool.

The clever person constantly searches out the obstacles ahead, which are always more subtle than those already overcome. They never rest content with the present lucidity, but always want to penetrate further. With the defilements still burning and scorching one, how can one afford to stop to brag of such and such an achievement — even if it might be a genuine insight? Without a firm foundation, you'll always need to be careful and cautious about this.

In your investigations with mindfulness and wisdom, it's the danger of carelessness and heedlessness that takes on the greatest significance. Only when heedful can you reckon to keep abreast with your life's span, the term of which is always ebbing away. But what exactly is this heedfulness, this avoidance of negligence? This is the vital question. If you remain ignorant of it, however much tranquillity you may gain — by guarding the sense doors, for instance — will eventually falter and you're back with the old turmoil.

Be careful! The defilements will provoke and force you to speak and bray; they won't allow you to keep

your mouth closed and quiet. Without understanding the underlying intentions and basic situation, you will only deceive yourself and end up going the rounds, bragging of your past attainments: "I attained calm for so many years...".

It's a deceiving of both yourself and others. For, in reality, you are still in bondage to stupidity, following the dictates of the defilements within yourself, without even realizing it. Then, if anyone should offer praise, the ears prick up and you puff yourself out. Instead of explaining about suffering and the harm of the defilements that you have managed to understand, you just boast about yourself.

You can't just bumble foolishly along, for this *Way* demands the alertness of mindfulness and wisdom. After proper examination, you'll find there's nothing to be idly amused and preoccupied about and that both externally and internally it's all really just one great deception.

It's like being alone in mid-ocean with no island or shore in sight. Can you now afford just to sit back and relax, or make a temporary show of effort and then boast about it? Of course not!

When a person's investigation penetrates through to ever more subtle levels of mind, they will steadily become both calmer and more reserved as well. This is comparable to the increasing knowledge and mature circumspection of the child as it develops to become a teenager and then an adult.

Mindfulness and wisdom must be continually developed in this way, so that you can discern, in whatever arises, what is right or wrong, true or false. This will enable you to relinquish and let go of it all. Attaining to this true Dhamma practice will make your path through life smooth and even.

Otherwise, you'll fall into boasting of temporary success in techniques of tranquillity practice and eventually find yourself in even greater distress. This is where the defilements proliferate and one plunges headlong into their conflagration. You'll (cockily) elevate your head into a mass of internal fire!

Instead, use the torch of mindfulness and wisdom to neutralize and extinguish the blaze of the defilements that sears your mind. Do so with an increasing faith in your own efforts

Don't allow the defilements a chance to insinuate their 'command post' with its various stratagems. You must be alert and equal to them. Be circumspect

— don't fall for them! Whatever rationale they come up with can only succeed when your mindfulness and wisdom are deficient. The defilements lead you away by the nose, openly scorching you with their fire, yet you are still able to open your mouth to brag and boast! Turn and inspect this in yourself. Check every aspect, because right and wrong, truth and falsity, are all within. It's not a matter of external observations. Any external damage is nothing compared to the internal hurt from the defilements' blaze.

When '*I myself*' raises its head, if you are not wholeheartedly committed to Dhamma practice, there's no way you can overcome suffering. A little knowledge, a little renunciation, can't get to the root problem that lies buried deep down. This must be dug out. It's not just a matter of resting easy after some temporary and superficial success.

This won't do because the defilements lie deep in the basis of personality, which can only be searched out with the delicate but thorough examination of mindfulness and wisdom. Otherwise, if you stay on the coarse level, you can practice until your body lies rotting in its coffin, but it won't have affected the basic personality problem.

Anyone with a careful and scrupulous manner of practice is able to see their own deficiencies and faults of character. They will need to control and overturn pride in all its aspects, not allowing it to act big, to become inflated. However, the actual elimination of this disease isn't so easy. For those who haven't persevered with a rigorous enough self-inspection, the process may actually only increase their conceit, their bragging and 'teaching'.

Yet should they turn within and discern the conceit and deceit of *self*, a profound feeling of weariness and sadness will arise. One will pity oneself for the stupidity of such self-deception. So you must set yourself to battle on. However much pain, however many tears — persevere! Don't be only concerned with pleasure seeking.

Determine that, "*Come what may, I will keep on with my striving, with my practice of chastity, throughout this life.*"

Don't grumble about the first small difficulty, and say, "*It's a waste of time. I'm quite content with giving in to the defilements.*" And then quit the task. You must take just the opposite stance. When temptations and provocations to 'grab this or take a lot of that' arise — just don't indulge, don't take!

However marvelous it seems, give a firm refusal, "*I don't want it.*" This is the only way to withstand the snares and deceptions of the defilements. They scare and trick in every manner of ways, so that even if you get wise to one stratagem, they simply change to another, and another...

Acknowledge the situation:

"I have been continually and variously deceived by the wiles of the defilements, and I'm still ignorant of the truth inside myself. Other people may fool me a little but the defilements do so all the time. I fall for them and follow them the whole way. My trust in the Lord Buddha is nothing compared to my belief in these defilements. I'm a disciple of the demons of desire, passively allowing myself to be led ever deeper into their jungle wilderness."

If you can't see this for yourself then you really are out there, lost and being burned alive among the corpses of that jungle charnel ground. There, the demons forever spit and roast you with desires and every form of distress.

Though you may have come to stay in a place void of distractions, these demons are still at work, persuading, tempting and trying to draw you away.

Just notice how the saliva flows when you come across any delicious object.

So you must make the decision to be either a warrior or a victim, and in your practice to struggle to overcome this horde of defilements and desires. Be always on your guard, no matter which way they enter, to seduce and deceive you. Nobody else can come in to lead you away, but the demons of your own desires can and do so with relish.

You must break this bondage through scrupulous attention and examination of yourself and thereby attain freedom. Strenuously develop your mindfulness and wisdom, gaining insight and letting go of everything, until all of your suffering is extinguished.

Notes

1. *Maara*

2. *"ruupa, vedanaa, sanyaa..."*

5. Overcoming Suffering - 21st November, B.E. 2513 (1970)

Today, I wish to comment on the principles of Dhamma practice, because when applied properly they steadily offer insight into the truth and falseness within oneself. This is valued highly because all of

us must come to see in ourselves the (Four) Truths of Suffering, its Origin, its Cessation, and the Way Leading to its Cessation.

Whoever remains totally ignorant of this falls into the suffering of the world. Even though they may reside in a monastery they won't gain any benefit from their vocation. It's the same for those who live at home: all they possess there are precepts, because lack of true understanding means their practice will tend to wander away towards worldly pleasures and, finally, suffering.

The practice of investigation must continue until one comprehends suffering and its origin, the power base of defilements in the mind. The steady elimination of these defilements is truly the Supreme Way. Those who don't practice at all are left behind, blind and ignorant in the midst of defilements. They are led unaware into suffering and, unless they find Dhamma and the way of practice, they are doomed to birth and death, making *kamma* for their next round of suffering.

When you catch sight — through your practice — of what suffering is really about, you will strive to overcome it and never again be heedless of the danger. This means a constant struggle for victory,

always cutting away at your faults until arriving at the more subtle aspects of suffering, craving and defilement.

A deep probing and a delicate examination are required, while a mere superficial inspection proves inadequate. Therefore, the mind must be firmly established with mindfulness and focused inwards without any outside distractions. When you do turn within, you will be able to see the truth of suffering and its origin, craving and the defilements. You will then know their features and traits, and be able to destroy them.

Truly speaking, Dhamma practice is only concerned with one thing: it all comes down to suffering and its origin. This is the central, pivotal point in human life, and even all the animals are in this same predicament. Ignorance and *wrong view* insinuate a propensity to grab and consume every sort of thing, but *right view* will clearly reveal the truth of suffering and its origin.

You can also think of it in terms of *fixing attention on seeing the truth, for without fixing on suffering you can only remain ignorant*. The unsecured mind will always tend to drift away, following and becoming absorbed in emotional objects.

Therefore, when you try to focus attention on Dhamma, the mind — which has been habitually allowed to wander away — may well resist and struggle.

You must then rely on repeated effort to secure the mind until you realize the way to tame it and bring it back under constant control. It then becomes easier because the mind no longer tends towards distraction. However stubborn a problem it may have appeared at first to be, it can now always be tamed and brought back to calm.

But never underestimate the strength of the defilements. Should the mind prove intractable, you must apply maximum effort to seek out the reasons why it won't calm down. A halfhearted approach won't succeed, for it needs a 'fight to the death' attitude. If your only concern is for pleasure and comfort, then be assured you will never gain release from the domination of the defilements.

The mastery of the defilements envelops the whole of the basic personality structure, making it formidably hard for anyone to find out the truth about themselves.

A mere smattering of knowledge certainly won't stop you from going astray. You'll thereby abandon the

quest and involve yourself in various excursions, without recognizing the vital importance of Dhamma practice. You'll no longer bother to be strict and vigorous in the Dhamma work, but instead will absorb yourself in grabbing things under the defilement's direction. By weakly groping along like this, the clear seeing of suffering is made all the more difficult by allowing the mind to abscond. It is concerned only with swallowing the defilement's bait. When the defilements announce their slight discomfort, you will quickly pander to them and take the lure. You neither appreciate the power and mastery of craving, as it swerves away after sights, tastes, smells and sounds, nor the resulting harm of such obsessions.

This ceaseless activity means you will never be able to bring the mind to stillness. It leaves one squarely sunk in suffering even though you may try to shut your eyes to it all.

But through Dhamma practice one gradually realizes one's situation, and this conveys a steady easing of the suffering — as long as you aren't heedless. Whereas before you were always defeated and burned, now you prevail by turning the flame of mindfulness and wisdom back onto the defilements.

So abandon your delinquent and heedless ways, and realize for yourself the benefits of Dhamma. When you take Dhamma to heart, it will keep the practice progressing, whereas inadequate effort will only reap you more and more misery. Resolve to practice until your final breath!

Don't be feeble and easily led astray. Those with mindfulness and wisdom will understand this advice, but those deficient and unpracticed will instead swallow the defilement's lures. Rather than surmounting suffering, their practice will then regress to its former state. Their attempt at skillfulness will mutate — through delusion — to become suffering and un-skillfulness. They will criticize Dhamma practice as being futile and bad. If such a person submits to the defilements, Dhamma practice becomes impossible.

The practice of Dhamma involves great struggle and endurance. It's comparable to rowing against the current, for one needs great exertion to succeed. Going counter to the defilements is just as demanding, for they're always waiting their chance to drag one down to a lower level. If you aren't alert and don't utilize the Lord Buddha's Dhamma in examining yourself, your strength will fail.

This is because mindfulness and wisdom remain weak and vacillating, especially when compared to the strength of the defilements. If you go over and combine with these tempters and agitators, you will be led wildly astray into turbulent obsessions.

Dhamma practice is, then, a going against the current of suffering — because *suffering* is the crux of the problem. This is where you must focus your practice, because it's only by actually seeing suffering that you will be drawn to discover its root source.

Wisdom will then be able to track down exactly where suffering springs from. For those with mindfulness and wisdom the arising of suffering is taken as the ideal opportunity to search out its original source — to be able cut it off there. Such investigation proceeds on many levels, from the coarse to the refined. It therefore also requires consultation and advice, so that you won't stumble. Otherwise you might fancy that you can figure it all out in your head. And that won't do at all.

There are many principles of Dhamma that the Lord Buddha left for our examination. However, it's not mandatory to learn about every one of them. Taking up just some of the more important schemes, such as

the five *aggregates*1 or *name-and-form*,2 will be of much value. However, it does require a rigorous all-round examination, not just an occasional probe. This will lead to the arising of a feeling of weariness with the worldly situation, so that the shackles of lust are loosened.

Alertly guarding the sense-doors with tight supervision will enable mindfulness to outdo any lapses into negligence. Whether talking, acting or thinking, be aware of whatever leads you into error. This persistent sustaining of mindfulness must continue with resolution, for it is the way to end your suffering.

Mindfulness and wisdom stay retarded because the concern and interest in you are still not sensitive and subtle enough. The more refined and circumspect you become, the more mindfulness and wisdom are strengthened. So the Lord Buddha said: "*Develop yourselves fully. Make mindfulness strong in the mind.*"3

The development of your practice through daily tasks follows on from the examination and control of the mind. This will become evident in its accomplishments and benefits, whether great or

small. Increase your effort and don't be so easily disheartened.

Don't forfeit such a golden opportunity, for your life is steadily dwindling and ebbing away.

The development of mindfulness and wisdom leads on to Dhamma maturity. However, if your defilements are gross and your wisdom coarse, you will have to take extra special care when you arrive at old age — and that eventually comes to us all. So grasp this present moment to develop the *faculties*⁴ of faith, energy, mindfulness, samadhi and wisdom; all in balance together.

Keep up a steadfast scrutiny and investigation and you'll find that the temptations of the world have lost their appeal. When you can see them as poisoned bait, the longing for worldly gains will cease. Dhamma then becomes the refuge and beacon of your life.

With this assurance in yourself, you can only stride forward without any slipping back, while any uncertainty about the merit of Dhamma practice will make you waver and turn astray. So be very careful that you aren't pulled away towards the chasm and pit of fire.

If you can't free yourself you will be tugged at from every direction, because the basic game plan is the tendency to be dragged down. But for those who are more circumspect and have enough mindfulness and wisdom to discern suffering, there's no more falling away and no more worldly hardships to endure.

You will then, feel a weariness and distaste an aversion for lust, and the temptations of the world will lose their color and attractiveness.

Your Dhamma practice will shake off whatever misled you into grasping at alluring objects. You will recognize that death may come soon — it isn't so very far away — and then there'll be no concern for owning or supervising worldly treasures, however vast.

With such realization, a great *disenchantment* and coolness towards worldly pleasures will arise, and they will lose all their luster.

They will no longer be cherished and esteemed; however, whenever required for Dhamma the disenchantments may still be of use. Your ardour cools down. After all, even this body that is perceived as 'me' and 'mine' is steadily wearing out and falling apart.

Defilement and desire stand ready with their troublemaking for any lapse into careless abandon. They then stab and punch through with the suffering involved in *name-and-form* and the five aggregates. When your investigation really penetrates, the gross external concerns about good and bad people or things are all swept away. Your attention is then wholly fixed on insight to destroy this *eminent self*, this conceit of self. *External affairs fade in importance because the vital concern is the penetration to lucidity within, where the bright light arises.*

This bright clarity of insight isn't the same as common or ordinary light. You must know it for yourself, otherwise it evades description. Mindfulness and wisdom will cleanse the mind: ejecting, renouncing, eliminating and liberating according to their ability. Any lack of mindfulness and wisdom, with its scrutiny and renunciation, leaves one surrounded by internal darkness — a gloom permeated with fire.

The defilements conceal their poisonous fuel so that the internal fires always blaze fiercely — what can be more terrifying than this? Even though this

conflagration may lack actual substance, as soon as there is contact with objects it flares up in the mind. The bombs dropped on people are nothing compared to the three bombs of lust, hatred and delusion. These are perpetually tearing the mind apart, whereas an air raid brings death in just the one lifetime.

But until there is practice of Dhamma you won't be able to comprehend the gravity of the situation, which is like a slow roasting of the mind by the defilements whenever there is (sense-) contact. To catch sight of the defilement's cunning agility, so that one can destroy them, requires proper tools and careful attention to avoid heedlessness.

Those who stay and practice here without the concerns and involvements of the world will find they can progress relatively quickly. Depending on the proficiency of mindfulness and wisdom, they will be able to refine their investigation and reduce suffering.

Each one of you will know for yourself the extent to which a life dedicated to Dhamma practice is advancing towards the end of suffering. People who can never find any free time to come and rest here, and those who come but don't truly leave their

worldly concerns behind, will be lost in a fog of diversions and preoccupations.

They often like to claim: *"It doesn't matter where you practice. One can practice anywhere."* This is really just hot air. In actual fact their practice is stuck in the groove of the worldly defilements. Yet they still manage to brag about being able to practice *"anywhere at all"*. One might remark that their mind and mouth are out of alignment. Their mind, though seething under the attack and heat of defilements and craving, isn't aware of their predicament. It's as if something lives in filth and prefers to exist and die in that filth.

Those people whose mindfulness and wisdom remain quite coarse will quite happily play about in the mire of their sullied minds. Those with a more mature and penetrating mindfulness and wisdom, will feel disgust at such filth. As one's insight grows, so this feeling of revulsion deepens and intensifies. One then sees the danger in preoccupations, delusions and desire, because they're entirely concerned with suffering.

One sees that it's all a matter of impermanence, suffering and not-self. Then the questions: *"What do I want from life? What was I born for?"* arise. Those

who are ignorant answer: "My life is for acquiring money and things to get rich." But that sort of life is the same as falling into hell! Anyone who understands the Dhamma of the Lord Buddha, realizes that there's absolutely nothing that is worth wishing for, or concerning oneself with. Everything ought to be relinquished and released.

Those who are still attached to the five aggregates, thinking, they are my 'self,' must investigate to see that each of them in actuality embraces and feeds the fires of suffering.

Alternatively, in a more condensed format, they should realize that *name-and-form* is suffering, or, even more broadly, that body and mind are suffering. When you can see all of this from the coarse to the subtle level, you will be able to rise above pleasure and pain, for both are then given up. However, without a full understanding *you will still yearn for pleasure, and the more you desire the more you will suffer.*

This also applies to any attachment based in the peace and happiness arising from tranquillity-meditation. This also becomes almost like an addiction. One craves and must consume the narcotic that, one considers, is able to bring one

pleasure. Insight into the nature of the continual craving and its concomitant suffering never occurs to the addict. They want and they get the drug, and think themselves very happy and contented!

The feature that continually foils the addicts' bid to break their habits, is that after taking the drug they feel momentarily content.

Thus it is with sensual desire also: it is sated only for a while to flare up again when the briefly assuaged appetite returns. People think that the gratification of an intense longing brings even greater pleasure, without realizing the inherent danger and suffering it involves later.

Such is the state of those with weak wisdom and gross defilements. They don't see the turmoil of desire as suffering, and instead of extinguishing it, they try to allay it by taking poison. This poison is the pandering to the craving so that it's briefly gratified, and, then having to do it again, and again, and again, until one is stupefied and deluded.

A person with mindfulness and wisdom focuses on the question: "*Why must I repeatedly indulge my desires?*" They realize that it's the craving itself that must be attacked, because by overcoming this one element, they will not only escape the frantic effort

to satisfy the craving, but will also do away with future desire. This is the way that enables one to transcend suffering. However, the obsession with the pleasure taken in consuming things makes the disowning of such desire an arduous task.

All one knows about is how to feed on the bait and this makes one afraid to forgo and then stop. It's the dread of the addict not getting his drug, or, on another level, meat-eaters not being able to give up their attachment to tastes. It's all a matter of being a slave to desire.

If you can't overcome such gross cravings, how can you ever deal with the much more subtle longings rotting within yourself? With just a little temptation and persuasion, off you go, swallowing the coarsest of baits, fussily arranging it to suit and satisfy.

You'll notice neither your exhaustion nor comprehend that the source of all the terrible suffering that deludes and dominates all woeful creatures in the world is found right here within this process of craving. Even though the Lord Buddha's Teaching sets out the most appropriate way to investigate and meditate to get to the root of all this, you ignore it and continue to swallow the bait.

Staying immersed in pleasure, you can only apply yourself to follow defilements and desire.

Our practice here is concerned with going against the current of craving and the deviating mind. It means a multi-faceted supervision together with restraint regarding any sense-contacts — sight, sound, smell or taste, for example.

Such contacts arise to lure and obsess one into liking some object and then, swiftly tiring of it, racing frantically after something else. Continuing on in this way can only lead to complete agitation.

The malignancies in the mind are many, and if you don't know how to curb and eliminate them, you can't help but fall under their menacing power. Those who have seen the nature of suffering will make it a life and death struggle.

Just as the Lord Buddha did, when he was prepared to give his life to overcome suffering. Don't think it's something that can be done with ease and leisure. In each of his lives the *future-Buddha*5 had to endure hardship and suffering to help himself and others. We too must be willing to sacrifice all possessions and wealth, however great.

It just can't be done in comfort. Dhamma practice is a battle and struggle, and whoever endures and

perseveres will gain success and peerless victory. This supreme victory means that any problem can be examined and then resolved. So please keep on trying.

It's not a matter of gaining some limited success and then turning away to something else for after every successful encounter mindfulness and wisdom will be strengthened.

So you must be on your guard and inspect whatever arises through the sense doors — the eyes, ears, nose, tongue, body and mind.

With application, your mindfulness will become sharper and more penetrating, and you will start to understand about releasing and extinguishing. It's similar to grasping a live, glowing coal and perceiving its heat — and therefore quickly releasing it. Dhamma practice is of supreme worth, but victory over the might of the defilements is arduous and shouldn't be underestimated.

Therefore, strenuously apply yourself to reinforcing mindfulness and wisdom, and the defilements will, correspondingly, lose their potency. This is called progress in Dhamma, because it's the quenching of the suffering within. So while you still have life and strength, apply it all to this task.

The Lord Buddha declared: "*Whatever is still unclear, make it clear; whatever is not penetrated, pierce it through; whatever is not complete, finish it off*".

So don't be feeble and vacillating, always making excuses. The leaving-home for 'ordination' is also considered a sacrifice. In the Lord Buddha's time, people from every level of the householder's life — royalty, the very wealthy, the middle class, ordinary citizens — went forth, cutting themselves off from home and family and entering the Lord Buddha's clan, with no return.

He said that *the falling-back into the former, petty life was bad*. The Lord Buddha's only concern was earnestly to pull people out of suffering. So if we want to escape, we must follow his example, cutting away worry and concern for former relatives by entering the lineage of the Lord Buddha. This life and practice under the Lord Buddha's discipline is truly the supreme way and refuge.

Those who follow the principles and discipline of Dhamma will pledge their life to the Buddha, Dhamma and Sangha. Even those who have only managed an occasional taste of its resulting peace,

without penetrating to the whole truth, will make their commitment.

They realize that there is no alternative way that leads to freedom from suffering. When their mindfulness and wisdom become more penetrating, they will see that on this shore there is only anguish, with a never-ending circle of birth and death. They, then, become determined to cross to the farther shore, making unceasing effort to renounce *self*.

There is nothing mysterious about this 'crossing over to the farther shore'. But, first, you must give up the view of self in the five aggregates, by investigating to see them all as suffering — and that none of them are 'me' or 'mine'.

Focus on *not grasping or holding*.

The Lord Buddha once spoke of the past as below, the future as above, and the present as in the middle. He also said that un-skillfulness was below, skillfulness was above and *neutrality*6 was in the middle.

Regarding each of these characteristics he said: "*Don't grasp them!*" You should not even grasp at what you think is Nibbana, the farther shore. Consider the scope of the true realization of non-attachment concerning any object. Those of you who

can't fathom why even Nibbana isn't to be grasped at, must reflect on this: *Nothing must be either grasped or held*. This is set down as a Dhamma principle and is really the perfect summary of them all.

'Determined things' and 'non-determined things' submit to '*all things are not-self*'.⁷ They should not be grasped and held. This summarizes the whole matter, including the investigation to see the Dhamma Truth in both the world and in the Teaching. One's mindfulness and wisdom need to see through the world, penetrating from *determined* things to the *non-determined*, from the worldly to the world-transcending. Yet this is all concerned with what's inside oneself, and not with anything external.

This insight into the essence of Dhamma requires a deep and profound understanding. Then, it's just a matter of releasing and letting go. The dictum: '*Don't grasp*', will suffice throughout your practice, from beginning to end. By not holding to 'me' or 'mine', it can be said that you are truly following the Lord Buddha's Way, and will eventually win through to the complete cessation of all suffering. Then mindfulness and wisdom will penetrate

throughout, without attachment to matter, feeling, perception, conditions and consciousness.

The Lord Buddha explained about ignorance, about delusion concerning *form*, about *craving* that arises in the mind making it agitated, and about *kamma*, the action that seeks to obtain what is desired. When you perceive this, your practice will be correctly aimed at eliminating desire and understanding yourself in both body and mind.

This needs a repeated examination for one to stop the concern and obsession with external things. The deeper your understanding the more pathetic such desires will appear. They are simply not worth the total absorption they demand. Such exuberant distractions originated in ignorance, resulting in a continued craving about people or involvements in the myriad things.

Your talk becomes pervaded with worldly concerns: "this is good, that is bad; she is good, he is bad." In such a condition, you won't be able to see either the affliction of desire or the defilements within yourself.

The Lord Buddha resolved *Mogharaja's Problem*,⁸ by advising him to see the world as empty, as not-self, as being composed of elements and aggregates.

The aggregates (and so on) must be stripped away, and concepts and assumptions such as 'person' or 'animal' (and so on) must be disestablished. The elements, aggregates, sense bases and concepts all need to be exposed so that there's no more grasping at them.

What remains is the Deathless Dhamma. This is without birth or death, and is also called the World-Transcending Dhamma or *Nibbaana*.

There are many names, but they all essentially refer to the same thing. When mundane things are spurned, the result is the Transcendent Dhamma, the Non-Determined Dhamma, Pure Dhamma.

Just consider the running-on, the coursing-on from birth to death, from death to birth in the different realms of existence. Then decide if Nibbana is really worth attaining. On that farther shore, there's no suffering, no birth or death, because the 'King of Death' can't reach there. Yet because we can't fathom this, we persist in repeatedly choosing to be born on this nether shore, amidst endless suffering.

With true understanding about suffering, your course will become firmly set straight for the farther shore, where all desires and defilements are extinguished. Insight allows the penetration to see the common

characteristics of impermanence, suffering and not-self in the aggregates. Those with mindfulness and wisdom must concentrate on annihilating the defilements, for should its 'germ' remain, it will lead to renewed suffering.

Therefore, steadily investigate, release and eliminate — this is certainly the right way to proceed. But do you care about any of this? It's not as if there's some mystery involved; every one of you, whether woman or man, can come to accomplish it. So develop yourselves through right moral behavior, through calming and stabilizing the mind, and through mindfulness and wisdom. Then you will realize its true worth.

The stupid person enjoys dismissing Dhamma with: "*Why should I bother?*" Such a person can neither safeguard precepts, nor bring the mind to calm, and they turn away from that greatest of all tasks, the resolute striving to end suffering. It is these people who are crazily rushing around, snatching and consuming, competing together until they all lie rotting in their coffins. Exactly where is the value in any of this?

We've gone astray for far too long already, our lives almost spent after spanning the years. It doesn't

matter which generation you come from. The air you breathe isn't just for your convenience and comfort, but for you to learn about suffering and the way to extinguish your suffering. Don't imagine that your family and relatives are anything fundamental — you are alone. You came alone and you'll go alone. It's the same for all of us. Only when there isn't any *self* to go, is Dhamma-insight achievable. If there is still a *self* to be born, then you are stuck in the orbit of suffering. So it's up to each one of you to investigate for a way of escape.

Those who trust in the Lord Buddha will have to go the same Dhamma way. Those who would rather count on the demons and defilements will thrust themselves down into the mire. They may then try to bully and be assertive, but their only gain will be more suffering.

True understanding on the other hand, leads to a profound weariness and a loosening of the bonds of lust. However, if people appear to understand while still going out following-after desires, then they truly are disciples of the demons. They declare a weariness and fatigue with it all, but really their mind isn't at all tired and still finds it very attractive. It still wants to get, to have, to possess.

Yet insight may still arise through self-inspection of mind, and, then, the stupidity and delusion will start to diminish. They will come to their senses, from misguided delusions, and will realize the foolishness of self-praise and conceit. This is the way to steadily rid oneself of such folly.

Your investigations must always be directed within, as self-inspection steadily becomes increasingly subtle and penetrating, your investigations must always be directed within. It's not concerned with expert knowledge in external affairs, but with the seeing within yourself of all that's impermanent, suffering and not-self.

Ignorance stands as the source of any misguided attraction, but you may have already closed your eyes and ears, and even tried to show off your presumed knowledge. You won't be able to blame anyone else either, for you'll see that it's all due to your own foolishness.

This means that you must strive to clear up such backwardness before you die. Don't waste your breath in gratifying desires, to get, to be and generally to make merry. For this is being possessed by the demons of the defilements, with their multifarious mania to procure and become great and

famous. Focusing clearly on this conceit will subdue it, and it will then withdraw until its death, as you start to realize that 'more conceit means more suffering.'

When a developed practice spins fully within yourself, you will be able, steadily, to clean out the defilements and find your reward in the emptied mind.

But if you continue to connive with the conceits, they will sweep away any Dhamma virtue you may have. Then, only the demons will keep you company; for it's only when they are all driven out that their antithesis, the virtuous ones, will enter in. Turmoil and unrest are the manifestations of your possession by demons, while freedom, serenity and peace demonstrate your fellowship with what is virtuous.

Will all of you please go and check how many of these demons have been driven out? Is the situation improving?

When they show their faces, point your finger at them and accuse them of being demons and devils, [who have] come to eat your heart and drink your blood. Previously you've allowed them in, but now you can stop them and reduce your suffering.

The former bloated self shrivels, as the demons lose their powers. Conceit of self withers away. It's comparable to administering anti-toxin to someone bitten by a rabid dog, for by fixing one's attention back onto the disease one thereby eliminates it.

The mind is then undisturbed and at peace, because the dictum, 'Don't grasp or hold anything', has been followed to the final cessation of suffering.

Notes

1. *khandha*

2. *naama-ruupa*

3. "*Bhaavita bahuliikataa.*"

4. *indriya*

5. *Bodhisatta*

6. *abyaakata*

7. '*sabbe dhammaa anattaa.*'

8. *Solasapanyha Sutta*, the series of 'Sixteen Questions

6. Training for Liberation

28th November, B.E. 2513 (1970)

Those who practice Dhamma by developing mindfulness and wisdom will come truly to understand the way to extinguish suffering.

If they should ever lapse into heedlessness and grasp on to something, their steady training in controlling the mind will quickly notice and check the situation. This, in itself, is of great benefit. The important point about defilements and suffering is that they lie deep down in the personality structure; thus one must probe and examine within oneself.

We are all intimately acquainted with observing external things and should realize that they bring unrest and they clutter the mind. We must therefore aim to achieve a condition of mind characterized by centeredness, and a stability of mindfulness. You should notice in yourself the extent of the mind's restraint under various circumstances and whether mindfulness is sustained in every posture.

How should we handle the mind as it loses its balance through its habitual tendency to allow thoughts to proliferate out of control? How can we bring it back under control? You must realize that the mind without calm is full of endless imaginings and thought fabrications.

It is all aimed at acquiring and obtaining, and that this is suffering.

You must continually examine within yourself to see that such things are all impermanent, subject to

change, to arising and ceasing, and are suffering. This must be seen clearly and distinctly.

When we understand this arising and ceasing — by turning to examine such conditions inside oneself — we will realize that it's neither something good nor bad. It is just a natural process of arising, persisting and ceasing.

Try to penetrate and see this. The regular cleansing of the mind will show up any impurity, like dirt in an otherwise tidy room. Each moment you should clean out any attachment. Whatever should arise, persist and then cease — don't grasp and hold onto it! Take this principle of '*not wanting, not grasping*' deeply to heart, for then the mind will be undisturbed and free. This is such a worthwhile realization.

It doesn't involve extensive knowledge — we just penetrate to see the impermanence in form, feeling, perception, conditions and consciousness.

Alternatively, you can examine the continually changing emotions within yourself, as they arise and cease. Even if you don't go astray by chasing after these moods, perceptions and notions, you should still carefully stabilize the mind so that it doesn't grasp after anything — including any memory or

thought which may arise. Just concentrate on doing this and you will sweep clean the mind, wiping out whatever suffering is present.

Every condition arises and then ceases, comes and disappears. Don't go and grasp hold of anything, thinking it's good or bad, or taking it as *oneself*. Stop all such thinking and conceptualizing.

When you understand this, the mind will calm down of itself; it will naturally become free. Whatever thoughts arise, see that they just come and will go, so don't grasp at them. Then there's not much else to do. Just carefully scrutinize and detach yourself from any entanglements within.

There are then no fantasies and thought fabrications about the past or future. They've all stopped. Things arise and cease — just that.

When you truly penetrate to see the present, with its arisings and ceasings, it's really no great affair at all. Whatever one thinks about will naturally come to a close. But if you can't foresee its cessation, then whatever comes up will be grasped and held, plunging you into turmoil and continuing thought proliferations.

You must stop this stream of conceivings and imaginings. Cut it off! Secure mindfulness and fix

your total attention on the mind, and the chain of thought and fantasy — which had become an obsession — can be broken and stopped.

You can do this at any time, and the mind will always release its hold and become still and free. This must, then, be guarded as the *normal* [wholesome] state of mind by repeatedly keeping the thought proliferations in check.

Whenever they run out of control you must be aware of the situation and stop them. You should practice like this until you become skilled, until the mind is no longer stuck in its obsessions.

Take the driver of a motor car as a model. Whenever he or she wants to stop, the brakes can immediately be applied. It's the same with the runaway mind, for when mindfulness is in attendance it will brake at once.

Whatever the situation, with mindfulness firmly established, you will be able to stop, disengage and free the mind. This is by far the quickest and easiest way to deal with any circumstance that may arise. Any other way is not quick enough to cope. This method of self- reflection and self-knowledge is very worthwhile, because anyone can apply it at any time. Even right here where there is speaking and

listening, always bring the mind back to its *normal* state.

Before we knew anything about all this, we allowed the mind to go chasing after concerns and fantasies, spinning a web to trap ourselves in all kinds of difficulties. Whatever meditation technique we tried wasn't really able to stop the confused dreaming. Don't underestimate *this* method because of its apparent simplicity.

Please train yourself to become skillful in its application to combat any emotion that may intrude or any opinion that may interject itself. *When such opinions and conceits issue forth, cry: "Halt! First stop and listen to what I have to say."* But the *self* and such conceits will immediately counter with their own arguments, even before you've finished telling them.

This is similar to suddenly encountering a wild animal, such as a tiger or poisonous snake. Lacking any escape route, you will have to stop and radiate *loving-kindness*.1

Likewise, this will be able to quench the defilements and the *self*, which is ever ready to emerge and show its face. You must be able to hold back the defilements; otherwise, they will vastly expand their

power. By enduring and holding them back you will allow mindfulness time to adapt to the situation. Then, if a halt is called, it will be able to stop it all immediately, without any resistance.

If you sit in meditation for one hour, it must be in order to know the state of the mind with mindfulness, not just for pleasure-seeking. By realizing the mind's condition you can make it firmly established; and, then, you will lose interest in pleasant feelings or desires.

Even if painful feeling should arise, don't commit your attention to it. Keep mindfulness constantly established, not allowing the mind to swerve away dependent on what pleases or displeases. Detach yourself from everything; for it's all just suffering involved with the aggregates, which are all impermanent. Feeling is impermanent; the body is impermanent. That's the way it is.

Craving is characterized by wanting pleasure: by feeling fully satisfied in any pleasurable feeling that arises; by abandoning oneself to entrancement with that pleasure; and by wanting that pleasure to last as long as possible.

But what about the suffering and pain that stand opposed to it? If one sits a long time the body

becomes stiff and painful, and the mind becomes agitated as the craving insists one change position. It suggests one should do this or that, but instead you must train yourself to become detached and see it as merely the suffering involved in the aggregates. Then the mind's agitation and anxiety will be allayed.

If this can't be fully achieved, never mind, just make sure there's no struggle to change the situation. You must restrain and extinguish the desire and agitation. If the mind is still very agitated and frantic, don't change your posture even if it is extremely painful. Wait and calmly observe the extent of the pain and catch the right moment to change positions. Carefully straighten out your leg, with the mind remaining firmly concentrated and unattached. This may last for five minutes, after which the pain should have subsided.

However, you should remain in complete control of the mind so that one's centeredness is not disturbed by attraction towards the pleasant feeling that has replaced the pain.

This control needs to be established in all postures, and especially when pleasant feeling arises because

there will, then, be a tendency to become entranced by it.

Even the feeling of equanimity — when there's neither pain nor pleasure — can be entrancing, so mindfulness must always be in attendance. You should realize that, in truth, feeling is impermanent and suffering. There's really no happiness involved at all.

You will need to examine to see both pleasant and unpleasant feeling in the same light. This should be repeated until you are no longer enamoured with pleasant feeling. Otherwise, it will lead to great suffering because craving wants only unalloyed pleasure, which simply does not exist in this world of suffering.

If the mind can go beyond pleasure, pain and feeling, then it is truly going the transcendent way.

But please understand right here that if you haven't truly transcended feeling, there will still be desire for pleasure, and therefore grasping and holding onto suffering.

So this is something you must check out, should you consider yourself detached from all feeling.

You should thoroughly train yourself to deal with the feeling that arises from bodily pain.

However, the pleasant feeling, stemming from the subtle form of sensual desire, isn't so easily understood and you may then (mis-)take it for happiness. You will want to obtain happiness and this is where craving comes in. It's, therefore, always taught that wanting and lust must be abandoned and given-up.

Lust here means *wanting only pleasure*. Satisfaction in lust or dissatisfaction in lust indicate that the mind is helplessly entangled in the tastes of both bodily and mental feeling.

Sometimes, bodily feeling can manifest as great pain and anguish, and mindfulness should be used to find relief through stopping and detaching from the mind's frantic struggling. Then, even though the body is upset, the mind doesn't follow after it. However, this needs to be practiced first under moderate conditions before the situation becomes critical.

If you eagerly gather-up the sensations stemming from the defilements, your load of suffering will increase more and more. To think [imagine] that it's all very comfortable and trouble-free is falling into enchantment with feeling. Don't do it!

You must carefully follow through with every type of feeling to see it all as impermanent, suffering and not-self. If you can disengage from feeling you will become totally disenchanted with the pleasant feeling involved in the five aggregates. When you don't investigate and aren't circumspect enough, you will fall into desire and pining; just notice whether the mind is free or not.

The mind entangled and satiated in its desires is obviously dirty and sullied. This occurs because the mind deludedly grasps after things, which brings struggle and extreme agitation. If the mind is still attached to feeling — [whether pleasant, unpleasant or neither pleasant nor unpleasant] — it must endure suffering.

You should investigate to see impermanence, suffering and not-self in both body and mind, and not grasp or hold onto anything. Whether looking out or in, you will then not be attached to anything and realize that this is, indeed, freedom.

The deeper you penetrate, the more you will realize that non-attachment is the overcoming of suffering. This is the easiest way to end suffering, but if you don't properly understand, it really is the hardest way. It is, therefore, imperative to train and

investigate so that you can detach yourself and gain true release from the mind and its grasping. Then, when you command the mind to stop and detach, to release and be free, it truly does find freedom.

This way of knowing the mind is of the greatest value, yet we never seem concerned enough to be as resourceful as possible in ridding ourselves of suffering. With such a relaxed and intermittent effort you will never understand exactly where and how to remedy, to eliminate and relinquish.

You will whirl around with attachments and suffering. You must know how to find your way to the end of suffering and not just sit back, taking it easy. Look around and use mindfulness and wisdom as the means to free yourself from such conceits as 'me' and 'mine' and from all attachments.

If you are lacking in mindfulness and wisdom you will never be able to extinguish suffering, for each and every defilement is stubborn and difficult to overcome.

You need to understand how each of the *sixteen defilements*² arises; although they won't all arise simultaneously. By seeing the characteristics of their birth [cause] you will then be able to detach yourself from them. Initially, you must clearly recognize

them all as being ‘hot and bothersome.’ When one is discontented this is relatively easy, but when one is happy and contented it’s much more difficult. You have to find the *normal* state of mind, body and speech.

Normal here means being disinterested and impartial, and involves the keeping of pure *precepts*. In guarding the sense doors this *normality*³ becomes an important indicator of failed vigilance when, for example, one is being attracted or repelled by an object that contacts the senses. If you become careless and indulge in desire, then it’s no longer just a small lapse but a very damaging failure that stains one’s precepts and virtue. The result is always agitation and distress.

So even in apparently minor affairs don’t carelessly dismiss any desire as negligible, thinking it doesn’t matter. Always be mindful, with wisdom ready to remedy and eliminate. By assiduous investigation even a very dangerous situation can be relieved and put down, and such incidents will then become more and more infrequent.

The intermediate (level) defilements, such as the *five hindrances*,⁴ must be similarly considered. The first hindrance is *sensual desire*: the satisfaction in

sights, sounds, smells, tastes and tangibles. The dissatisfaction in such sense experience is *aversion*. Both attraction and repulsion sully the mind making it agitated and frantic, unable to come to calm. The important point to recognize here is that when the mind is dominated by the five hindrances, it is in a state of distress and suffering. Can you recognize these intermediate defilements that shroud your mind?

The hindrance of *sensual desire* can be likened to dye which clouds clear water, making it murky; and this turbidity equates with suffering. *Aversion* as a hindrance is irritability and dissatisfaction, and the hindrance of *sloth-and-torpor* is a state of drowsiness and lassitude. This is a condition of burying oneself in sleep and childish forgetfulness. All the hindrances — including the final two; *restless thought proliferations* that interminably burden the mind, and *doubt* — cloaks and clouds the mind in darkness.

You must therefore forcefully struggle to investigate these hindrances so that they, and every form of defilement from the gross to the subtle level, are weakened and ejected.

The practice of Dhamma is a very subtle and profound task requiring mindfulness and wisdom to probe and comprehend body and mind. Repeatedly, strive to see the truth of the body that is impermanent, suffering and composed of mere elements. If you don't practice in this way to achieve insight, you will be left vainly groping about with no chance of extricating yourself from the mass of suffering.

The mind is full of intrigue and trickery that can adapt and expand in myriad ways. Sometimes, you may gain some insight through mindfulness and wisdom, becoming calm, clear and free, only to find the defilements intruding to spoil and cloak the mind in total darkness. Then, thought obsessions becloud your lucidity.

Each one of you must find a special means or stratagem to employ in attaining understanding about yourself so that you don't get lost in a maze of distractions. The obsessional thought proliferations together with heedlessness are of vital concern. To become disheartened and indifferent to this danger means that your enemies effectively bar your way, thwarting your penetration to Dhamma.

You must find a way to destroy them and this needs *proper attention*⁵ — a resourceful, clever and *ingenious attack*.

Carefully probe to see how they originated and how they cease. Repeatedly attend to the characteristics of impermanence, suffering and not-self. When you truly see impermanence, you will also know how to put down the defilements and craving, or at least how to weaken and thin them out. It's as if we take up a broom and sweep out whatever attachments arise until eventually, there's nothing left to grasp at, because everything was found to be tainted with impermanence and swept away.

By persevering in your investigation to see impermanence, suffering and not-self you will gain relief and ease, for you will be far from attachments. This is *the wonder of Dhamma*: ease of body and mind and complete freedom from entanglement in the defilements. It's nescience that enshrouds the mind and causes one to wander about entranced by sights and sounds, a victim under the tyranny of craving and the defilements.

Mindfulness and wisdom will break your entrancement by seeing that really there's no *self* involved in any of it, only things that arise and

cease. Such insight sweeps away every trace of ‘me’ and ‘mine’, leaving pure Dhamma with neither pleasure nor suffering.

The Lord Buddha declared, “*Sabbe dhammaa anattaa*” — All things are not-self.”... There’s just Dhamma that is essential but not-self. This doesn’t mean the wrong view of complete annihilationism, but the extinction of all attachment and holding ‘me’ and ‘mine’.

There’s only that which is called the *Undying Dhamma*6 — without birth, without aging, without pain and without death. Only the defilements and suffering are annihilated. This is also known as ‘*Sunyo*’, the voidness of a substantial self. This *Undying Dhamma* is the true marvel that the Lord Buddha discovered and expounded to awaken us. Shouldn’t we therefore hurry to penetrate through the impermanence, suffering and not-self in the five aggregates, to that condition of Dhamma that is without birth, old age, illness and death?

This is also called *Nibbaana*, *Sunyataa* and the *Undetermined Dhamma*. They are really the same but have been given various mundane names and titles. Don’t grasp at them! Just stay in the condition of mind free of *self*.

The *Path, Fruit and Nibbaana* are not something to hope for in a future life by developing a vast heap of *Perfections*.⁷ Some people like to point out that the Lord Buddha had to accumulate so many, many virtues — but what about *yourself*? You don't consider how many lives have passed, yet you still haven't attained to the Goal. It's all because of your stupidity in ever devising excuses.

The Lord Buddha expounded principles of Dhamma such as the Four Foundations of Mindfulness, the Four Noble Truths and the Three Marks. These are to be found inside yourself, so probe and examine and search out the defilements within. Then disengage and eject them and all their concerns for 'me' and 'mine', to overcome all suffering.

It's not a case of excusing oneself from exertion by relying on the miraculous powers of some object or by building up the perfections. Bring the mind back to the present defilements — *is it better to eliminate them or fall in with them?*

Does that lead to suffering? You must find out the truth within yourself about getting rid of stupidity and the delusion that living in the structure of suffering is really happiness. Each one of us is stuck in such delusion because we won't open our eyes to

the predicament. You must discuss together, gain advice and dig out the truth so that mindfulness and wisdom can lead to self-knowledge.

This acknowledgement and seeing of the defilements and suffering within yourself brings great benefits. But you must also consult about this to learn the basic truths of suffering, its origin and the way of investigating body, mind and Dhamma to extinguish that suffering. Then your suffering will diminish because mindfulness and wisdom probe and extract the defilements that burn in the mind.

With correct Dhamma practice and insight your suffering will decline.

This will, of itself, encourage and attract other people to follow your example without having to go out to proclaim your success. Here, there's nothing like: "*I received this diploma or that degree.*"

Our talk is all about suffering, defilements and not-self. True penetration using mindfulness and wisdom can scrape away all the defilements; but only if you persevere and take advantage of this opportune moment to achieve such results in yourself.

Don't abandon your life to the service of the defilements and craving. You must constantly adjust your exertion to make it increasingly effective in

destroying craving and extinguishing suffering. The renouncing of self and defilements is essential because of the resulting state of peace and freedom in the mind. You must concern yourself with this; otherwise, the defilements will never be destroyed and, together with every other ignorant person in the world, you will only find vexation and suffering.

Maara, the Evil One, attempted to stop the Lord Buddha's exertion by telling him that within seven days he was to become a *World Ruling Monarch*. But the Lord Buddha was wise to such deceptions and trickery and answered, "*I know that already!*" The Lord Buddha had the ability instantly to know such things for himself, so *Maara* was continually defeated.

But what about us? Are you a disciple of the Lord Buddha or still a follower of *Maara*? When a temptation appears — there you go, following Mara the whole way, never wearying of the lust involved. Disciples of the Lord Buddha must turn against the stream of craving and establish themselves in pure precepts and virtue, the perfect qualities of self control.

By exertion, from the level of precepts to that of developing calm and wisdom to see impermanence,

suffering and not-self, they attain to the end of suffering. This level of not-self is also where *high-wisdom* must be brought to bear.

But the essential point is never to believe the wiles of the defilements. Whether it's the canker of nescience or of craving, you must establish mindfulness and wisdom to check, clear and renounce.

Temptations will then fail and stop because you reject their offers. One doesn't want, one relinquishes. If you accept and follow their lure, then you will fall for more and more desire until the mind is frantic and aflame. But by steadily turning away and resisting, such cravings lessen and diminish until finally they cease.

The training of the mind takes desire for its battlefield. Otherwise, it is like an addict who, with no intention to beat his habit, becomes inescapably a slave to his own craving. *You must establish mindfulness as your rampart, and wisdom as the weapon you use to break through and destroy.*

You can then make steady progress, penetrating to an ever deepening awareness of the structure of craving. By self-penetration you will be able to

destroy the defilements and realize the escape route used by all the Noble Disciples.

You will then see that it was because of one's own previous blindness that one felt able to assert that Nibbana didn't exist.

The true elimination of suffering is only concerned with yourself in this present moment. By being mindful, you can stop and disengage yourself, so that suffering is relieved. As your Dhamma practice develops, the defilements steadily lose strength. It's *Ehipassiko* — inviting one to come and see — because everyone is capable of extinguishing suffering.

By discerning the impermanence, suffering and not-self in everything, and breaking off all attachments, the mind is free, becoming Dhamma. There's no need to rush out to follow anyone else, whether heavenly protectors or miracle men, because success is wholly found within the mind.

One penetrates thoroughly, clearing out all attachments, making the mind worthy of *Ehipassiko*. But if the mind is still full of defilements, one's invitation is to come and see oneself being burned alive!

Therefore such an invitation always has a double edge. When craving and attachments are entirely quenched, one knows right there and then that one is free. So come and see this liberated mind right now! You are perfectly capable of realizing this for yourself. It's not so difficult.

To enter and examine the mind is easy because it's evident in every posture and at every moment. You don't have to take any trip by car or boat to see the various forms of truth and falsehood within yourself. But if you only learn about external things by studying mundane affairs as worldly people do, you can never gain insight.

You must turn within to learn about Dhamma, truly penetrating to the impermanence, suffering and not-self of body, feeling, mind and mind-objects. One sees each thing as: impermanent — it arises, persists and ceases; suffering; therefore, one doesn't grasp it; and it's all free of *self*. It all comes together in this state of Dhamma and then, if one has true insight, it's simple for the mind to gain freedom.

But if you understand wrongly — it's like switching an electric light off instead of on. With proper understanding one flicks the switch and all is light,

while wrong understanding plunges one into instant darkness.

It's the same with the mind: insight brings light and improper understanding brings darkness. You need to examine to see why there is a constant wanting of things. Such concerns are all suffering based in ignorance, wishful thinking and fantasizing about self, people and possessions. It's all frantic and nonstop news and information gathering.

But by concentrating the mind within you will find there's no problem or concern. It's just a detaching and emptying. Dhamma arises here as easily as the defilements can develop on the opposite side. So you must choose: either the bright or dark side; to stop and be free or to continue rushing frantically about. Make this decision within yourself. Dhamma insight is remarkable, for, if one begins by seeing correctly, it leads on to full penetration. If one becomes snagged on any obstacle, one must then probe and examine to see where one's attachment still lies. Then it will all become clear.

You have learned and followed the ways of the defilements long enough. Now turn and use mindfulness and wisdom to investigate them. Don't

continue conniving with them! Resist their advances and refuse to follow them!

When you understand this, you will find that all desire and delinquency, all love and hatred, are completely swept away. But without insight the *self* inflates with desires for this and that, masterly arranging its banquet fantasies. Just consider the following: People are just like actors in a large theater. It's a drama of life with a cast of *Maara* and demons, and hero and heroine — all contained within yourself! You must rip away the conventional forms to reveal the pure Dhamma that remains. This is freedom from *self* and everything will end there.

Notes:

1. *mettaa*
2. *upakilesa*
3. *siila*
4. *niivara.na*
5. *yoniso inaya ára*
6. *amata dhamma, inay inay*
7. *paaramii*

Glossary: _

The language used in these talks is that of Forest Dhamma. This means that apart from some *Paali*

quotations — usually taken from the chants that many of the listeners would be familiar with, and most of the monks would have learned by heart — it is usually ordinary Thai. Many Thai words are rooted in *Paali* and this can be seen in their spelling. However, both the present pronunciation and the meaning of the word have often been transformed. Forest Dhamma therefore, should not be treated as if it were classical *Paali*, and scholars should beware of trying to track definitions through the text. It's important to remember that this is an oral teaching, which afterwards was warmed-up between pages.

Acharn (Thai); *aacariya* (Pali):
(meditation) teacher.

Akaaliko

not delayed; timeless. A quality of Dhamma.

Akusala

In Pali it means unwholesome, demeritorious. It is part of a piece ritually chanted at funerals and, therefore, is given another Forest Dhamma meaning: un-clever, unskilled. See *kusala*.

Amata

the deathless state; the Undying; *Nibbaana*; immortal; ambrosia.

Anaagaamii

a never-returner; non-returner. See *Ariya*.

Appanaa

See *Samaadhi*.

Arahant

worthy one; one who has attained *Nibbaana*. See *Ariya*.

Ariya

Noble One. It has four stages, with Path (*magga*) and Fruit (*phala*) for each stage: *Sotaapanna*; *Sakadaagaamii*; *Anaagaamii*; *Arahant*.

Arom (Thai); *aaramma.na* (Pali):

The original Pali means: sense-objects; an object of consciousness. Modern Thai: mood, temper, spirits, disposition. In this work it is an important term and is translated as: preoccupation, mood, emotional object, object.

Attaa

self; soul; ego; personal entity. (contrast *anattaa*.) Mind; the whole personality, as in the phrase from the *Dhammapada*: “*Attaa hi attano naatho, kohi naatho paro siyaa?*” This is concerned with *attaadhipateyya*, which is self-dependence and self-reliance, and a central theme of these Dhamma talks.

Avijjaa

ignorance; nescience; lack of knowledge; delusion.

Bahn (Thai):

village.

Bahp (Thai); *ina* (Pali):

evil, wrong action; demerit; bad; base; wicked.
(contrast *boon*.)

Bhaavanaa

heart/mind development; meditation.

Boon (Thai); *punya* (Pali):

merit; meritorious (-action); virtue; righteousness;
good works; good. (contrast *bahp*.)

Brahmacariya

the Holy life; religious life; strict chastity.

Buddha

the Awakened One; Enlightened One.

Buddho

often used as a meditation word ('mantra')
"*Buddho...*", being the recollection of Buddha. (See
kamma.t.thaana.)

Citta

(Pali); *Chit*, *chit-chai* (Thai): heart; mind. A central
term. In *To the Last Breath* it is usually translated as
'heart', while in *Directions for Insight* it is more
often 'mind'. (In fact it is more like 'heart-mind'.)
For similar usage in the *Suttas* see: *Mano*, *Citta*,

Vinyaa.na; R. Johansson; University of Ceylon Review. Peredeniya. Vol. 23. 1965.

Daana

giving; alms-giving; charity; generosity; benevolence. See Appendix.

Dhamma

the Teachings (of the Buddha); the Truth; the Supramundane; virtue. Dhamma: thing; phenomenon; nature; condition.

Dhaatu

an element; natural condition; earth, water, fire and air.

Di.t.thi

view; opinion; (often) wrong view.

Dosa

hatred; anger; ill-will; aversion.

Dukkha

suffering. See *Noble Truths*.

Ehipassiko

inviting to come and see; inviting inspection. An attribute of Dhamma.

Kamma.t.thaana

subjects of meditation; the act of meditation. The subjects often mentioned in this book are: *Buddhaanussati* — recollection of the Buddha;

contemplation on the virtues of the Buddha. *Kaayagataasati* — mindfulness occupied with the body; contemplation on the 32 impure parts of the body. *Aanaapaanasati* — mindfulness on breathing. (For more see *A. I. 30,41; Vism. 197.*) It is also sometimes used as a general term describing the way of practice of meditation monks in N.E. Thailand.

Khandha

aggregate; category. Usually the Five Aggregates: *ruupa; vedanaa; sanyaa; sa.nkhaara; vinaya.na.*

Khun (Thai):

The equivalent of Mr., Mrs., or Ms.

Kilesa

defilements; impurities; impairments. These include: greed, hatred, delusion, conceit, wrong view, doubt or uncertainty, sloth, restlessness, shamelessness, lack of moral concern.

Kusala

wholesome; meritorious; moral; skillful. It is part of a piece ritually chanted at funerals and therefore is given another Forest Dhamma meaning: clever, skilled. See *akusala*.

Magga

the Path; the Way. See *Noble Truths*.

Maagha-puuja

Worship on the Full-Moon Day of the third lunar month in commemoration of the Great Assembly of Disciples.

Ma.ngala (Sutta)

auspicious; (the thirty-eight) blessings.

Maara

the Evil One; Death; the Tempter; Defilements personified.

Mettaa

loving-kindness, friendliness, goodwill.

Moha

delusion; ignorance; dullness.

Naama

mind; name; mental factors; mentality. See *ruupa*.

Nyaa.na

knowledge; wisdom; insight.

Nyaa.nadassana

knowing and seeing, perfect knowledge; vision through wisdom.

Nekkhamma

renunciation; letting go; giving up the world; self-denial.

Nibbaana

the extinction of the fires of greed, of hatred and of ignorance; the extinction of all defilements and suffering; the Unconditioned.

Nirodha

cessation. See Noble Truths.

Niivara.na

the (five) hindrances; obstacles.

Noble Truths

Dukkha: suffering; misery; woe; discontent; anguish; anxiety; pain. *Samudaya*: the Cause, Origin or Source of Suffering; *Nirodha*: the Cessation or Extinction of Suffering. *Magga*: the Path; the Way; the Noble Eightfold Path.

Opanayiko

worthy of inducing in and by one's own mind; worthy of realizing; to be tried by practice; leading onward. An attribute of Dhamma.

Paali

the language of the texts of the Theravada Canon.

Panyaa (Pali/Thai):

wisdom. Often coupled with mindfulness. See *sati*.

Paaramii

(the ten) Perfections; stages of spiritual perfection on the path to Awakening.

Parikamma

(Pali: preliminary action, preparation.) Thai: preparatory meditation, such as the (silent) repetition of “Buddho”.

Parinibbaana

the Final Passing Away of the Lord Buddha; final release.

Pariyatti

the Scriptures; study of them; the Teachings to be studied.

Patipatti

putting into practice.

Pativedha

penetration; realization; insight.

Pa.tisandhi-vinyaa.na

relinking; rebirth; reunion; conception.

Phala

fruit; result; consequence; effect. See *magga*.

Pi.n.dapaata

food received in the alms-bowl (of a Bhikkhu); alms- gathering; to go on an alms-round.

Puujaa

worship (external and mental); honor; veneration; devotional offering.

Puthujjana

a worldling; worldly person; ordinary person. As opposed to *ariya*.

Ruupa

matter; form; material; body; shape; corporeality. See *naama*.

Sabhaava dhamma

principle of nature; natural condition; natural phenomenon.

Sacca (-Dhamma)

truth, truthfulness; Truth.

Saddhaa

faith; confidence.

Sakadaagaamii

a once-returner. See *ariya*.

Sakkaaya-di.t.thi

(the delusion of) self-view; belief in a personal self.

Samaadhi

concentration; one-pointedness of mind; the condition of mind when focused, centered and still.

Sama.na

recluse; holy one; a Buddhist monk.

Sammati; Sammuti (Thai/Pali):

conventional; mundane; supposed; assumed; generally accepted.

Samudaya

Cause. See *Noble Truth*.

Sa.myojana

(the ten) Fetters (that bind to the round of rebirth).

Sa.ngha (Saavaka Sa.ngha)

(the noble) community, one of the Three Jewels; the Order.

Sa.nkappo

thought.

Sankhaara

determinations; compounded things; mental formations (see *Khandha*). In Forest Dhamma this is the processing, concocting and fabricating of thoughts.

Sanyaa

perception; idea; ideation; (see *Khandha*). In Forest Dhamma this is the aspect of remembering (past perceptions).

Sara.na

refuge; help; protection; guide; remembrance.

Saranagamana

taking refuge (in the Three Jewels); going for refuge.

Saasada (Thai), *Satthu* (Pali):

the Master; the Great Teacher (the Lord Buddha).

Saasana

teaching; message; doctrine; a religion.

Sati

mindfulness; awareness; attentiveness. In Forest Dhamma it is often coupled with wisdom (*panyaa*). (In Thai common usage *sati-panya* means: intelligence; intellect.)

Saavaka

a (noble) disciple; hearer; follower.

Siila

virtue; morality; moral conduct; a precept; training rule. See Appendix.

Sotaapanna

a stream-enterer; one who has attained the first stage of *Ariya*.

Sugato

Well-gone; Well-farer; sublime. An epithet of Buddha.

Sukha

happiness; ease; joy; comfort; pleasure; physical or bodily happiness or ease. As opposed to *dukkha*.

Sutta

a discourse from the Pali canon.

Svaakkhaata

well-taught; well proclaimed. An attribute of Dhamma.

Ta.nhaa

craving; desire; thirst.

Tapa

exertion; ascetic practice; (burning out).

Tathaagata

the Accomplished One; the Thus-come; the Thus-gone. An epithet of the Lord Buddha. Sometimes used as a pronoun when the Lord Buddha is quoted as saying something himself.

Ti-lakkha.na

the Three Characteristics, Marks or Signs; also called the Common Characteristics, viz., impermanence, suffering and not-self.

Upaadaana

attachment; clinging; grasping; holding.

Uposatha

Observance Day (for the monks).

Va.t.ta (-cakka)

the round of rebirth, of existences; (the cycle or wheel of rebirth).

Vedanaa

feeling. See *Khandha*.

Vimutti (-nyaanadassana)

deliverance; release; liberation; freedom; (knowledge of that deliverance).

Vinyaa.na

consciousness. See *Khandha*.

Viriya

effort; energy; vigor; endeavor; exertion.

Visuddhi

purity; purification.

Wat (Thai)

a monastery.

Appendix: The Gradual Teaching _

As this book is mainly concerned with meditation, here are some *Sutta* passages with descriptions of generosity (*daana*) and moral precepts (*siila*).

Daana: Generosity

In contrast to the modern emphasis on consuming and possessing, the Lord Buddha spoke of the virtue of giving and being content with whatever one has. There are always circumstances where one can give. For instance, one can offer one's time, help and sympathy. And one can for-give.

If one has wealth, he explained the use of possessions; the benefits which one should get from wealth; reasons for earning and having wealth:

- i) to make oneself, one's parents, children, wife, servants and workmen happy and live in comfort.

ii) to share this happiness and comfort with one's friends.

iii) to make oneself secure against all misfortunes.

iv) to make the fivefold offering:

to relatives, by giving help to them.

To guests, by receiving them.

To the departed, by dedicating merit to them.

To the king, (i.e., to the government) by paying taxes and duties and so on.

To the deities, i.e., those beings who are worshipped according to one's faith.

v) to support those monks and spiritual teachers who lead a pure and diligent life.

(A.III.45)

Sappurisa Daana: Gifts of a good man

i) to give clean things.

ii) to give choice things.

iii) to give at fitting times.

iv) to give suitable things.

v) to give with discretion.

vi) to give repeatedly or regularly.

vii) to calm one's mind on giving.

viii) to be glad after giving.

(A.IV.243)

Siila: Precepts

The basic guidelines for the actions and speech of any Buddhist can be appreciated by anyone, of any religion or none. There is no dogma involved, it is a plain and simple way of living without harming or hurting any creature.

The other feature to bear in mind is that it is accepted voluntarily by the individual. This is not something that one is commanded to receive. It is the individual's volition that changes a list of precepts into a way of living. With that change, the appreciation and mindfulness of one's actions and speech become more subtle and which automatically leads on to meditation.

There are the basic Five Precepts and these become more refined with the Eight Precepts. Everyone who listened to the original Dhamma talks (in this book) would be keeping (at least temporarily) the Eight Precepts.

These Precepts can be received by simply saying:

“I undertake the training rule/precept...

i) to abstain from taking life.

ii) to abstain from taking what is not given.

*iii) to abstain from sexual misconduct.

- iv) to abstain from false speech.
- v) to abstain from intoxicants causing heedlessness.”
- *iii) “to abstain from unchastity.
- vi) to abstain from untimely eating.
- vii) to abstain from dancing, singing, music and unseemly shows, from wearing garlands, smartening with scents, and embellishment with unguents.
- viii) to abstain from the use of high and large luxurious couches.”

[Taken from the Dictionary of Buddhism, compiled by Ven. Phra Debvedi (Prayudh Payutto), Bangkok, B.E. 2528 (1985)]

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Thus ends the above text.

The texts below have been collected from other sources:
Let's, now, see how she sounds with a different translator.

Going Against the Flow
by
Upasika Kee Nanayon

Source: BuddhaSasana

Translated from the Thai by Thanissaro Bhikkhu

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Mindfulness Like the Pilings of a Dam

November 6, 1970

Discussing the practice is more useful than discussing anything else because it gives rise to insight. If we follow

the practice step by step we can *read* ourselves, continually deciphering things within us.

As you read yourself through probing and investigating the harm and suffering caused by defilement, craving, and attachment, there will be times when you come to true knowledge, enabling you to grow dispassionate and let go. The mind will then immediately grow still, with none of the mental concoctions that used to have the run of the place through your lack of self-investigation.

The principles of self-investigation are our most important tools. We have to make a concerted effort to master them at all times, with special emphasis on using mindfulness to focus on the mind and bring it to centered concentration.

If we don't focus on keeping the mind centered or neutral as its basic stance, it will wander off in various ways in pursuit of preoccupations or sensory contacts, giving rise to turmoil and restlessness.

But when we practice restraint over the sensory doors by maintaining continuous mindfulness in the heart, it's like driving in the pilings for a dam. If you've ever seen the pilings for a dam, you'll know that they're driven deep, deep into the ground so that they're absolutely firm and immovable.

But if you drive them into mud, they're easily swayed by the slightest contact. This should give us an idea of how firm our mindfulness should be in supervising the mind to

make it stable, able to withstand sensory contact without liking or disliking its objects.

The firmness of your mindfulness is something you have to maintain continuously in your every activity, with every in-and-out breath.

The mind will stop being scattered in search for preoccupations. If you don't manage this, then the mind will get stirred up whenever there's sensory contact, like a rudderless ship going wherever the wind and waves will take it. This is why you need mindfulness to guard the mind at every moment. If you can make mindfulness constant, in every activity, the mind will be continuously neutral, ready to probe and investigate for insight.

As a first step in driving in the pilings for our dam -- in other words, in making mindfulness firm -- we have to focus on neutrality as our basic stance. There's nothing you have to think about. Simply make the mind solid in its neutrality.

If you can do this continuously, that's when you'll have a true standard for your investigation, because the mind will have gathered into concentration. But this concentration is something you have to watch over carefully to make sure it's not just oblivious indifference.

Make the mind firmly established and centered so that it doesn't get absentminded or distracted as you sit in meditation. Sit straight, maintain steady mindfulness, and there's nothing else you have to do. Keep the mind firm and neutral, not thinking of anything at all.

Make sure this stability stays continuous. When anything pops up, no matter how, keep the mind neutral. For example, if there's a feeling of pleasure or pain, don't focus on the feeling. Simply focus on the stability of the mind -- and there will be a sense of neutrality in that stability.

If you're careful not to let the mind get absentminded or distracted, its concentration will become continuous. For example, if you're going to sit for an hour of meditation, focus on centering the mind like this for the first half hour and then make sure it doesn't wander off anywhere until the hour is up. If you change positions, it's simply an outer change in the body, while the mind is still firmly centered and neutral each moment you're standing, sitting, lying down, or whatever.

Mindfulness is the key factor in all of this, keeping the mind from concocting thoughts or labeling things. *Everything has to stop.* Keep this foundation snug and stable with every in-and-out breath.

Then you can relax your focus on the breath while keeping the mind in the same state of neutrality. Relax your heavy focus so that it feels just right with the breath. The mind will be able to stay in this state for the entire hour, free from any thoughts that might wander off the path. Then keep an eye out to see that no matter what you do or say, the mind stays solidly in its normal state of inward knowing.

If the mind is stable within itself, you're protected on all sides. When sensory contacts come, you stay focused on being aware of your mental stability. Even if there are any momentary slips in your mindfulness, you get right back to the stability of the mind.

Other than that, there's nothing you have to do. The mind will let go without your having to do anything else. The way you used to like this, hate that, turn left here, turn right there, won't be able to happen. The mind will stay neutral, equanimous, just right. If mindfulness lapses, you get right back to your focus, recognizing when the mind is centered and neutral toward its objects and then keeping it that way.

The pilings for the dam of mindfulness have to be driven in so that they're solid and secure with your every activity. Keep working at this no matter what you're doing. If you can train the mind so that stability is its basic stance, it won't get into mischief. It won't cause you any trouble. It won't concoct thoughts. It will be quiet. Once it's quiet and centered, it'll grow more refined and probe in to penetrate within itself, to know its own state of concentration from within.

As for sensory contacts, those are things outside -- appearing only to disappear -- so it's not interested. This can make cravings disband. Even when we change positions as pains arise in the body, the mind in that moment is stable, focused not on the pains but on its own stability.

When you change positions, there will be physical and mental reactions as the circulation improves and pleasant feelings arise in place of the pains, but the mind won't get snagged on either the pleasure or the pain. It will simply stay stable: centered and firm in its neutrality.

This stability can easily help you abandon the cravings that lie latent in connection with all feelings. But if you don't keep the mind centered in advance like this, craving will create issues, provoking the mind into a turmoil, wanting to change things so as to get this or that kind of happiness.

If we practice in this way repeatedly, hammering at this point over and over again, it's like driving pilings into the ground. The deeper we can drive them, the more immovable they'll be. That's when you'll be able to withstand sensory contacts.

Otherwise, the mind will start boiling over with its thought concoctions in pursuit of sights, sounds, smells, tastes, and tactile sensations. Sometimes, it keeps concocting the same old senseless issues over and over again. This is because the pilings of mindfulness aren't yet firmly in place. The way we've been stumbling through life is due to the fact that we haven't really practiced to the point where mindfulness is continuous enough to make the mind firmly centered and neutral. So we have to make our dam of mindfulness solid and secure.

This centeredness of mind is something we should develop with every activity, with every in-and-out breath.

This way we'll be able to see through our illusions, all the way into the truths of inconstancy and not-self. Otherwise, the mind will go straying off here and there like a mischievous monkey -- yet even monkeys can be caught and trained to perform tricks. In the same way, the mind is something that can be trained, but if you don't tie it to the post of mindfulness and give it a taste of the stick, it'll be very hard to tame.

When training the mind, you shouldn't force it too much, nor can you simply let it go its habitual ways. You have to test yourself to see what gets results. If you don't get your mindfulness focused, it'll quickly go running out after preoccupations or easily waver under the impact of its objects.

When people let their minds simply drift along with the flow of things, it's because they haven't established mindfulness as a solid stance. When this is the case, they can't stop. They can't grow still. They can't be free. This is why we have to start out by driving in the pilings for our dam so that they're good and solid, keeping the mind stable and centered whether we're sitting, standing, walking, or lying down. This stability will then be able to withstand everything. Your mindfulness will stay with its foundation, just like a monkey tied to a post: It can't run off or get into mischief. It can only circle the post to which its leash is tied.

Keep training the mind until it's tame enough to settle down and investigate things, for if it's still scattered about,

it's of no use at all. You have to train it until it's familiar with what inner stability is like, for your own instability and lack of commitment in training it is what allows it to get all entangled with thought-concoctions, with things that arise and then pass away.

You have to get it to stop. Why is it so mischievous? Why is it so scattered? Why does it keep wandering off? Get in under control! Get it to stop, to settle down and grow centered!

At this stage you all have practiced enough to gain at least a taste of centered concentration. The next step is to use mindfulness to maintain it in your every activity, so that even if there are any distractions, they last only for a moment and don't turn into long issues. Keep driving in the pilings until they're solid, every time there's an impact from external objects, or so that the mental concoctions that go straying out from within are all brought to stillness in every way.

This training isn't really all that hard. The important point is that, whichever of the many meditation subjects you choose, you stay mindful and aware of the mind state that's centered and neutral.

If, when the mind goes straying out after objects, you keep bringing it back to its centeredness over and over again, the mind will eventually be able to stay firmly in its stance. In other words, its mindfulness will become constant, ready to probe and investigate, *because when*

the mind really settles down, it gains the power to read the facts within itself clearly.

If it's not centered, it can jumble everything up to fool you, switching from this issue to that, from this role to that; but if it's centered, it can disband everything -- all defilements, cravings, and attachments -- on every side.

So what this practice comes down to is how much effort and persistence you put into getting the mind firmly centered.

Once it's firm, then when there arise all the sufferings and defilements that would otherwise get it soiled and worked up, it can withstand them just as the pilings of a dam can withstand windstorms without budging.

You have to be clearly aware of this state of mind so that you won't go out liking this or hating that. This state will then become your point of departure for probing and investigating so as to gain the insight that sees clearly all the way through -- but you have to make sure that this centeredness is continuous. Then you won't have to think about anything.

Simply look right in, deeply and subtly.

The important point is that you get rid of absentmindedness and distractions. This in itself gets rid of a lot of delusion and ignorance, and leaves no opening for craving to create any issues that will stir up the mind and set it wandering. This is because we've established our stance in advance. Even if we lose our normal balance a little bit, we get right back to focusing on the stability of

our concentration. If we keep at this over and over again, the stability of the mind with its continuous mindfulness will enable us to probe into the truths of inconstancy, stress, and not-self.

In the beginning, though, you don't have to do any probing. It's better simply to focus on the stability of your stance, for if you start probing when the mind isn't really centered and stable, you'll end up scattered. So, focus on making centeredness the basic level of the mind and, then, start probing in deeper and deeper. This will lead to insights that grow more and more telling and profound, bringing the mind to a state of freedom within itself, or to a state where it is no longer hassled by defilement.

This in itself will bring about true mastery over the sense doors. At first, when we started out, we weren't able to exercise any real restraint over the eyes and ears, but once the mind becomes firmly centered, then the eyes, ears, nose, tongue, and body are automatically brought under control. If there's no mindfulness and concentration, you can't keep your eyes under control, because the mind will want to use them to look and to see, it will want to use the ears to listen to all kinds of things.

So instead of exercising restraint outside, at the senses, we exercise it inside, right at the mind, making the mind firmly centered and neutral at all times. Regardless of whether you're talking about or whatever, the mind's focus still stays in place.

Once you can do this, you'll regard the objects of the senses as meaningless. You won't have to take issue with things, thinking, "This is good, I like it. This is bad, I don't like it. This is pretty; that's ugly." The same holds true with the sounds you hear. You won't take issue with them. You focus instead on the neutral, uninvolved centeredness of the mind. This is the basic foundation for neutrality.

When you can do this, everything becomes neutral. When the eye sees a form, it's neutral. When the ear hears a sound, it's neutral -- the mind is neutral, the sound is neutral, *everything is all neutral* -- because we've closed five of the six sense doors and then settled ourselves in neutrality right at the mind. This takes care of everything. Whatever the eye may see, the ear may hear, the nose may smell, the tongue may taste, or the body may touch, the mind doesn't take issue with anything at all. It stays centered, neutral, and impartial. Take just this much and give it a try.

For the next seven days I want you to make a special point of focusing mindfulness right at the mind, for this is the end of the rainy season, the period when the lotus and water lily bloom after the end of the Rains Retreat. In the Buddha's time, he would have the senior monks train the new monks throughout the Rains Retreat and then meet with him when the lotuses bloom. I've mentioned this before and I want to mention it again as a way of encouraging you to develop a stable foundation for the

mind. If its stability is continuous, then it too will have to bloom -- to bloom because it's not burned, disturbed, or provoked by the defilements. So make a special effort during the next seven days to see how you can manage to observe and investigate the centered, neutral state of mind continuously at all times.

Of course, if you fall asleep, you fall asleep; but even then, when you lie down to sleep, try to observe how you can keep the mind centered and neutral at all times until you doze off. When you wake up, the movements of the mind will still remain in that centered, neutral state. Give it a try, so that your mind will be able to grow calm and peaceful, disbanding its defilements, cravings, sufferings - - everything. Then notice to see whether or not it's beginning to bloom.

The sense of refreshment bathing the mind that comes as part of the peace of mind undisturbed by defilement will arise of its own accord without your having to do anything aside from keeping the mind stable and centered. This is your guarantee: If the mind is really stable in its concentration, the defilements won't be able to burn it or mess with it. In other words, desire won't be able to provoke it.

When concentration is stable, the fires of passion, aversion, and delusion won't be able to burn it. Try to see within yourself how the stability of the mind can withstand these things, disbanding the stress, putting out the flames. But you'll have to be earnest in practicing, in

making an effort to keep mindfulness truly continuous. This isn't something to play at. You can't let yourself be weak, for if you're weak you won't be able to withstand anything. You'll simply follow the provocations of defilement and craving.

The practice is a matter of stopping so that the mind can settle down and stand fast. It's not a matter of getting into mischief, wandering around to look and listen and get involved in issues. Try to keep the mind stable; in all your activities -- eating, defecating, whatever -- keep the mind centered within.

If you know the state of the mind when it's centered, immovable, no longer wavering, no longer weak, then the basic level of the mind will be free and empty -- empty of the things that would burn it, empty because there's no attachment.

This is what enables you to ferret out the stability of the mind at every moment. It protects you from all sorts of things. All attachment to self, "me," and "them" is totally wiped out, cut away. The mind is entirely centered. If you can keep this state stable for the entire seven days, it will enable you to reach insight all on your own.

So I ask each of you to see whether or not you'll be able to make it all the way. Check to see how you're doing each day. And make sure you check things carefully. Don't let yourself be lax, sometimes stable, sometimes not. Get so that the mind is absolutely solid. Don't let yourself be weak. You have to be genuine in what you do if you want

to reach the genuine extinguishing of suffering and stress. If you're not genuine, you'll end up letting yourself weaken in the face of the provocation of wanting this or wanting that, doing this or doing that, whatever, in the same way that you've been enslaved to desire, agitated by desire for who knows how long.

Your everyday life is where you can test yourself -- so get back to the battlefield! Take a firm stance in neutrality. Then the objects that come into contact with the mind will be neutral; the mind itself will feel centered in neutrality. There will be nothing to take issue with in terms of good or bad or whatever. Everything will come to a halt in neutrality -- because things in themselves aren't good or bad or self or whatever, simply that the mind has gone and made issues out of them.

So keep looking inward until you see the mind's neutrality and freedom from "self" continuously, and then you'll see how the lotus comes to bloom. If it hasn't bloomed yet, that's because it's withering and dry in the heat of the defilements, cravings, and attachments smoldering in the mind -- things we'll have to learn to ferret out until we can disband them. If we don't, the lotus will wither away, its petals falling to the ground and simply rotting there. So make an effort to keep the lotus of the mind stable until it blooms. Don't wonder about what will happen as it blooms. Just keep it stable and make sure it isn't burned by the defilements.

The Battle Within

November 13, 1970

Today we are meeting as usual.

From what I've seen of your reports on your special development of mindfulness to read the facts within yourselves, some of you have really benefited in terms of penetrating in to read what's going on inside, and you've come out with correct understanding.

So now I'd like to give you a further piece of advice: In developing mindfulness as a foundation for probing in to know the truth within yourself, you have to apply a level of effort and persistence appropriate to the task. This is because, as we all know, the mind is cloaked in defilements and mental effluents. If we don't train it and force it, it'll turn weak and lax. It won't have any strength. You have to make your persistence more and more constant so that your probing and investigating will be able to see all the way through to clear insight.

Clear insight doesn't come from thinking and speculating. It comes from investigating the mind while it's gathered into an adequate level of calm and stability. You look deeply into every aspect of the mind when it's neutral and calm, free from thought-formations or likes and dislikes for its preoccupations.

You have to work at maintaining this state and at the same time probe deeply into it, because superficial knowledge isn't true knowledge. As long as you haven't probed deeply into the mind, you don't really know

anything. The mind is simply calm on an external level, and your reading of the aspects of the wanderings of the mind under the influence of defilement, craving, and attachment isn't yet clear.

So you have to try to peer into yourself until you reach a level of awareness that can maintain its balance and let you contemplate your way to sharper understanding. If you don't contemplate so as to give rise to true knowledge, your mindfulness will stay just on the surface. The same principle holds with contemplating the body. You have to probe deeply into the ways in which the body is repulsive and composed of physical elements.

This is what it means to *read* the body so as to understand it, so that you can explore yourself in all your activities. This way, you prevent your mind from straying off the path and keep it focused on seeing how it can burn away the defilements as they arise -- which is very delicate work.

Being un-complacent, not letting yourself get distracted by outside things, is what will make the practice go smoothly. It will enable you to examine the germs in the mind in a skillful way so that you can eliminate the subtlest ones: ignorance and delusion. Normally, we aren't fully aware of even the blatant germs, but now that the blatant ones are inactivated because of the mind's solid focus, we can look into the more profound areas to catch sight of the deceits of craving and defilements in whatever way they move into action. We watch them,

know them, and are in a position to abandon them as soon as they wander off in search of sights, sounds, smells, and delicious flavors.

Whether they're looking for good physical flavors -- bodily pleasure -- or good mental flavors, we have to know them from all sides, even though they're not easy to know because of all the many desires we feel for physical pleasure.

And on top of that, there are the desires for happiness imbued with pleasurable feelings, perceptions that carry pleasurable feelings, thought-formations that carry pleasurable feelings, and consciousness that carries pleasurable feelings.

All of these are nothing but desires for illusions, for things that deceive us into getting engrossed and distracted. As a result, it isn't easy for us to understand much of anything at all.

These are subtle matters, and they all come under the term, "sensual craving" -- the desire, lust, and love that provoke the mind into wandering out in search of the enjoyment it remembers from past sights, sounds, smells, tastes, and tactile sensations. Even though these things may have happened long ago, our perceptions bring them back to deceive us with ideas of their being good or bad. Once we latch onto them, they make the mind unsettled and defiled.

So it isn't easy to examine and understand all the various germs within the mind. The external things we're able to know and let go of are only the minor players.

The important ones have gathered together to take charge in the mind and won't budge no matter how you try to chase them out. They're stubborn and determined to stay in charge. If you take them on when your mindfulness and discernment aren't equal to the fight, you'll end up losing your inner calm.

So you have to make sure that you don't push the practice too much, without at the same time letting it grow too slack. Find the Middle Way that's just right. While you're practicing in this way, you'll be able to observe what the mind is like when it has mindfulness and discernment in charge, and, then, you make the effort to *maintain* that state and keep it constant.

That's when the mind will have the opportunity to stop and be still, stable and centered for long periods of time until it's used to being that way.

Now, there are some areas where we have to force the mind and be strict with it. If we're weak and lax, there's no way we can succeed, for we've given in to our own wants for so long already. If we keep giving in to them, it will become even more of a habit. So you have to use force -- the force of your will and the force of your mindfulness and discernment. Even if you get to the point where you have to put your life on the line, you've got to be willing.

When the time comes for you really to be serious, you've got to hold out until you come out winning. If you don't win, you don't give up. Sometimes you have to make a vow as a way of forcing yourself to overcome your stubborn desires for physical pleasure that tempt you and lead you astray.

If you're weak and settle for whatever pleasure comes in the immediate present, then, when desire comes in the immediate present, you fall right for it. If you give in to your wants often in this way, it'll become habitual, for defilement is always looking for the chance to tempt you, to incite you.

As when we try to give up an addiction to betel, cigarettes, or meat: It's hard to do because craving is always tempting us. "Take just a little," it says. "Just a taste. It doesn't matter." Craving knows how to fool us, the way a fish is fooled into getting caught on a hook by the bait surrounding the hook, screwing up its courage enough to take just a little, and then a little more, and then a little more until it's sure to get snagged.

The demons of defilement have us surrounded on all sides. Once we fall for their delicious flavors, we're sure to get snagged on the hook. No matter how much we struggle and squirm, we can't get free.

You have to realize that gaining victory over your enemies -- the cravings and defilements in the heart -- is no small matter, no casual affair. You can't let yourself be weak or lax, but you also have to gauge your strength, for

you have to figure out how to apply your efforts at abandoning and destroying to weaken the defilements and cravings that have had the power of demons overwhelming the mind for so long.

It's not the case that you have to battle to the brink of death in every area. With some things -- such as giving up addictions -- you can mount a full-scale campaign and come out winning without killing yourself in the process. But with other things, more subtle and deep, you have to be more perceptive so as to figure out how to overcome them over the long haul, digging up their roots so that they gradually weaken to the point where your mindfulness and discernment can rise above them.

If there are any areas where you're still losing out, you have to take stock of your sensitivities to figure out why. Otherwise, you'll keep losing out, for when the defilements really want something, they trample all over your mindfulness and discernment in their determination to get what they're after: "That's what I want. I don't care what anyone says." They really are that stubborn! So it's no small matter, figuring out how to bring them under control. It's like running into an enemy or a wild beast rushing in to devour you. What are you going to do?

When the defilements arise right before your eyes, you have to be wary. Suppose you're perfectly aware, and all of a sudden they spring up and confront you: What kind of mindfulness and discernment are you going to use to disband them, to realize that, "These are the hordes of

Mara, come to burn and eat me. How am I going to get rid of them?" In other words, how are you going to find a skillful way of contemplating them so as to destroy them right then and there?

We have to do this regardless of whether we're being confronted with physical and mental pain or physical and mental pleasure.

Actually, pleasure is more treacherous than pain because it's hard to fathom and easy to fall for. As for pain, no one falls for it because it's so uncomfortable. So how are we going to contemplate so as to let go of *both* the pleasure *and* the pain? This is the problem we're faced with at every moment. It's not the case that when we practice we accept only the pleasure and stop when we run into pain. That's not the case at all. We have to learn how to read *both* sides, to see that the pain is inconstant and stressful, and that the pleasure is inconstant and stressful, too. We have to penetrate clear through these things. Otherwise, we'll be deluded by the deceits of the cravings that want pleasure, whether it's physical pleasure or whatever. Our every activity -- sitting, standing, walking, lying down -- is really for the sake of pleasure, isn't it?

This is why there are so many, many ways in which we're deluded with pleasure. Whatever we do, we do for the sake of pleasure without realizing how deeply we've mired ourselves in suffering and stress. When we contemplate inconstancy, stress, and not-selfness, we don't get anywhere in our contemplation because we

haven't yet seen through pleasure. We still think that it's a good thing.

We have to probe into the fact that there's no real ease to physical or mental pleasure. It's all stress. When you can see it from this angle, that's when you'll come to understand inconstancy.

Then, once the mind isn't focused on wanting pleasure all the time, its stresses and pains will lighten. It will be able to see them as something common and normal, to see that if you try to change the pains to find ease, there's no ease to be found.

In this way, you won't be overly concerned with trying to change the pains, for you'll see that there's no pleasure or ease to the aggregates, that they give nothing but stress and pain. As in the Buddha's teachings we chant every day: "Form is stressful, feeling, perception, thought-formations, and consciousness are all stressful." *The problem is that we haven't investigated into the truth of our own form, feelings, perceptions, thought-formations, and consciousness.*

Our insight isn't yet penetrating because we haven't looked from the angle of true knowing. And so we get deluded here and lost there in our search for pleasure, finding nothing but pain and yet mistaking it for pleasure. This shows that we still haven't opened our ears and eyes; we still don't know the truth. Once we do know the truth, though, the mind will be more inclined to grow still and calm than to go wandering off. The reason it goes

wandering off is because it's looking for pleasure, but once it realizes there's no real pleasure to be found in that way, it settles down and grows still.

All the cravings that provoke and unsettle the mind come down to nothing but the desire for pleasure. So we have to contemplate so as to see that the aggregates have no pleasure to offer, that they're stressful by their very nature. They're not us or ours. Take them apart and have a good look at them, starting with the body.

Analyze the body down to its elements so that the mind won't keep latching onto it as "me" or "mine." You have to do this over and over again until you really understand.

It's the same as when we chant the passage for *Recollection while Using the Requisites* -- food, clothing, shelter, and medicine -- every day. We do this so as to gain real understanding. If we don't do this every day, we forget and get deluded into loving and worrying about the body as "my body," "my self." No matter how much we keep latching onto it over and over again, it's not easy for us to realize what we're doing, even though we have the Buddha's teachings available, explaining these things in every way.

Or we may have contemplated to some extent, but we haven't seen things clearly. We've seen only in a vague and blurry way and then we've flitted-off oblivious without having probed in to see all the way through. This is because the mind isn't firmly centered. It isn't still. It keeps wandering off to find things to think about and get

itself all agitated. This way it can't really get to know anything at all. All it knows are a few little perceptions. This is the way it has been for who knows how many years now. It's as if our vision has been clouded by spots that we haven't yet removed from our eyes.

Those who aren't interested in exploring, who don't make an effort to get to the facts, don't wonder about anything at all. They're free from doubt, all right, but it's because their doubts have been smothered by delusion.

If we start exploring and contemplating, we'll have to wonder about the things we don't yet know [about our selves]: "What's this? What does it mean? How should I deal with it?" These are questions that lead us to explore. If we don't explore, it's because we don't have any intelligence. Or we may gain a few little insights, but we let them pass so that we never explore deeply into the basic principles of the practice.

What little we *do* know doesn't go anywhere, doesn't penetrate into the Noble Truths, because our mindfulness and discernment run out of strength. Our persistence isn't resilient enough, isn't brave enough. We don't dare look deeply inside ourselves.

To go by our own estimates of how far is enough in the practice is to lie to ourselves. It keeps us from gaining release from suffering and stress. If you happen to come up with a few insights, don't go bragging about them, or else you'll end up deceiving yourself in countless ways. Those who really know, even when they *have* attained the

various stages of insight, are heedful to keep on exploring. They don't get stuck on this stage or that stage. Even when their insights are correct, they don't stop right there and start bragging, for that's the way of a fool.

Intelligent people, even though they see things clearly, always keep an eye out for the enemies lying in wait for them on the deeper, more subtle levels ahead. They have to keep penetrating further and further in. They have no sense that this or that level is plenty enough -- for how can it be enough? The defilements are still burning away, so how can you brag? Even though your knowledge may be true, how can you be complacent when your mind has yet to establish a foundation for itself?

As you investigate with mindfulness and discernment, complacency is the major problem. You have to be uncomplacent in the practice if you want to keep up with the fact that life is ebbing away, ebbing with every moment. And how should you live so that you can be said to be uncomplacent? This is an extremely important question, for if you're not alive to it, then no matter how many days or months you practice meditation or restraint of the senses, it's simply a temporary exercise. When you're done, you get back to your same old turmoil as before.

And watch out for your mouth. You'll have trouble not bragging, for the defilements will provoke you into speaking. They want to speak, they want to brag, they won't let you stay silent.

If you force yourself in the practice without understanding its true aims, you end up deceiving yourself and go around telling people, "I practiced in silence for so many days, so many months."

This is deceiving yourself and others as well. The truth of the matter is that you're still a slave to stupidity, obeying the many levels of defilement and craving within yourself without realizing the fact. If someone praises you, you really prick up your ears, wag your tail and, instead of explaining the harm of the defilements and craving you were able to find within yourself, you simply want to brag.

So the practice of the Dhamma isn't something that you can just muddle your way through. It's something you have to do with your intelligence fully alert -- for when you contemplate in a circumspect way, you'll see that there's nothing worth getting engrossed in, that everything -- both inside and out -- is nothing but an illusion.

It's like being adrift, alone in the middle of the ocean with no island or shore in sight. Can you afford just to sit back and relax, to make a temporary effort and then brag about it? Of course not!

As your investigation penetrates inwardly to ever more subtle levels of the mind, you'll have to become more and more calm and reserved, in the same way that people become more and more circumspect as they grow from children to teenagers and into adults. Your mindfulness and discernment have to keep growing more and more

mature in order to understand the right and wrong, the true and false, in whatever arises: That's what will enable you to let go and gain release. And that's what will make your life in the true practice of the Dhamma go smoothly. Otherwise, you'll fool yourself into boasting of how many years you practiced meditation and will eventually find yourself worse off than before, with defilement flaring up in a big way. If this is the way you go, you'll end up tumbling head over heels into fire -- for when you raise your head in pride, you run into the flames already burning within yourself.

To practice means to use the fire of mindfulness and discernment as a counter-fire to put out the blaze of the defilements, because the heart and mind are burning with defilement, and when we use the fire of mindfulness and discernment to put out the fire of defilement, the mind can cool down.

Do this by being increasingly honest with yourself, without leaving an opening for defilement and craving to insinuate their way into control. You have to be alert. Circumspect. Wise to them. Don't fall for them! If you fall for whatever rationale they come up with, it means that your mindfulness and discernment are still weak. They lead you away by the nose, burning you with their fire right before your very eyes, and yet you're still able to open your mouth to brag!

So turn around and take stock of everything within yourself. Take stock of every aspect, because right and

wrong, true and false, are all within you. You can't go finding them outside. The damaging things people say about you are nothing compared to the damage caused inside you when defilement burns you, when your feeling of "me" and "mine" raises its head.

If you don't honestly come to your senses, there's no way your practice of the Dhamma can gain you release from the great mass of suffering and stress. You may be able to gain a little knowledge and let go of a few things, but the roots of the problem will still lie buried deep down. So you have to dig them out.

You can't relax after little bouts of emptiness and equanimity. That won't accomplish anything. The defilements and mental effluents lie deep in the personality, so you have to use mindfulness and discernment to penetrate deep down to make a precise and thorough examination. Only then will you get results. Otherwise, if you stay only on the surface level, you can practice until your body lies rotting in its coffin but you won't have changed any of your basic habits.

Those who are scrupulous by nature who know how to contemplate their own flaws will keep on the alert for any signs of pride within themselves. They'll try to control and destroy conceit on every side and won't allow it to swell. The methods we need to use in the practice for examining and destroying the germs within the mind aren't easy to master.

For those who don't contemplate themselves thoroughly, the practice may actually only increase their pride, their bragging, their desire to go teaching others. But if we turn within and discern the deceits and conceits of self, a profound feeling of disenchantment and dismay arises, causing us to pity ourselves for our own stupidity, for the amount to which we've deluded ourselves all along, and for how much effort we'll still need to put into the practice.

So however great the pain and anguish, however many tears bathe your cheeks, persevere! The practice isn't simply a matter of looking for mental and physical pleasure. "Let tears bathe my cheeks, but I'll keep on with my striving at the holy life as long as I live!" That's the way it has to be!

Don't quit at the first small difficulty with the thought, "It's a waste of time. I'd do better to follow my cravings and defilements." You can't think like that! You have to take the exact opposite stance: "When they tempt me to grab this, take a lot of that -- I won't! However fantastic the object may be, I won't take the bait." Make a firm declaration! This is the only way to get results.

Otherwise, you'll never work yourself free, for the defilements have all sorts of tricks up their sleeves. If you get wise to one trick, they simply change to another, and then another.

If we're not observant to see how much we've been deceived by the defilements in all sorts of ways, we won't

come to know the truth within ourselves. Other people may fool us now and then, but the defilements fool us all of the time. We fall for them and follow them hook, line, and sinker. Our trust in the Lord Buddha is nothing compared to our trust in them. We're disciples of the demons of craving, letting them lead us ever deeper into their jungle.

If we don't contemplate to see this for ourselves, we're lost in that jungle charnel ground where the demons keep roasting us to make us squirm with desires and every form of distress. Even though you have come to stay in a place with few disturbances, these demons still manage to tempt and draw you away.

Just notice how the saliva flows when you come across anything delicious! *So you have to decide to be either a warrior or a loser.* The practice requires that you do battle with defilements and cravings. Always be on your guard, whatever the approach they take to seduce and deceive you.

Other people can't come in to lead you away, but these demons of your own defilements can, because you're willing to trust them, to be their slave. You have to contemplate yourself carefully so that you're no longer enslaved to them and can reach total freedom within yourself. Make an effort to develop your mindfulness and discernment so as to gain clear insight and then let go until suffering and stress disband in every way!

All Things Are Unworthy of Attachment

November 21, 1970

Today's our day to discuss the practice.

It's very beneficial that we have practiced the Dhamma by contemplating ourselves step by step and have -- to some extent -- come to know the truth.

This is because each person has to find the truth within: the truths of stress, its cause, and the path leading to its disbanding. If we don't know these things, we fall into the same sufferings as the rest of the world.

We may have come to live in a Dhamma center, yet if we don't know these truths we don't benefit from staying here. The only way we differ from living at home is that we're observing the precepts.

If we don't want to be deluded in our practice, these truths are things we have to know. Otherwise, we get deluded into looking for our fun in the stresses and sufferings offered by the world.

Our practice is to contemplate until we understand stress and its cause, in other words, the defilements that have power and authority in the heart and mind. It's only because we have this practice that we can disband these defilements, that we can disband stress every day and at all times.

This is something really marvelous. Those who don't practice don't have a clue, even though they live enveloped by defilements and stress. They simply get led around by the nose into more and more suffering, and yet

none of them realize what's going on. If we don't make contact with the Dhamma, if we don't practice, we go through birth and death simply to create *kamma* with one another and to keep whirling around in suffering and stress.

We have to contemplate until we really *see* stress: That's when we'll become un-complacent and try to disband it or to gain release from it. The practice is, thus, a matter of struggling to gain victory over stress and suffering with better and better results each time. Whatever mistakes we make in whatever way, we have to try not to make them again. And we have to contemplate the harm and suffering caused by the more subtle defilements, cravings, and attachments within us.

This is why we have to probe into the deeper, more profound parts of the heart -- for if we stay only on the superficial levels of emptiness in the mind, we won't gain any profound knowledge at all.

So we train the mind to be mindful and firmly centered, and to fix its focus on looking within, knowing within. Don't let it get distracted outside. When it focuses within, it will come to know the truth: the truth of stress and of the causes of stress -- defilement, craving, and attachment -- as they arise. It will see what they're like and how to probe inward to disband them

When all is said and done, the practice comes down to one issue, because it focuses exclusively on one thing: stress together with its cause. This is the central issue in

human life -- even animals are in the same predicament -- but our ignorance deludes us into latching onto all kinds of things. This is because of our misunderstandings or wrong views.

If we gain Right View, we see things correctly. Whenever we see stress, we see its truth. When we see the cause of stress, we see its truth. We both know and see because we've focused on it. *If you don't focus on stress, you won't know it; but as soon as you focus on it, you will.* It's because the mind hasn't focused here that it wanders out oblivious, chasing after its preoccupations.

When we try to focus it down, it struggles and resists because it's used to wandering. But if we keep focusing it again and again, more and more frequently until we get a sense of how to bring it under control, then the task ultimately becomes easier, because the mind no longer is no longer struggling to chase after its preoccupations as it did before.

No matter how much it resists when we start training it, eventually, we're sure to bring it under our control, getting it to settle down and be still. If it doesn't settle down, you have to contemplate it. You have to show it that you mean business. This is because defilement and craving are very strong. You can't be weak when dealing with them. You have to be brave, to have a fight-to-the-death attitude, and to keep sustaining your efforts. If you're concerned only with finding comfort and pleasure, the day will never

come when you'll gain release. You'll have to continue staying under their power.

Their power envelops everything in our character, making it very difficult for us to find out the truth about ourselves. What we do know is just a smattering, and so we play truant, abandoning the task, and end up seeing that the practice of the Dhamma isn't really important. Thus, we don't bother to be strict with ourselves, and, instead, involve ourselves in all kinds of things, for that's the path the defilements keep pointing out to us.

We grope along weakly, making it harder and harder to see stress clearly because we keep giving in to the defilements and taking their bait. When they complain about the slightest discomfort, we quickly pander to them and take the bait again. It's because we're so addicted to the bait that we don't properly appreciate either the power of craving -- as it wanders out after sights, sounds, smells, tastes, etc. -- or the harm it causes in making us scattered and restless, unable to stay still and contemplate ourselves.

It's always finding things for us to do, to think about, making ourselves suffer, and yet we remain blind to the fact.

Now that we've come to practice the Dhamma, we begin to have a sense of what's going on. For this reason, whoever practices without being complacent will find that defilement and stress will have to grow lighter and lighter, step by step. The areas where we used to be defeated, we

now come out victorious. Where we used to be burned by the defilements, we now have the mindfulness and discernment to burn *them* instead. Only when we stop groping around and really come to our senses will we realize the benefits of the Dhamma, the importance of the practice.

Then, there is no way that we can abandon the practice, for something inside us keeps forcing us to stay with it. We've seen that if we don't practice to disband defilement and stress, the stress of the defilements will keep piling up. This is why we have to stay with the practice to our last breath.

You have to be firm in not letting yourself be weak and easily led astray. Those who are mindful and discerning will naturally act in this way; those who aren't will keep on following their defilements, ending up back where they were when they hadn't yet started practicing to gain release from stress.

They may keep on practicing, but it's hard to tell what they're practicing for -- mostly for more stress. This shows that they're still groping around -- and when they grope around in this way, they start criticizing the practice as useless and bad.

When a person submits readily to defilement and craving, there's no way she can practice, for if you're going to practice, there are a lot of things you have to struggle with and endure. It's like paddling a boat against the stream -- you have to use strength if you want to make any

headway. It's not easy to go against the stream of the defilements, because they are always ready to pull you down to a lower level.

If you aren't mindful and discerning, if you don't use the Lord Buddha's Dhamma to examine yourself, your strength will fail you, for if you have only a little mindfulness and discernment in the face of a lot of defilements, they'll make you vacillate. And if you're living with sweet-talking sycophants, you'll go even further off the path, involved with all sorts of things and oblivious to the practice.

To practice the Dhamma, then, is to go *against* the flow, to go upstream against suffering and stress, because suffering and stress are the main problems. If you don't really contemplate stress, your practice will go nowhere.

Stress is where you start, and then you try to trace out its root cause.

You have to use your discernment to track down exactly where stress originates, for stress is a result. Once you see the result, you have to track down the cause. Those who are mindful and discerning are never complacent. Whenever stress arises they're sure to search out its causes, so that they can eliminate them. This sort of investigation can proceed on many levels, from the coarse to the refined, and requires that you seek advice so that you don't stumble.

Otherwise, you may think you can figure it all out in your head -- which won't work at all!

The basic Dhamma principles that the Lord Buddha proclaimed for us to use in our contemplation are many, but there's no need to learn them all. Just focusing on some of the more important ones such as the five aggregates or name and form will be very useful. But you need to keep making a thorough, all-round examination, not just an occasional probe, so that a feeling of dispassion and disengagement arises and loosens the grip of desire. Use mindfulness to keep constant and close supervision over the senses, and that mindfulness will come to be more present than your tendency to drift off elsewhere.

Regardless of what you're doing, saying, or thinking, be on the lookout for whatever will make you slip, for if you're tenacious in sustaining mindfulness, that's how all your stresses and sufferings can be disbanded.

So keep at this. If you fall down 100 times, get back up 100 times and resume your stance. The reason mindfulness and discernment are slow to develop is because you're not really sensitive to yourself. The greater your sensitivity, the stronger your mindfulness and discernment will become.

As the Lord Buddha said, "*Bhavita bahulikata*" -- which means, "Develop and maximize" -- i.e., make the most of your mindfulness.

The way your practice has developed through contemplating and supervising the mind throughout your daily life has already shown its rewards to some extent, so

keep stepping-up your efforts. Don't let yourself grow weak or lax. You've finally got this opportunity: Can you afford to be complacent? Your life is steadily ebbing away, so you have to compensate by building up more and more mindfulness and discernment until you become mature in the Dhamma.

Otherwise, your defilements will remain many and your discernment crude. The older you grow, the more you have to watch out -- for we know what happens to old people everywhere.

So seize the moment to develop the faculties of conviction, persistence, mindfulness, concentration, and discernment in a balanced way. Keep contemplating and probing, and you'll protect yourself from wandering out after the world. No matter who tempts you to go with them, you can be sure within yourself that you won't go following them because you no longer have to go believing anyone else or hoping for the baits of the world -- *because the baits of the world are poison. The Dhamma has to be the refuge and light of your life.* Once you have this degree of conviction in yourself, you can't help but stride forward without slipping back; but if you waver and wander, unsure of whether or not to keep practicing the Dhamma, watch out: You're sure to get pulled over the cliff and into the pit of fire.

If you aren't free within yourself, you get pulled at from all sides because the world is full of things that keep pulling at you. But those who have the intelligence not to

be gullible will see the stress and harm of those things distinctly for themselves. For this reason they're not headed for anything low; they won't have to keep suffering in the world. They feel dispassion. They lose their taste for all the various baits and lures the world has to offer.

The practice of the Dhamma is what allows us to shake off whatever attractive things used to delude us into holding on. Realize that it won't be long before we die -- we won't be here much longer! -- so even if anyone offers us incredible wealth, why should we want it? Who could really own it? Who could really control it?

If you can read yourself in this matter, you come to a feeling of dispassion. Disenchantment. You lose your taste for all the lures of the world. You no longer hold them in esteem. If you make use of them, it's for the sake of the benefits they give in terms of the Dhamma, but your disenchantment stays continuous.

Even the name and form you've been regarding as "me" and "mine" have been wearing down and falling apart continually. As for the defilements, they're still lying in wait to burn you. So how can you afford to be oblivious? First, there's the suffering and stress of the five aggregates, and on top of that there's the suffering and stress caused by defilement, craving, and attachment, stabbing you, slapping you, beating you.

The more you practice and contemplate, the more you become sensitive to this on deeper and deeper levels.

Your interest in blatant things outside -- good and bad people, good and bad things -- gets swept away. You don't have to concern yourself with them, for you're concerned solely with penetrating yourself within, destroying your pride and conceit. Outside affairs aren't important. What's important is how clearly you can see the truth inside until the brightness appears.

The brightness that comes from seeing the truth isn't at all like the light we see outside. Once you really know it, you see that it's indescribable, for it's something entirely personal. It cleans everything out of the heart and mind in line with the strength of our mindfulness and discernment. It's what sweeps and cleans and clears and lets go and disbands things inside.

But if we don't have mindfulness and discernment as our means of knowing, contemplating, and letting go, then everything inside is dark on all sides--and not only dark, but also full of fire whose poisonous fuel keeps burning away. What could be more terrifying than the fuel burning inside us? Even though it's invisible, it flares up every time there's sensory contact.

The bombs they drop on people to wipe them out aren't really all that dangerous, for you can die only once per lifetime. But the three bombs of passion, aversion, and delusion keep ripping the heart apart countless times. Normally we don't realize how serious the damage is, but when we come to practice the Dhamma we can take stock of the situation, seeing what it's like when sensory contact

comes, at what moments the burning heat of defilement and craving arises, and why they're all so very quick.

When you contemplate how to disband suffering and defilement, you need the proper tools and you have to make the effort without being complacent.

The fact that we've come to practice out here without any involvements or worldly responsibilities helps to speed-up the practice. It's extremely beneficial in helping us to examine our inner diseases in detail and to disband suffering and stress, continually, in line with our mindfulness and discernment. Our burdens grow lighter, and we come to realize how much our practice of the Dhamma is progressing in the direction of the cessation of suffering.

Those who don't have the time to come and rest here or to really stop, get carried away with all kinds of distractions. They may say, "I can practice anywhere," but those are just words. The fact of the matter is that their practice is to follow the defilements until their heads are spinning, and yet they can still boast that they can practice anywhere! Their mouths aren't in line with their minds, and their minds -- burned and beaten by defilement, craving, and attachment -- don't realize their situation. They're like worms that live in filth and are happy to stay and die right there in the filth.

People with any mindfulness and discernment feel disgust at the filth of the defilements in the mind. The more they practice, the more sensitive they become, the more their

revulsion grows. Before, when our mindfulness and discernment were still crude, we didn't feel this at all. We were happy to play around in the filth within ourselves. But now that we've come to practice, to contemplate from the blatant to the more subtle levels, we sense more and more how disgusting the filth really is. There's nothing to it that's worth falling for at all, because it's all inconstancy, stress, and not-self.

So what's there to want out of life? Those who are ignorant say that we're born to gain wealth and be millionaires, but that kind of life is like falling into hell! If you understand the practice of the Dhamma in the Buddha's footsteps, you realize that nothing is worth having, nothing is worth getting involved with, everything has to be let go.

Those who still latch onto the body, feeling, perceptions, thought-formations, and consciousness as self need to contemplate until they see that the body is stressful, feelings are stressful, perceptions are stressful, thought-formations are stressful, consciousness is stressful -- in short, name is stressful, and so is form, or in even plainer terms, the body is stressful and so is the mind.

You have to focus on stress. Once you see it thoroughly, from the blatant to the subtle levels, you'll be able to rise above pleasure and pain because you've let them go. But if you have yet to fully understand stress, you'll still yearn for pleasure -- and the more you yearn, the more you suffer.

This holds too for the pleasure that comes when the mind is tranquil. If you let yourself get stuck on it, you're like a person addicted to a drug: Once there's the desire, you take the drug and think yourself happy. But as for how much suffering the repeated desire causes, you don't have the intelligence to see it. All you see is that if you take the drug whenever you want, you're okay.

When people can't shake off their addictions, this is why. They get stuck on the sense of pleasure that comes when they take the drug. They're ingesting sensuality and they keep on wanting more, for only when they ingest more will their hunger subside. But, soon, it comes back again, so they'll want still more. They keep on ingesting sensuality, stirring-up the mind, but don't see that there's any harm or suffering involved. Instead, they say they're happy. When the longing gets really intense, it feels really good to satisfy it. That's what they say.

People who have heavy defilements and crude discernment don't see that desire and longing are suffering, and so they don't know how to do away with them. As soon as they take what they want, the desire goes away. Then it comes back again, so they take some more. It comes back again and they take still more -- over and over like this, so blind that they don't realize anything at all.

People of intelligence, though, contemplate: "Why is there desire and why do I have to satisfy it? And when it comes back, why do I have to keep satisfying it over and

over again?" *Once they realize that the desire in and of itself is what they have to attack, that by disbanding this one thing they won't feel any disturbance and will never have to suffer from desire again, that's when they really can gain release from suffering and stress.*

But for the most part we don't see things from this angle because we still take our pleasure in consuming things. This is why it's hard for us to practice to abandon desire. All we know is how to feed on the bait, so we don't dare try giving it up -- as when people who are addicted to meat-eating are afraid to become vegetarians. Why? Because they're still attached to flavor, still slaves to desire.

If you can't let go of even these blatant things, how can you ever hope to abandon the damp and fermenting desires within you that are so much harder to detect? You still take the most blatant baits. When desire whispers and pleads with you, there you go -- pandering to it as quickly as possible.

You don't notice how much this tires you out, don't realize that this is the source of the most vicious sufferings that deceive all living beings into falling under its power. Even though the Buddha's teachings reveal the easiest way to use our discernment to contemplate cause and effect in this area, we don't make the effort to contemplate and instead keep swallowing the bait. We get our pleasure and that's all we want, going with the flow of defilement and craving.

Our practice here is to go *against* the flow of every sort of desire and wandering of the mind. It means self-restraint and training in many, many areas: as, for instance, when sights, sounds, smells, tastes, tactile sensations arise and deceive us into liking something and then, a moment later, tiring of it and wanting something else. We get so thoroughly deceived that we end up running frantically all over the place.

The virulent diseases in the mind are more than many. If you don't know how to deal with them, you'll remain under Mara's power.

Those who have truly seen stress and suffering will be willing to put their lives on the line in their effort to work free, in the same way the Buddha was willing to put his life on the line in order to gain freedom from suffering and release from the world. He wasn't out after personal comfort at all.

Each Buddha-to-be has had to undergo suffering in the world for his own sake and that of others. Each has had to relinquish all of his vast wealth instead of using it for his comfort. So the practice is one of struggle and endurance. Whoever struggles and endures will gain victory -- and no other victory can match it. *Gaining control over the defilements is the ultimate victory.*

Whatever you contemplate, you can let go: That's the ultimate victory.

So please keep at the effort. You can't let yourself relax after each little victory. The more you keep being

victorious, the stronger, more daring, and more resilient your mindfulness and discernment will become in every area, examining everything regardless of whether it comes in by way of the eyes, ears, nose, tongue, body, or mind.

The more you examine yourself, the sharper your mindfulness and discernment will become, understanding how to disband things and let them go.

As soon as there's attachment, you'll see the suffering and stress -- just as when you touch fire, feel the heat, and immediately let go. This is why the practice of the Dhamma is of supreme worth. It's not just a game you play around with -- for the defilements have a great deal of power that's hard to overcome. But if you make the effort to overcome them, they'll weaken as mindfulness and discernment grow stronger. This is when you can say that you're making progress in the Dhamma: when you can disband your own suffering and stress.

So try to go all the way, while you still have the breath to breathe. The Buddha said, "Make an effort to attain the as-yet-unattained, reach the as-yet-unreached, realize the as-yet-unrealized." He didn't want us to be weak and vacillating, always making excuses for ourselves, because now that we've ordained we've already made an important sacrifice.

In the Buddha's time, no matter where the monks and nuns came from -- from royal, wealthy, or ordinary backgrounds -- once they had left their homes they cut their family ties and entered the Lord Buddha's lineage

without ever returning. To return to the home life, he said, was to become a person of no worth. His only concern was to keep pulling people out, pulling them out of suffering and stress. If we want to escape, we have to follow his example, cutting away worry and concern for our family and relatives by entering his lineage. To live and practice under his discipline is truly the supreme refuge, the supreme way.

Those who follow the principles of the Dhamma-Vinaya - - even though they may have managed only an occasional taste of its peace without yet reaching the paths and their fruitions -- pledge their lives to the Buddha, Dhamma, and Sangha. They realize that nothing else they can reach will lead to freedom from suffering, but if they reach this one refuge, they'll gain total release.

Those whose mindfulness and discernment are deep, far-seeing, and meticulous will cross over to the further shore. They've lived long enough on this shore and have had all the suffering they can bear. They've circled around in birth and death countless times. So now they realize that they have to go to the further shore and so they make a relentless effort to let go of their sense of self.

There's nothing distant about the further shore, but to get there, you first have to give up your sense of self in the five aggregates by investigating to see them all as stress, to see that none of them are "me" or "mine."

Focus on this one theme: not clinging. The Lord Buddha once spoke of the past as below, the future as above, and

the present as in the middle. He also said that unskillful qualities are below, skillful qualities above, and neutral ones in the middle. To each of them, he said, "Don't cling to it." Even *nibbana*, the further shore, shouldn't be clung to. *See how far we're going to be released through not-clinging!* Any of you who can't comprehend that even *nibbana* isn't to be clung to should consider the standard teaching that tells us not to cling, that we have to let go: "All things are unworthy of attachment." This is the ultimate summary of all that the Buddha taught.

All phenomena, whether compounded or un-compounded, fall under the phrase, "*Sabbe dhamma anatta* -- All things are not-self." They're all unworthy of attachment. This summarizes everything, including our investigation to see the truth of the world and of the Dhamma, to see things clearly with our mindfulness and discernment, penetrating through the compounded to the un-compounded, or through the worldly to the transcendent, all of which has to be done by looking within, not without.

And if we want to see the real essence of the Dhamma, we have to look deeply, profoundly. Then it's simply a matter of letting go all along the way. We see all the way in and let go of everything. The theme of *not clinging* covers everything from beginning to end. If our practice is to go correctly, it's because we look with mindfulness and discernment to penetrate everything, not getting stuck on any form, feeling, perception, thought-formation, or consciousness at all.

The Buddha taught about how ignorance -- not knowing form, delusion with form -- leads to craving, the mental act that arises at the mind and agitates it, leading to the *kamma* by which we try to get what we crave. When you understand this, you can practice correctly, for you know that you have to disband the craving.

The reason we contemplate the body and mind over and over again is so that we won't feel desire for anything outside, won't get engrossed in anything outside. The more you contemplate, the more things outside seem pitiful and not worth getting engrossed in at all.

The reason you were engrossed and excited was because you didn't know. And so you raved about people and things and made a lot of fuss, talking about worldly matters: "This is good, that's bad, she's good, he's bad." The mind got all scattered in worldly affairs -- and so how could you examine the diseases latently hidden within your own mind?

The Buddha answered Mogharaja's question -- "In what way does one view the world so that the king of death does not see one?" -- by telling him to see the world as empty, as devoid of self. We have to strip away conventions, such as "person" and "being," and all designations such as elements, aggregates, and sense media.

Once we know how to strip away conventions and designations, there's nothing we need to hold onto. What's left is the Deathless. The transcendent. *Nibbana*. There

are many names for it, but they're all one and the same thing. When you strip away all worldly things, what's left is the transcendent. When you strip away all compounded things, what's left is the uncompounded, the true Dhamma.

So consider for yourself whether or not this is worth attaining. If we stay in the world, we have to go through repeated births and deaths in the three levels of existence: sensuality, form, and formlessness. But on that further shore there's no birth, no death. It's beyond the reach of the King of Mortality. But because we don't know the further shore, we want to keep on being reborn on this shore with its innumerable repeated sufferings.

Once you comprehend suffering and stress, though, there's nowhere else you want to turn: You head straight for the further shore, the shore with no birth or death, the shore where defilement and craving disband once and for all. Your practice thus goes straight to the cessation of suffering and defilement, to clear penetration of the Common Characteristics of inconstancy, stress, and not-selfness in the aggregates. People with mindfulness and discernment focus their contemplation in the direction of absolute disbanding, for if their disbanding isn't absolute, they'll have to be reborn again in suffering and stress. So keep disbanding attachments, keep letting go, contemplating inconstancy, stress, and not-selfness and relinquishing them. This is the right path for sure.

Isn't this something worth knowing and training for? It's not all that mysterious or far away, you know. It's something that anyone -- man or woman -- can realize, something we can all train in. We can develop virtue, can make the mind quiet, and can use our mindfulness and discernment to contemplate. So isn't this really worth practicing?

Stupid people like to say no. They say they can't do it: They can't observe the precepts, can't make the mind quiet. The best thing in life -- the practice for release from suffering and stress -- and yet they reject it. Instead, they rush around in a turmoil, competing with one another, bragging to one another, and then end up rotting in their coffins. Exactly what is appealing about all that?

We've gone astray for far too long already, our lives almost gone after how many decades. Now we've come here to turn ourselves around. No matter how old you are, the air you breathe isn't just for your convenience and comfort, but for you to learn about suffering and stress. That way you'll be able to disband it.

Don't imagine that your family and relatives are essential to you. You are alone. You came alone and you'll go alone. This holds true for each of us. *Only when there's no self to go*: That's when you penetrate to the Dhamma. If there is still a self to be born, then you're stuck in the cycle of suffering and stress. So isn't it worthwhile to strive for release? After all, it's something each of us has to find for him or herself.

Those who trust in the Lord Buddha will all have to follow this way. To trust the defilements is to throw yourself down in the mire -- and there who will you be able to brag to, aside from your own sufferings? The knowledge that leads to dispassion and disenchantment is what counts as true knowledge. But if your knowledge leads you to hold on, then you're a disciple of Mara. You still find things very delicious. You may say that you're disenchanted, but the mind isn't disenchanted at all. It still wants to take this, to get that, to stay right here.

Whoever can keep reading the truth within her own mind, deeper and deeper, will be able to go all the way through, wiping out stupidity and delusion each step along the way. Where you used to be deluded, you've now begun to come to your senses. Where you used to brag, you now realize how very stupid you were -- and that you'll have to keep on correcting your stupidity.

Reading yourself, contemplating yourself, you see new angles, you gain more precise self-knowledge each step along the way.

It's not a question of being expert about things outside. You see how what's inside is really inconstant, really stressful, really not-self. The way you used to fall for things and latch onto them was because of your blindness, because you didn't understand. So who can you blame? Your own stupidity, that's who -- because it wanted to brag about how much it knew.

Now you know that you've still got a lot of stupidity left and that you'll have to get rid of it before you die. Every day that you still have breath left to breathe, you'll use it to wipe out your stupidity rather than to get this or be that or to dance around. The ones who dance around are possessed by spirits: the demons of defilement making them crazy and deluded, wanting to get this and be that and dance all over the place. But if you focus your attention in on investigating yourself, then your pride, your conceit, your desires to stand out will shrink out of sight, never daring to show their faces for the rest of your life, for you realize that the more you brag, the more you suffer.

So the essence of the practice is to turn around and focus inside. The more you can wash away these things, the more empty and free the mind will be: This is its own reward. If you connive with your conceits, you'll destroy whatever virtue you have, but if you can drive these demons away, virtuous influences will come and stay with you. If the demons are still there, the virtuous ones won't be able to stay. They can't get along at all.

If you let yourself get entangled in turmoil, it's an affair of the demons. If you're empty and free, it's an affair of cleanliness and peace -- an affair of the virtuous influences.

So go and check to see how many of these demons you've been able to sweep away. Are they thinning out? When they make an appearance, point them right in the face and

call them what they are: demons and devils, come to eat your heart and drink your blood. You've let them eat you before, but now you've finally come to your senses and can drive them away.

That will put an end to your troubles, or at least help your sufferings grow lighter. Your sense of self will start to shrivel away. Before, it was big, fat, and powerful, but now its power is gone. Your pride and conceit have grown thin and weak. It's as when a person has been bitten by a rabid dog: They give him a serum made from rabid dogs to drive out the disease.

The same holds here: If we can recognize these things, they disband. The mind is then empty and at peace, for this one thing -- the theme of not clinging -- can disband suffering and stress with every moment.

Simply Stop Right Here

November 28, 1970

Today we have gathered for our regular meeting.

The way we've been contemplating to the point of giving rise to knowledge through genuine mindfulness and discernment makes us realize how this is a process of disbanding suffering and defilement.

Whenever mindfulness lapses and we latch on to anything, our practice of reading ourselves step by step will enable us to realize the situation easily.

This helps us keep the mind under control and does a world of good. Still, it's not enough, for the affairs of suffering and defilement are paramount issues buried

deep in the character. We thus we have to contemplate and examine things within ourselves.

Looking outside is something we're already used to: Whenever we know things outside, the mind is in a turmoil instead of being empty and at peace. This is something we can all be aware of.

And this is why we have to maintain the mind in its state of neutrality or mindful centeredness. We then notice from our experience in the practice: What state have we been able to maintain the mind in? Is our mindfulness continuous throughout all our activities?

These are things we all have to notice, using our own powers of observation. When the mind deviates from its foundation because of mental fabrications, thinking up all sorts of turmoil for itself as it's used to doing, what can we do to make it settle down and grow still? If it doesn't grow still, it gets involved in nothing but stress: wandering around thinking, imagining, taking on all sorts of things. *That's* stress. You have to keep reading these things [inside] at all times, seeing clearly the ways in which they're inconstant, changing, and stressful.

Now, if you understand the nature of arising and passing away by turning inward to watch the arising and passing away within yourself, you realize that it's neither good nor bad nor anything of the sort. It's simply a natural process of arising, persisting, and passing away.

Try to see deeply into this, and you'll be sweeping the mind clean, just as when you constantly sweep out your

house: If anything then comes to make it dirty, you'll be able to detect it. So with every moment, we have to sweep out whatever arises, persists, and then passes away. Let it all pass away, without latching on or clinging to anything. Try to make the mind aware of this state of un-attachment within itself: If it doesn't latch on to anything, doesn't cling to anything, there's no commotion in it. It's empty and at peace.

This state of awareness is *so* worth knowing, for it doesn't require that you know a lot of things at all.

You simply have to contemplate so as to see the inconstancy of form, feelings, perceptions, thought-formations, and consciousness.

Or you can contemplate whatever preoccupies the mind as it continually changes -- arising and passing away -- with every moment. This is something you have to contemplate until you really *know* it. Otherwise, you'll fall for your preoccupations in line with the way you label sensory contacts.

If you don't fall for sensory contacts arising in the present, you fall for your memories or thought-formations. This is why you have to train the mind to stay firmly centered in neutrality without latching onto anything at all. *If you can maintain this one stance continuously, you'll be sweeping everything out of the mind, disbanding its suffering and stress in the immediate present with each and every moment.*

Everything arises and then passes away, arises and then passes away -- everything. Don't grasp hold of anything, thinking that it's good or bad or taking it as your self.

Stop all your discursive thinking and mental fabrications. When you can maintain this state of awareness, the mind will calm down on its own, will naturally become empty and free. If any thoughts arise, see that they just come and go, so don't latch onto them. When you can read the aspects of the mind that arise and pass away, there's not much else to do: Just keep watching and letting go within yourself, and there will be no remaining long, drawn-out trains of thought about past or future. They all stop right at the arising and passing away.

When you really see the present with its arising and passing away, there are no great issues. Whatever you think about will all pass away, *but if you can't notice its passing away, you'll grasp at whatever comes up*, and then everything will become a turmoil of ceaseless imaginings. So you have to cut off these connected thought-formations that keep flowing like a stream of water.

Establish your mindfulness and, once it's established, simply fix your whole attention on the mind. Then, you'll be able to still the flow of thought-formations that had you distracted. You can do this at any time, and the mind will always grow still to become empty, un-entangled, unattached.

Then keep watch over the normalcy of the mind again and again whenever it gets engrossed and starts spinning out long, drawn out thought-formations. As soon as you're aware, let them stop. As soon as you're aware, let them stop, and things will disband right there. Whatever the issue, disband it immediately. Practice like this until you become skilled at it, and the mind won't get involved in distractions.

It's like driving a car: When you want to stop, just slam on the brakes and you stop immediately. The same principle works with the mind. You'll notice that, no matter when, as soon as there's mindfulness, it stops and grows still. In other words, when mindfulness is firmly centered, then no matter what happens, as soon as you're mindfully aware of it, the mind stops, disengages, and is free.

This is a really simple method: stopping as soon as you're mindful. Any other approach is just too slow to cope with. This method of examining yourself, knowing yourself, is very worthy of knowing because anyone can apply it at any time. Even right here while I'm speaking and you're listening, just focus your attention right at the mind as it's normal in the present. This is an excellent way of knowing your own mind.

Before we knew anything about all this, we let the mind go chasing after any thoughts that occurred to it, taking up a new thought as soon as it was finished with an old one, spinning its webs to trap us in all kinds of complications. Whatever meditation techniques we tried weren't really

able to stop our distraction. So don't underestimate this method as being too simple. Train yourself to be on top of any objects that make contact or any opinions that intrude on your awareness.

When pride and opinions come pouring out, cry, "Stop! Let me finish first!" This method of calling a halt can really still the defilements immediately, even when they're like two people interrupting each other to speak, the conceit or sense of "self" on one side immediately raising objections before the other side has even finished. Or you might say it's like suddenly running into a dangerous beast -- a tiger or poisonous snake -- with no means of escape. All you can do is simply stop, totally still, and spread thoughts of loving-kindness.

The same holds true here: You simply stop, and that cuts the strength of the defilement or any sense of self that's made a sudden appearance. We have to stop the defilements in their tracks, for if we don't, they'll grow strong and keep intensifying. So we have to stop them right from the first. Resist them right from the first. This way your mindfulness will get used to dealing with them. As soon as you say, "Stop!", things stop immediately. The defilements will grow obedient and won't dare push you around in any way.

If you're going to sit for an hour, make sure that you're mindful right at the mind the whole time. Don't just aim at the pleasure of tranquility. Sit and watch the sensations within the mind to see how it's centered.

Don't concern yourself with any cravings or feelings that arise. Even if pain arises, in whatever way, don't pay it any attention. Keep being mindful of the centered normalcy of the mind at all times. The mind won't stray off to any pleasures or pains, but will let go of them all, seeing the pains as an affair of the aggregates, because the aggregates are inconstant. Feelings are inconstant. The body's inconstant. That's the way they have to be.

When a pleasant feeling arises, the craving that wants pleasure is contented with it and wants to stay with that pleasure as long as possible. But when there's pain, it acts in an entirely opposite way, because pain hurts. When pains arise as we sit for long periods of time, the mind gets agitated because craving pushes for a change. It wants us to adjust things in this way or that. *We have to train ourselves to disband the craving instead.* If pains grow strong in the body, we have to practice staying at equanimity by realizing that they're the pains of the aggregates -- and not our pain -- until the mind is no longer agitated and can return to a normal state of equanimity.

Even if the equanimity isn't complete, don't worry about it. Simply make sure that the mind doesn't struggle to change the situation. Keep disbanding the struggling, the craving.

If the pain is so unbearable that you have to change positions, don't make the change while the mind is really worked up. Keep sitting still, watch how far the pain goes,

and change positions only when the right moment comes. Then as you stretch out your leg, make sure that the mind is still centered, still at equanimity. Stay that way for about five minutes, and the fierce pain will go away. But watch out: When a pleasant feeling replaces the pain, the mind will like it. So you have to use mindfulness to keep the mind neutral and at equanimity.

Practice this in all your activities, because the mind tends to get engrossed with pleasant feelings. It can even get engrossed with neutral feelings. So you have to keep your mindfulness firmly established, knowing feelings for what they really are: inconstant and stressful, with no real pleasure to them at all. Contemplate pleasant feelings to see them as nothing but stress. You have to keep doing this at all times.

Don't get infatuated with pleasant feelings, for if you do, you fall into more suffering and stress, because craving wants nothing but pleasure even though the aggregates have no pleasure to offer. The physical and mental aggregates are all stressful. If the mind can rise above pleasure, above pain, above feeling, *right there is where it gains release.*

Please understand this: It's release from feeling. If the mind hasn't yet gained release from feeling -- if it still wants pleasure, is still attached to pleasure and pain -- then try to notice the state of mind at the moments when it's neutral toward feeling. That will enable it to gain release from suffering and stress.

So we have to practice a lot with feelings of physical pain and, at the same time, to make an effort to comprehend pleasant feelings as well, for the pleasant feelings connected with the subtle defilements of passion and craving are things we don't really understand.

We think that they're true pleasure, which makes us want them. This wanting is craving -- and the Buddha tells us to abandon craving and passion for name and form. "Passion" here means wanting to get nothing but pleasure and then becoming entangled in liking or disliking what results. It means that we're entangled in the delicious flavors of feelings, regardless of whether they're physical feelings or mental ones.

We should come to realize that when a feeling of physical pain gets very strong, we *can* handle it by using mindfulness to keep the mind from struggling. Then, even if there's a great deal of physical pain, we can let go. Even though the body may be agitated, the mind isn't agitated along with it. But to do this, you first have to practice separating feelings from the mind while you're still strong and healthy.

As for the feelings that come with desire, if we accumulate them, they lead to even greater suffering. So don't think of them as being easeful or comfortable, because that's delusion. You have to keep track of how feelings -- no matter what the sort -- are all inconstant, stressful and not-self. If you can let go of feeling, you'll become disenchanted with form, feelings, perceptions,

thought-formations, and consciousness that carry feelings of pleasure. But if you don't contemplate these things, you'll stay infatuated with them.

So try noticing when the mind is in this infatuated state. Is it empty and at peace? If it's attached, you'll see that it's dirty and defiled because it's deluded into clinging. As soon as there's pain, it grows all agitated.

If the mind is addicted to the three kinds of feeling -- pleasant, painful, and neither pleasant nor painful -- then it has to endure suffering and stress. We have to see the inconstancy, stressfulness, and not-selfness of the body and mind so that we won't cling. We won't cling whether we look outside or in. We'll be empty -- empty because of our lack of attachment. We'll know that the mind isn't suffering from stress. The more deeply we look inside, the more we'll see that the mind is truly empty of attachment. This is how we gain release from suffering and stress. It's the simplest way to gain release, but if we don't really understand, it's the hardest.

Thus you absolutely have to keep working at letting go. The moment the mind latches onto anything, make it let go. And then notice to see that when you tell the mind to let go, it does let go. When you tell it to stop, it stops. When you tell it to be empty, it's really and truly empty. This method of watching the mind is extremely useful, but we're rarely interested in contemplating to the point of becoming adept and resourceful at disbanding our own sufferings. We practice in a leisurely, casual way, and

don't know which points we should correct, where we should disband things, what we should let go of. And so we keep circling around with suffering and attachment.

We have to figure out how to find our opportunity to disband suffering with every moment. We can't just live, sleep, and eat at our ease.

We need to find ways to examine and contemplate all things, using our mindfulness and discernment to see their emptiness of "self." Only then, will we be able to loosen our attachments. If we don't know with real mindfulness and discernment, our practice won't be able to lead us out of suffering and stress at all.

Every defilement -- each one in the list of sixteen -- is hard to abandon. Still, they don't arise all sixteen at once, but only one at a time. If you know the features of their arising, you can let them go. The first step is to recognize their faces clearly, because you have to realize that they're burning hot every time they arise. If they have you sad or upset, it's easy to know them. If they have you happy, they're harder to detect. So you first have to learn to recognize the mind at normalcy, keeping your words and deeds at normalcy, too. "Normalcy" here means being free of liking and disliking.

It's a question of purity in virtue -- just as when we practice restraint of the senses. Normalcy is the basic foundation. If the mind isn't at normalcy -- if it likes this or dislikes that -- that means your restraint of the senses isn't pure. For instance, when you see a sight with the eye

or hear a sound with the ear, you don't get upset as long as no real pains arise, but if you get distracted and absentminded as the pains get more and more earnest, your precepts will suffer, and you'll end up all agitated.

So don't underestimate even the smallest things. Use your mindfulness and discernment to disband things, to destroy them, and to keep working at your investigation.

Then, even if serious events happen, you'll be able to let go of them. If your attachments are heavy, you'll be able to let go of them. If they're many, you'll be able to thin them out.

The same holds true with intermediate defilements: the five Hindrances. Any liking for sights, sounds, smells, tastes, and tactile sensations is the Hindrance of sensual desire. If you don't like what you see, hear, etc., that's the Hindrance of ill will. These Hindrances of liking and disliking defile the mind, making it agitated and scattered, unable to grow calm. Try observing the mind when it's dominated by the five Hindrances to see whether or not it's in a state of suffering. Do you recognize these intermediate defilements when they enshroud your mind?

The Hindrance of sensual desire is like a dye that clouds clear water, making it murky -- and when the mind is murky, it's suffering. Ill will as a Hindrance is irritability and dissatisfaction, and the Hindrance of sloth and torpor is a state of drowsiness and lethargy -- a condition of refusing to deal with anything at all, burying yourself in sleep and lazy forgetfulness. All the Hindrances,

including the final pair -- restlessness and anxiety and uncertainty -- cloak the mind in darkness. This is why you need to be resilient in fighting-them-off at every moment and in investigating them so that you can weaken and eliminate every form of defilement -- from the gross to the middling and on to the subtle -- from the mind.

The practice of the Dhamma is very delicate work, requiring that you use all your mindfulness and discernment in probing and comprehending the body and mind.

When you look into the body, try to see the truth of how it's inconstant, stressful, and nothing more than physical elements. If you don't contemplate in this way, your practice will simply grope around and won't be able to release you from suffering and stress -- for the sufferings caused by the defilements concocting things in the mind are more than many.

The mind is full of all kinds of tricks. Sometimes you may gain some insight through mindfulness and discernment -- becoming bright, empty, and at peace -- only to find the defilements slipping in to spoil things, cloaking the mind in total darkness once more, so that you get distracted and can't know anything clearly.

We each have to find special strategies in reading ourselves so that we don't get lost in distractions. Desire is a big troublemaker here, and so is distraction. Torpor and lethargy -- *all* the Hindrances -- are enemies blocking your way.

The fact that you haven't seen anything all the way through is because these characters are blocking your way and have you surrounded. You have to find a way to destroy them using *apt attention*, i.e., a skillful way of making use of the mind. You have to dig down and explore, contemplating to see how these things arise, how they pass away, and what exactly is inconstant, stressful, and not-self. These are questions you have to keep asking yourself so that the mind will really come to know. When you really know inconstancy, you're sure to let go of defilement, craving, and attachment, or at least be able to weaken and thin them out.

It's like having a broom in your hand. Whenever attachment arises, you sweep it away until the mind can no longer grow attached to anything, for there's nothing left for it to be attached to. You've seen that everything is inconstant, so what's there to latch onto?

When you're persistent in contemplating to see your inconstancy, stress and not-selfness, the mind feels ease because you've loosened your attachments. This is the marvel of the Dhamma: an ease of body and mind completely free from entanglement in the defilements. It's truly special.

Before, the ignorance obscuring the mind caused you to wander about spellbound by sights, sounds, and so forth, so that defilement, craving, and attachment had you under their power. But now, mindfulness and discernment break the spell by seeing that there's no self to these things,

nothing real to them at all. They simply arise and pass away with every moment. There's not the least little bit of "me" or "mine" to them at all. Once we really know with mindfulness and discernment, we sweep everything clean, leaving nothing but pure Dhamma with no sense of self at all. We see nothing but inconstancy, stress, and not-selfness, with no pleasure or pain.

The Lord Buddha taught, "*Sabbe dhamma anatta* -- All things are not-self." Both the compounded and the uncompounded -- which is *nibbana*, the transcendent -- are not-self. There's just Dhamma. *This is very important.* There's no sense of self there, but what *is* there, is Dhamma.

This isn't the extinction taught by the wrong view of annihilationism; it's the extinction of all attachment to "me" and "mine." All that remains is Deathlessness -- the undying Dhamma, the undying property -- free from birth, ageing, illness, and death. Everything still remains as it was, it hasn't been annihilated anywhere; the only things annihilated are the defilements together with all suffering and stress.

It's called "*suñño*" -- empty -- because it's empty of the label of self. *This Deathlessness is the true marvel the Buddha discovered and taught to awaken us.*

This is why it's so worth looking-in, to penetrate clear through the inconstancy, stress, and not-selfness of the five aggregates, for what then remains is the natural Dhamma free from birth, ageing, illness, and death. It's

called Unbinding, Emptiness, the Unconditioned: These names all mean the same thing. They're simply conventional designations that also have to be let go so that you can dwell in the aspect of mind devoid of any sense of self.

So the paths, fruitions, and *nibbana* are not something to hope for in a future life by developing a vast heap of perfections. Some people like to point out that the Lord Buddha had to accumulate so many, many virtues -- but what about you? You don't consider how many lives have passed while you still have yet to attain the goal, all because of your stupidity in continually finding excuses for yourself.

The basic principles that the Lord Buddha taught -- such as the four foundations of mindfulness, the four Noble Truths, the three characteristics of inconstancy, stress, and not-selfness -- are right here inside you, so probe on in to contemplate them until you know them.

Defilement, craving, and attachment are right here inside you, too, so contemplate them until you gain true insight. Then you'll be able to let them go, no longer latching onto them as really being "me" or "mine." This way you'll gain release from suffering and stress within yourself.

Don't keep excusing yourself by relying, for instance, on the miraculous powers of some object or waiting to build up the perfections. Don't think in those terms. Think, instead, of what the defilements are like right here and now: Is it better to disband them or to fall in with them? If

you fall in with them, is there suffering and stress? You have to find out the truth within yourself so as to get rid of your stupidity and delusion in thinking that this bodily frame of suffering is really happiness.

We're all stuck in this delusion because we don't open our eyes. This is why we have to keep discussing these issues, giving advice and digging out the truth so that you'll give rise to the mindfulness and discernment that will enable you to know yourself.

The fact that you've begun to see things, to acknowledge the defilements and stress within yourself to at least some extent, is very beneficial. It's better that we talk about these things than about anything else, so that we'll gain knowledge about suffering and its cause, about how to contemplate body, feelings, mind, and mental qualities so as to disband our suffering and stress.

This way we can reduce our sufferings because we'll be letting go of the defilements that scorch the mind and get it agitated. Our mindfulness and discernment will gradually be able to eliminate the defilements and cravings from the heart.

This practice of ours, if we really do it and really come to know, will really reduce our sufferings. This will attract others to follow our example. We won't have to advertise, for they'll have to notice. We don't have to brag about what level we've attained or what degrees we've earned. We don't have any of that here, for all we talk about is suffering, stress, the defilements, not-self. If we know

with real mindfulness and discernment, we can scrape away our defilements, cravings, and attachments, and the good results will be right there inside us.

So now that we have this opportunity, we should make a concerted effort for the sake of our own progress. Don't let your life pass under the influence of defilement, craving, and attachment. Make an effort to correct yourself in this area every day, every moment, and you're sure to progress in your practice of destroying your defilements and disbanding your suffering and stress at all times.

This business of sacrificing defilements or sacrificing your sense of self is very important because it gives rewards -- peace, normalcy, freedom with every moment - - *right here in the heart*. The practice is, thus, something really worthy of interest. If you're not interested in the practice of searching out and destroying the diseases of defilement, of your own suffering and stress, you'll have to stay stuck there in repeated suffering along with every other ignorant person in the world.

When Mara -- temptation -- tried to stop the Buddha's efforts by telling him that within seven days he would become a Universal Emperor, the Buddha answered, "I know already! Don't try to deceive me or tempt me." Because the Buddha had the ability to know such things instantly for himself, Mara was continually defeated.

But what about you? Are you a disciple of the Lord Buddha or of Mara? Whenever temptation appears --

there you go, following him hook, line, and sinker, with no sense of weariness or dispassion at all. If we're really disciples of the Buddha we have to go *against* the flow of defilement, craving, and attachment, establishing ourselves in good qualities -- beginning with morality, which forms the ideal principle for protecting ourselves. Then we can gain release from suffering by working from the level of the precepts on to mental calm and, then, using discernment to see inconstancy, stress, and not-self. This is a high level of discernment, you know: the discernment that penetrates not-self.

At any rate, the important point is that you not believe your defilements. Even though you may still have the effluents of ignorance or craving in your mind, always keep making use of mindfulness and discernment as your means of knowing, letting go, scrubbing things clean. When these effluents come to tempt you, simply stop. Let go. Refuse to go along with them.

If you believe them when they tell you to latch onto things, you'll simply continue being burned and agitated by desire. But if you don't go along with them, the desires in the mind will gradually loosen, subside, and eventually cease.

So in training the mind, you have to take desire as your battlefield in the same way you would in treating an addiction: If you aren't intent on defeating it, there's no way you can escape being a slave to it repeatedly.

We have to use mindfulness as a protective shield and discernment as our weapon to cut through and destroy our desires.

That way our practice will result in steady progress, enabling us to keep abreast of defilement, craving and attachment with more and more precision.

If, in your practice, you can read and decipher the mind, you'll find your escape route, following the footsteps of the Noble Ones. But as long as you don't see it, you'll think that there are no paths, no fruitions, no *nibbana*. *Only when you can disband the defilements will you know*. You really have to be able to disband them in order to know for yourself that the paths, fruitions, and *nibbana* really exist and really can disband suffering and stress. This is something you have to know for yourself. It's timeless:

No matter what the time or season, whenever you have the mindfulness to stop and let go, there's no suffering. As you learn to do this over and over, more and more frequently, the defilements grow weaker and weaker. This is why it's *ehipassiko* -- something you can invite other people to come and see, for all people who do this can disband defilement and suffering. If they contemplate until they see inconstancy, stress, and not-self, they'll no longer have any attachments, and their minds will become Dhamma, will become free.

There's no need to get all excited about anyone outside -- spirit entities or whatever -- because success in the

practice lies right here in the heart. Look into it until you penetrate clearly all the way through yourself, sweep away all your attachments, and then you'll have this "ehipassiko" within you. "Come and see! Come and see!" But if there's still any defilement, then it's, "Come and see! Come and see the defilements burning me!" It can work both ways, you know.

If you disband the defilements, let go, and come to a stop, then it's, "Come and see how the defilements are gone, how the mind is empty right here and now!" This is something anyone can know, something you can know thoroughly for yourself with no great difficulty.

Turning to look into the mind isn't all that difficult, you know. You don't have to travel far to do it. You can watch it at any time, in any posture. True things and false are all there within you, but if you don't study yourself within, you won't know them -- for you spend all your time studying outside, the things of the world that worldly people study.

If you want to study the Dhamma, you have to turn around and come inside, watching right at the body, at feelings, at the mind, at mental qualities, until you know the truth that the body isn't you or yours; it's inconstant, stressful, and not-self. Feelings are inconstant, stressful, and not-self. The mind is inconstant, stressful, and not-self as well.

Then, look at the Dhamma of mental qualities: They're inconstant and stressful. They arise, persist, and pass

away. If you don't latch on and can become free from any sense of self right here at mental qualities, the mind becomes free.

If you understand correctly, the mind is really easy to deal with. If you don't, it's the exact opposite. Like pushing a light switch: If you hit the "on" button, the light is immediately bright. With the "off" button, it's immediately dark.

The same holds true with the mind. If your knowledge is wrong, it's dark. If your knowledge is right, it's bright. Then look to see if there's anything worth clinging to. If you really look, you'll see that there isn't, for all the things you can cling to are suffering and stress -- affairs of ignorance, speculation, day-dreaming, taking issue with things, self, people, useless chatter, endless news reports. But if you focus on probing into the mind, there's nothing -- nothing but letting go to be empty and free.

This is where the Dhamma arises easily -- as easily as defilements arise on the other side, simply that you're now looking from a different angle and have the choice: Do you want the dark angle or the bright? Should you stop or keep running? Should you be empty or entangled? It's yours to decide within you.

The Dhamma is something marvelous and amazing. If you start out with right understanding, you can understand all the way through. If you get snagged at any point, you can examine and contemplate things to see where you're

still attached. Keep cross-examining back and forth, and then all will become clear.

We're already good at following the knowledge of defilement and craving, so now we have to follow the knowledge of mindfulness and discernment instead. Keep cross-examining the defilements. Don't submit to them easily. You have to resist their power and refuse to fall in with them. That's when you'll really come to know. When you really know, everything stops. Craving stops, your wanderings stop, likes, hatreds -- this knowledge sweeps everything away. But if you don't know, you keep gathering things up until you're thoroughly embroiled: arranging this, adjusting that, wanting this and that, and letting your sense of self rear its ugly head. Think of it like this: You're a huge playhouse showing a true-to-life drama whose hero, heroine, and villains -- which are conventional suppositions -- are entirely within you.

If you strip away all conventional suppositions and designations, what you have left is nothing but Dhamma: freedom, emptiness. And simply being free and empty of any sense of self is enough to bring the whole show to an end.

Condensed Breath Meditation

Kor Khao Suan Luang (Kee Nanayon)

Translated by Thanissaro Bhikkhu

There are lots of people who are ashamed to talk about their own defilements, but who feel no shame at talking about the defilements of others. Those who are willing to report their own diseases -- their own defilements -- in a straightforward manner are few and far between. As a result, the disease of defilement is hushed-up and kept secret, so that we don't realize how serious and widespread it is. We all suffer from it, and, yet, no one is open about it. No one is really interested in diagnosing his or her own defilements....

We have to find a skillful approach if we hope to wipe out this disease, and we have to be open about it, admitting our defilements from the grossest to the most subtle levels, dissecting them down to their minutest details. Only then will we gain from our practice. If we look at ourselves in a superficial way, we may feel that we're already fine just as we are, already know all we need to know. But then when the defilements let loose with full force as anger or delusion, we pretend that nothing is wrong --and this way the defilements become a hidden disease, hard to catch hold of, hard to diagnose....

We have to be strong in fighting-off defilements, cravings and illusions of every sort. We have to test our strength against them and bring them under our power. If we can bring them under our power, we can ride on their backs. If we can't, they'll have to ride on our backs, making us do their work, pulling us around by the nose, making us want, wearing us out in all sorts of ways.

So are we still beasts of burden? Are we beasts of burden because defilement and craving are riding on our backs? Have they put a ring through our noses? When you get to the point when you've had enough, you have to stop --stop and watch the defilements to see how they come into being, what they want, what they eat, what they find delicious. Make it your sport--watching the defilements and making them starve, like a person giving up an addiction...See if it gets the defilements upset. Do they hunger to the point where they're salivating? Then don't let them eat. No matter what, don't let them eat what they're addicted to. After all, there are plenty of other things to eat. You have to be hard on them--hard on your "self"-- like this..."Hungry? Well go ahead and be hungry! You're going to die? Fine! Go ahead and die!" If you can take this attitude, you'll be able to

win out over all sorts of addictions, all sorts of defilements --because you're not pandering to desire, you're not nourishing the desire which exists for the sake of finding flavor in physical things. It's time you stopped, time you gave up feeding these things. If they're going to waste away and die, let them die. After all, why should you keep them fat and well fed?

No matter what, you must keep putting the heat on your cravings and defilements until they wither and waste away. Don't let them raise their heads. Keep them under your thumb. This is the sort of straightforward practice you have to follow. If you have endurance, if you put up a persistent fight until they're all burned away, then there's no other victory which can come anywhere near, no other victory which is anywhere near a match for victory over the cravings and defilements in your own heart.

This is why the Buddha taught us to put the heat on the defilements in all our activities--sitting, standing, walking and lying down. If we don't do this, they'll burn us in all our activities....

If you consider things carefully, you'll see that the Buddha's teachings all are exactly right, both in how they tell us to examine the diseases of defilement, and in how they tell us to let go, destroy and extinguish defilement. All the steps are there, so we needn't go study anywhere else. Every point in his doctrine and discipline shows us the way, so we needn't wonder how we can go about examining and doing away with these diseases. This becomes mysterious and hard to know only if you study his teachings without making reference to doing away with your own defilements. People don't like to talk about their own defilements, so they end up completely ignorant. They grow old and die without knowing a thing about their own defilements at all.

When we start to practice, when we come to comprehend how the defilements burn our own hearts, that's when we gradually come to know ourselves. To understand suffering and defilement and learn how to extinguish defilement gives us space to breathe....

When we learn how to put out the fires of defilement, how to destroy them, it means we have tools. We can be confident in ourselves--no doubts,

no straying of into other paths of practice, because we're sure to see that practicing in this way, contemplating inconstancy, stress and not-selfness in this way at all times, really gets rid of our defilements.

The same holds true with virtue, concentration and discernment. They're our tools--and we need a full set. We need the discernment which comes with Right View, and the virtue which comes with self-discipline. Virtue is very important. Virtue and discernment are like our right and left hands. If one of our hands is dirty, it can't wash itself. You need to use both hands to keep both hands washed and clean. Thus wherever there is virtue, you have to have discernment. Wherever there is discernment, you have to have virtue. Discernment is what enables you to know; virtue is what enables you to let go, to relinquish, to destroy your addictions. Virtue isn't just a matter of the five or eight precepts, you know. It has to be deal with the finest details. Whatever your discernment sees as a cause of suffering, you have to stop, to let go.

Virtue is something which gets very subtle and precise. Letting go, giving up, renouncing,

abstaining, cutting away and destroying: All of these things are an affair of virtue. This is why virtue and discernment have to go together, just as our right and left hands have to help each other. They help each other wash away defilement. That's when your mind will be able to become centered, to be bright and clear. These things show their benefits right at the mind. If we don't have these tools, it's as if we had no hands or feet: We wouldn't be able to get anywhere at all. We have to use our tools--virtue and discernment--to destroy defilement. That's when our minds will benefit....

This is why the Buddha taught us to keep training in virtue, concentration and discernment. We have to keep fit in training these things. If we don't keep up the training as we should, our tools for extinguishing suffering and defilement won't be sharp, won't be of much use. They won't be a match for the defilements. The defilements have monstrous powers for burning our mind in the twinkling of an eye. Say that mind is quiet and neutral: The slightest sensory contact can set things burning in an instant by making us pleased or displeased. Why?

Sensory contact is our measuring-stick for seeing how firm or weak our mindfulness is. Most of the time, it stirs things up. As soon as there's contact by way of the ear or eye, the defilements are very quick. When this is the case, how can we keep things under control? How are we going to gain control over our eyes? How are we going to gain control over our ears, our nose, our tongue, our body and mind? How can we get mindfulness and discernment in charge of these things? This is a matter of practice, pure and simple...our own affair, something by which we can test ourselves, to see why defilements flare up so quickly when sensory contact takes place.

Say, for instance, that we hear someone criticizing someone else. We can listen and not get upset. But say that the thought occurs to us, "They're actually criticizing me." As soon as we concoct up this "me", we're immediately angry and displeased. If we concoct very much of this "me", we can get very angry. Just this fact should enable us to observe that as soon as our "self" gets involved, we suffer immediately. This is how it happens. If no sense of self comes out to get involved, we can remain calm and indifferent. When they criticize other people we can stay indifferent, but as soon as we conclude that

they're criticizing us, our "self" appears and immediately gets involved--and we immediately burn with defilement. Why?

You have to pay close attention to this. As soon as your "self" arises, suffering arises in the very same instant. The same holds true even if you're just thinking. The "self" you think up spreads out into all sorts of issues. The mind gets scattered all over the place with defilement, craving and attachments. It has very little mindfulness and discernment watching over it, so it gets dragged all over the place by defilement and craving.

And yet we don't realize it. We think we're just fine. Is there anyone among us who realizes that this is what's happening? We're too weighted-down, weighted-down with our own delusions. No matter how much the mind is smothered in the defilement of delusion, we don't realize it, for it keeps us deaf and blind....

There are no physical tools you can use to detect or cure this disease of defilement, because it arises only at sensory contact. There's no substance to it. It's like a match in a matchbox. As long as the match doesn't

come into contact with the friction strip on the side of the box, it won't give rise to fire. But as soon as we strike it against the side of the box, it bursts into flame. If it goes out right then, all that gets burned is the match-head. If it doesn't stop at the match-head, it'll burn the matchstick. If it doesn't stop with the matchstick, and meets up with anything flammable, it can grow into an enormous fire.

When defilement arises in the mind, it starts from the slightest contact. If we can be quick to put it out right there, it's like striking a match which flares up for an instant and then dies down right in the match-head. The defilement disbands right there. But if we don't put it out the instant it arises, and let it start concocting issues, it's like pouring fuel into a fire.

We have to observe the diseases of defilement in our own minds to see what their symptoms are, why they are so quick to flare up. They can't stand to be disturbed. The minute you disturb them, they flare up into flame. When this is the case, what can we do to prepare ourselves beforehand? How can we stock up on mindfulness before sensory contact strikes?

The way to stock up is to practice meditation, as when we keep the breath in mind. This is what gets our mindfulness prepared, so that we can keep ahead of defilement, so that we can keep it from arising as long as we have our theme of meditation as an inner shelter for the mind.

The mind's outer shelter is the body, which is composed of physical elements, but its inner shelter is the theme of meditation we use to train its mindfulness to be focused and aware. Whatever theme we use, that's the inner shelter for the mind which keeps it from wandering around, concocting thoughts and imaginings. This is why we need a theme of meditation. Don't let the mind chase after its preoccupations the way ordinary people who don't meditate do.

Once we have a meditation theme to catch this monkey of a mind so that day by day it becomes less and less willful, it will gradually calm down, calm down until it can stand firm for long or short periods, depending on how much we train and observe ourselves.

Now, as for how we do breath meditation: The texts say to breathe in long and out long --heavy or light-- and then in short and out short, again heavy or light. Those are the first steps of the training. After that, we don't have to focus on the length of the in-breath or out-breath. Instead, we simply gather our awareness at any one point of the breath, and keep this up until the mind settles down and is still. When the mind is still, you, then, focus on the stillness of the mind at the same time you're aware of the breath.

At this point you don't focus directly on the breath. You focus on the mind which is still and at normalcy. You focus continuously on the normalcy of the mind at the same time you are aware of the breath coming in and out, without actually focusing on the breath. You simply stay with the mind, but you watch it with each in-and-out breath. Usually when you are doing physical work and your mind is at normalcy, you can know what you're doing, so why can't you be aware of the breath? After all, it's part of the body.

Some of you are new at this, which is why you don't know how you can focus on the mind at normalcy with each in-and-out breath without focusing

directly on the breath itself. What we're doing here is practicing how to be aware of the body and mind, pure and simple, in and of themselves....

Start out by focusing on the breath for about 5, 10 or 20 minutes. Breathe in long and out long, or in short and out short. At the same time, notice the stages in how the mind feels, how it begins to settle down when you have mindfulness watching over the breath. You've got to make a point of observing this, because usually you breathe out of habit, with your attention far away. You don't focus on the breath, you're not really aware of it. This leads you to think that it's hard to stay focused there, but actually it's very easy. After all, the breath comes in and out on its own, by its very nature. There's nothing at all difficult about breathing. It's not like other themes of meditation. For instance, if you're going to practice recollection of the Buddha, or buddho, you have to keep on repeating buddho, buddho, buddho.

Actually, if you want, you can repeat buddho in the mind with each in-and-out breath, but only in the very beginning stages. You repeat buddho to keep the mind from concocting thoughts about other things. Simply by keeping up this repetition you can

weaken the mind's tendency to stray, for the mind can take on only one object at a time. This is something you have to observe. The repetition is to prevent the mind from thinking up thoughts and clambering after them.

After you've kept up the repetition--you don't have to count the number of times--the mind will settle down to be aware of the breath with each in-and-out breath. It will begin to be still, neutral and at normalcy.

This is when you focus on the mind instead of the breath. Let go of the breath and focus on the mind--but still be aware of the breath on the side. You don't have to make note of how long or short the breath is. Make note of the mind which stays at normalcy with each in-and-out breath. Remember this carefully so that you can put it into practice.

The Posture:

For focusing on the breath, sitting is a better posture than standing, walking or lying down, because the sensations that come with the other postures often overcome the sensations of the breath. Walking jolts the body around too much, standing for a long time

can make you tired, and if the mind settles down when you're lying down, you tend to fall asleep. With sitting, it's possible to stay in one position and keep the mind firmly settled for a long time. You can observe the subtleties of the breath and the mind naturally and automatically.

Here I'd like to condense the steps of breath meditation to show how all four of the tetrads mentioned in the texts can be practiced at once. In other words, is it possible to focus on the body, feelings, the mind and the Dhamma all in one sitting? This is an important question for all of us. You could, if you wanted to, precisely follow all the steps in the texts so as to develop strong powers of mental absorption (jhana), but it takes a lot of time. It's not appropriate for those of us who are old and have only a little time left.

What we need is a way of gathering our awareness at the breath long enough to make the mind firm, and then go straight to examining how all formations are inconstant, stressful and not-self, so that we can see the truth of all formations with each in-and-out breath. If you can keep at this continually, without break, your mindfulness will become firm and snug

enough for you to give rise to the discernment which will enable you to gain clear knowledge and vision.

So what now follows are the steps in practicing a condensed form of breath meditation....Give them a try until you find they give rise to knowledge of your own within you. You're sure to give rise to knowledge of your very own.

The first thing when you are going to meditate on the breath is to sit straight and keep your mindfulness firm. Breathe in. Breathe out. Make the breath feel open and at ease. Don't tense your hands, your feet, or any of your joints at all. You have to keep your body in a posture that feels appropriate to your breathing. At the beginning, breathe in long and out long, fairly heavily, and gradually the breath will shorten--sometimes heavy and sometimes light. Then breathe in short and out short for about 10 or 15 minutes, and then change.

After a while, when you stay focused mindfully on it, the breath will gradually change. Watch it change for as many minutes as you like, then be aware of the whole breath, all of its subtle sensations. This is the third step, the third step of the first tetrad: sabba-

kaya-patisamvedi--focusing on how the breath affects the whole body by watching all the breath sensations in all the various parts of the body, and in particular the sensations related to the in-and-out breath.

From there, you focus on the sensation of the breath at any one point. When you do this right, and for a fairly long while, the body --the breath-- will gradually grow still. The mind will grow calm. In other words, the breath grows still together with the awareness of the breath. When the subtleties of the breath grow still, at the same time that your undistracted awareness settles down, the breath grows even more still. All the sensations in the body gradually grow more and more still. This is the fourth step, the stilling of bodily formations.

As soon as this happens, you begin to be aware of the feelings which arise with the stilling of the body and mind. Whether they are feelings of pleasure or rapture or whatever, they will appear clearly enough for you to contemplate them.

The stages through which you have already passed-- watching the breath come in and out, long or short--

should be enough to make you realize --even though you may not have focused on the idea-- that the breath is inconstant. It's continually changing, from in long and out long to in short and out short, from heavy to light and so forth. This should enable you to read the breath, to understand that there's nothing constant to it at all. It changes on its own from one moment to the next.

Once you have realized the inconstancy of the body, i.e. of the breath, you'll be able to see the subtle sensations of pleasure and pain in the realm of feeling. So now you watch feelings, right there in the same place where you have been focusing on the breath. Even though they are feelings which arise from the stillness of the body or mind, they are nevertheless inconstant even in that stillness. They can change. So these changing sensations in the realm of feeling exhibit inconstancy in and of themselves, just like the breath.

When you see change in the body, change in feelings and change in the mind, this is called seeing the Dhamma, i.e. seeing inconstancy. You have to understand this correctly. Practicing the first tetrad of breath meditation contains all four tetrads of

breath meditation. In other words, you see the inconstancy of the body, and then contemplate feeling. You see the inconstancy of feeling, and then contemplate the mind. The mind, too, is inconstant. This inconstancy of the mind is the Dhamma. To see the Dhamma is to see this inconstancy.

When you see the true nature of all inconstant things, then keep track of that inconstancy at all times, with every in-and-out breath. Keep this up in all your activities to see what happens next.

What happens next is dispassion. Letting go. This is something you have to know for yourself.

This is what condensed breath meditation is like. I call it condensed because it contains all the steps all at once. You don't have to do one step at a time. Simply focus at one point: Focus on the body, and you'll see the inconstancy of the body. When you see the inconstancy of the body, you'll have to see feeling. Feeling will have to show its inconstancy. The mind's sensitivity to feeling, or its thoughts and imaginings, are also inconstant. All of these things keep on changing. This is how you know inconstancy....

If you can become skilled at looking and knowing in this way, you'll be struck with the inconstancy, stressfulness and not-selfness of your "self", and you'll meet with the genuine Dhamma. The Dhamma which is constantly changing like a burning fire, burning with inconstancy, stress and not-selfness, is the Dhamma of the impermanence of all formations.

But further in, in the mind or in the property of consciousness, is something special, beyond the reach of any kind of fire. There, there is no suffering or stress of any kind at all. This thing which lies "inside": You could say that lies within the mind, but it isn't really in the mind. It's simply that the contact is there at the mind. There's no way that you can really describe it. Only the extinguishing of all defilement will lead you to know it for yourself.

This "something special" within exists by its very nature, but defilements have it surrounded on all sides. All these counterfeit things --the defilements-- keep getting in the way and taking possession of everything, so that this special nature remains imprisoned inside at all times. Actually, there is nothing in the dimension of time which can be compared with it. There's nothing by which you can

label it, but it is something which you can pierce through to see --i.e. by piercing through defilement, craving and attachment into the state of mind which is pure, bright and silent. This is the only thing that's important.

But it doesn't have only one level. There are many levels, from the outer bark to the inner bark and on to the sapwood before you reach the heartwood. The genuine Dhamma is like the heartwood, but there's a lot to the mind which isn't heartwood: The roots, the branches and leaves of the tree are more than many, but there's only a little heartwood. The parts which aren't heartwood will gradually decay and disintegrate, while the heartwood doesn't decay. That's one kind of comparison we can make. It's like a tree which dies standing. The leaves fall away, the branches rot away, the bark and sapwood rot away, leaving nothing but the true heartwood. That's one comparison we can make with this thing we call deathless, this property which has no birth, no death, no changing. We can also call it nibbana or the Unconditioned. It's all the same thing.

Now, then. Isn't this something worth trying to break through to see?...

Sources: DharmaNet International and Access-to-Insight

Looking Inward

by

Upasika Kee Nanayon

Translated from the Thai by Thanissaro Bhikkhu

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Introduction

Kor Khao-suan-luang is the penname of Upasika Kee Nanayon (1909 - 1978), one of the foremost women teachers of Dhamma in modern Thailand.

Following Thai tradition, she took her penname from the name of the place where she lived: the forested hill in Rajburi province where she had established a women's center for practicing Dhamma. Although she did not allow men to reside in her center, both men and women were welcome to visit on the weekly Observance days and listen to her talks. Known for the simplicity of her way of life, and the direct, uncompromising style of her teaching, she had a way with words evident not only in her talks but also in her poetry, which was widely published.

Many of her talks were transcribed and printed for free distribution. Six have already been translated into English and published in a volume entitled, *Directing to Self Penetration*. This present collection consists of a brief outline of the practice which she wrote as an introduction to one of her early books of talks, plus excerpts from her later talks which help flesh out the outline.

Although this collection is too brief to serve as a complete guide to the practice, my hope is that it will provide insight and inspiration for all those who, in their search for freedom and happiness, have

begun looking inward to the subtleties of their own minds.

The translator

The Practice in Brief

March 17, 1954

Those who practice the Dhamma should train themselves to understand in the following stages:

The training that is easy to learn, gives immediate results, and is suitable for every time, every place, for people of every age and either sex, is to study in the school of this body -- a fathom long, a cubit wide, and a span thick -- with its perceiving mind in charge. This body has many things, ranging from the crude to the subtle, that are well worth knowing.

The steps of the training:

1. To begin with, know that the body is composed of various physical properties, the major ones being the properties of earth, water, fire, and wind; the minor ones being the aspects that adhere to the major ones: things like color, smell, shape, etc.

These properties are unstable (inconstant), stressful, and unclean. If you look into them deeply, you will see that there's no substance to them at all. They are simply impersonal conditions, with nothing worth calling "me" or "mine." When you can clearly perceive the body in these terms, you will be able to let go of any clinging or attachment to it as an entity, your self, someone else, this or that.

2. The second step is to deal with mental phenomena (feelings, perceptions, thought-formations, and consciousness). Focus on keeping track of the truth that these are characterized by arising, persisting, and then disbanding. In other words, their nature is to arise and disband, arise and disband, repeatedly. When you investigate to see this truth, you will be able to let go of your attachments to mental phenomena as entities, as your self, someone else, this or that.

3. Training on the level of practice doesn't simply mean studying, listening, or reading. You have to practice so as to see clearly with your own mind in the following steps:

a. Start out by brushing aside all external concerns and turn to look inside at your own mind until you can know in what ways it is clear or murky, calm or unsettled. The way to do this is to have mindfulness and self-awareness in charge as you keep aware of the body and mind until you've trained the mind to stay firmly in a state of normalcy, i.e., neutrality.

b. Once the mind can stay in a state of normalcy, you will see mental formations or preoccupations in their natural state of arising and disbanding. The mind will be empty, neutral, and still -- neither pleased nor displeased -- and will see physical and mental phenomena as they arise and disband naturally, of their own accord.

c. When the knowledge that there is no self to any of these things becomes thoroughly clear, you will meet with something that lies further inside, beyond all suffering and stress, free from the cycles of change -- deathless -- free from birth as well as death, since all things that take birth must by nature age, grow ill, and die.

d. When you see this truth clearly, the mind will be empty, not holding onto anything. It won't even

assume itself to be a mind or anything at all. In other words, it won't latch onto itself as being anything of any sort. All that remains is a pure condition of Dhamma.

e. Those who see this pure condition of Dhamma in full clarity are bound to grow disenchanted with the repeated sufferings of life. When they know the truth of the world and the Dhamma throughout, they will see the results clearly, right in the present, *that there exists that which lies beyond all suffering*. They will know this without having to ask or take it on faith from anyone, for the Dhamma is *paccattam*, i.e., something really to be known for oneself. Those who have seen this truth within themselves will attest to it always.

An Hour's Meditation

March 3, 1977

For those of you who have never sat in meditation, here is how it's done: Fold your legs, one on top of the other, but don't cut off the nerves or the blood flow, or else the breath energy in your legs will stagnate and cause you pain. Sit straight and place your hands, one on top of the other, on your lap.

Hold your head up straight and keep your back straight, too -- as if you had a yardstick sticking down your spine. You have to work at keeping it straight, you know. Don't spend the time slouching down and then stretching up again, or else the mind won't be able to settle down and be still....

Keep the body straight and your mindfulness firm -- firmly with the breath. However coarse or refined your breath may be, simply breathe in naturally. You don't have to force the breath or tense your body. Simply breathe in and out in a relaxed way. Only then will the mind begin to settle down. As soon as the breath grows normally refined and the mind has begun to settle down, focus your attention on the mind itself. If it slips off elsewhere, or any thoughts come in to intrude, simply know right there at the mind. Know the mind right at the mind with every in-and-out breath for the entire hour....

When you focus on the breath, using the breath as a leash to tie the mind in place so that it doesn't go wandering off, you have to use your endurance. That is, you have to endure pain. For example, when you sit for a long time there's going to be pain, because you've never sat for so long before. So first make

sure that you keep the mind normal and neutral. When pain arises, don't focus on the pain. Let go of it as much as you can. Let go of it and focus on your mind....For those of you who've never done this before, it may take a while. Whenever any pain or anything arises, if the mind is affected by craving or defilement, it'll struggle because it doesn't want the pain. All it wants is pleasure.

This is where you have to be patient and endure the pain, *because pain is something that has to occur*. If there's pleasure, don't get enthralled with it. If there's pain, don't push it away. Start out by keeping the mind neutral as your basic stance. Then, whenever pleasure or pain arises, don't get pleased or upset. Keep the mind continuously neutral and figure out how to let go. If there's a lot of pain, you first have to endure it and then relax your attachments. Don't think of the pain as being *your* pain. Let it be the pain of the body, the pain of nature.

If the mind latches tight onto anything, it really suffers. It struggles. So, here, we patiently endure and let go. You have to practice so that you're really good at handling pain. If you can let go of physical pain, you'll be able to let go of all sorts of other

sufferings and pains as well....Keep watching the pain, knowing the pain, letting it go. Once you can let it go, you don't have to use a lot of endurance. It takes a lot of endurance only at the beginning. Once the pain arises, separate the mind from it. Let it be the pain of the body. Don't let the mind be pained, too....

This is something that requires equanimity. If you can maintain equanimity in the face of pleasure or pain, it can make the mind peaceful -- peaceful even though the pain is still pain. The mind keeps knowing, enduring the pain so as to let it go.

After you've worked at this a good while, you'll come to see how important the ways of the mind are. The mind may be hard to train, but if you keep training it -- if you have the time, you can practice at home, at night or early in the morning, keeping watch on your mind -- you'll gain the understanding that comes from mindfulness and discernment. Those who don't train the mind like this go through life -- birth, ageing, illness, and death -- not knowing a thing about the mind at all.

When you know your own mind, then when any really heavy illness comes along, the fact that you know your mind will make the pain less and less. But this is something you have to work at doing correctly. It's not easy, yet once the mind is well trained there's no match for it. It can do away with pain and suffering, and doesn't get restless and agitated. It grows still and cool -- refreshed and blooming right there within itself. So try to experience this still, quiet mind....

This is a really important skill to develop, because it will make craving, defilement, and attachment grow weaker and weaker. All of us have defilements, you know. Greed, anger, and delusion cloud all of our hearts. If we haven't trained ourselves in meditation, our hearts are constantly burning with suffering and stress. Even the pleasure we feel over external things is pleasure only in half-measures, because there's suffering and stress in the delusion that thinks it's pleasure. As for the pleasure that comes from the practice, it's a cool pleasure that lets go of everything, really free from any sense of "me" or "mine." I ask that you reach the Dhamma that's the real meat inside this thing undisturbed by defilement, undisturbed by pain or anything else.

Even though there's pain in the body, you have to figure out how to let it go. The body's simply the four elements -- earth, water, wind, and fire. It has to keep showing its inconstancy and stressfulness, so keep your mindfulness neutral, at equanimity. Let the mind be above its feelings -- above pleasure, above pain, above everything....

All it really takes is endurance -- endurance and relinquishment, letting things go, seeing that they're not us, not ours. This is a point you have to hammer at, over and over again. When we say you have to endure, you *really* have to endure. Don't be willing to surrender. Craving is going to keep coming up and whispering -- telling you to change things, to try for this or that kind of pleasure -- but don't you listen to it. You have to listen to the Buddha -- the Buddha who tells you to let go of craving. Otherwise, craving will plaster and paint things over; the mind will struggle and won't be able to settle down. So you have to give it your all. Look at this hour as a special hour -- special in that you're using special endurance *to keep watch on your own heart and mind.*

A Basic Order in Life

January 29, 1964

The most important thing in the daily life of a person who practices the Dhamma is to keep to the precepts and to care for them more than you care for your life -- to maintain them in a way that the Noble Ones would praise. If you don't have this sort of regard for the precepts, then the vices that run counter to them will become your everyday habits....

Meditators who see that the breaking of a precept is something trifling and insignificant spoil their entire practice. If you can't practice even these basic, beginning levels of the Dhamma, it will ruin all the qualities you'll be trying to develop in the later stages of the practice. This is why you have to stick to the precepts as your basic foundation and to keep a lookout for anything in your behavior that falls short of them. Only then will you be able to benefit from your practice for the sake of eliminating your sufferings with greater and greater precision.

If you simply act in line with the cravings and desires swelling out of the sense of self that has no fear of the fires of defilement, you'll have to suffer

both in this life and in lives to come. If you don't have a sense of conscience -- a sense of shame at the thought of doing shoddy actions, and a fear of their consequences -- your practice can only deteriorate day by day....

When people live without any order to their lives -- without even the basic order that comes with the precepts -- there's no way they can attain purity. We have to examine ourselves:

In what ways at present are we breaking our precepts in thought, word, or deed? If we simply let things pass and aren't intent on examining ourselves to see the harm that comes from breaking the precepts and following the defilements, our practice can only sink lower and lower. Instead of extinguishing defilements and suffering, it will simply succumb to the power of craving. If this is the case, what damage is done? How much freedom does the mind lose? These are things we have to learn for ourselves. When we do, our practice of self-inspection in higher matters will get solid results and won't go straying-off into nonsense. For this reason, whenever craving or defilement shows itself in any

way in any of our actions, we have to catch hold of it and examine what's going on inside the mind.

Once we're aware with real mindfulness and discernment, we'll see the poison and power of the defilements. We'll feel disgust for them and want to extinguish them as much as we can. But if we use our defilements to examine things, they'll say everything is fine. The same as when we're predisposed to liking a certain person: Even if he acts badly, we say he's good. If he acts wrongly, we say he's right. This is the way the defilements are. They say that everything we do is right and throw all the blame on other people, other things. So we can't trust it -- this sense of "self" in which craving and defilement lord it over the heart. We can't trust it at all....

The violence of defilement, or this sense of self, is like that of a fire burning a forest or burning a house. It won't listen to anyone, but simply keeps burning away, burning away inside of you. And that's not all. It's always out to set fire to other people, too.

The fires of suffering, the fires of defilement consume all those who don't contemplate themselves

or who don't have any means of practice for putting them out. People of this sort can't withstand the power of the defilements, can't help but follow along wherever their cravings lead them. The moment they're provoked, they follow in line with these things. This is why the sensations in the mind when provoked by defilement are very important, for they can lead you to do things with no sense of shame, no fear for the consequences of doing evil at all -- which means that you're sure to break your precepts.

Once you've followed the defilements, they feel really satisfied -- like arsonists who feel gleeful when they've set other people's places on fire. As soon as you've called somebody something vile or spread some malicious gossip, the defilements really like it. Your sense of self really likes it, because acting in line with defilement like that gives it real satisfaction. As a consequence, it keeps filling itself with the vices that run counter to the precepts, falling into hell in this very lifetime without realizing it. So take a good look at the violence the defilements do to you, to see whether you should keep socializing with them, to see whether you should regard them as your friends or your enemies....

As soon as any wrong views or ideas come out of the mind, we have to analyze them and turn around so as to catch sight of the facts within us. No matter what issues the defilements raise, focusing on the faults of others, we have to turn around and look within. *When we realize our own faults and can come to our senses:* That's where our study of the Dhamma, our practice of the Dhamma, shows its real rewards.

Continuous Practice

January 14, 1964

The passage for reflection on the four requisites (clothing, food, shelter, and medicine) is a fine pattern for contemplation, but we never actually get down to putting it to use. We're taught to memorize it in the beginning not simply to pass the time of day or so that we can talk about it every now and then, but so that we can use it to contemplate the requisites until we really know them with our own mindfulness and discernment. If we actually get down to contemplating in line with the established pattern, our minds will become much less influenced by unwise thoughts. But it's the rare person who genuinely makes this a continuous practice....For the

most part we're not interested. We don't feel like contemplating this sort of thing. We'd much rather contemplate whether this or that food will taste good or not, and if it doesn't taste good, how to fix it so that it will. That's the sort of thing we like to contemplate.

Try to see the filthiness of food and of the physical properties in general, to see their emptiness of any real entity or self. There's nothing of any substance to the physical properties of the body, which are all rotten and decomposing. The body is like a restroom over a cesspool. We can decorate it on the outside to make it pretty and attractive, but on the inside it's full of the most horrible, filthy things. Whenever we excrete anything, we ourselves are repelled by it; yet even though we're repelled by it, it's there inside us, in our intestines -- decomposing, full of worms, awful smelling. There's just the flimsiest membrane covering it up, yet we fall for it and hold tight to it. We don't see the constant decomposition of this body, in spite of the filth and smells it sends out....

The reason we're taught to memorize the passage for reflecting on the requisites, and to use it to contemplate, is so that we'll see the inconstancy of

the body, to see that there's no "self" to any of it or to any of the mental phenomena we sense with every moment.

* * *

We contemplate mental phenomena to see clearly that they're not-self, to see this with every moment. The moments of the mind -- the arising, persisting, and disbanding of mental sensations -- are very subtle and fast. To see them, the mind has to be quiet. If the mind is involved in distractions, thoughts, and imaginings, we won't be able to penetrate in to see its characteristics as it deals with its objects, to see what the arising and disbanding within it is like.

This is why we have to practice concentration: to make the mind quiet, to provide a foundation for our contemplation. For instance, you can focus on the breath, or be aware of the mind as it focuses on the breath. Actually, when you focus on the breath, you're also aware of the mind. And again, the mind is what knows the breath. So you focus exclusively on the breath together with the mind. Don't think of anything else, and the mind will settle down and

grow still. Once it attains stillness on this level, you've got your chance to contemplate.

Making the mind still so that you can contemplate it is something you have to keep working at in the beginning. The same holds true with training yourself to be mindful and fully aware in all your activities. This is something you really have to work at continuously in this stage, something you have to do all the time. At the same time, you have to arrange the external conditions of your life so that you won't have any concerns to distract you....

Now, of course, the practice is something you can do in any set of circumstances -- for example, when you come home from work you can sit and meditate for a while -- but when you're trying seriously to make it continuous, to make it habitual, it's much more difficult than that. "Making it habitual" means being fully mindful and aware with each in-and-out breath, wherever you go, whatever you do, whether you're healthy, sick, or whatever, and regardless of what happens inside or out. *The mind has to be in a state of all-encompassing awareness while keeping track of the arising and disbanding of mental phenomena at all times* -- to the point where you can stop the

mind from forming thoughts under the power of craving and defilement the way it used to before you began the practice.

Every In-and-out Breath

January 29, 1964

Try keeping your awareness with the breath to see what the still mind is like. It's very simple, all the rules have been laid out, but when you actually try to do it, something resists. It's hard. But when you let your mind think 108 or 1009 things, no matter what, it's all easy. It's not hard at all. *Try and see if you can engage your mind with the breath in the same way it's been engaged with the defilements.* Try engaging it with the breath and see what happens. See if you can disperse the defilements with every in-and-out breath. Why is it that the mind can stay engaged with the defilements all day long and yet go for entire days without knowing how heavy or subtle the breath is at all?

So try and be observant. The bright, clear awareness that stems from staying focused on the mind at all times: Sometimes a strong sensory contact comes and can make it blur and fade away with no trouble

at all. But if you can keep hold of the breath as a reference point, that state of mind can be more stable and sure, more insured. It has two fences around it. If there's only one fence, it can easily break.

Taking a Stance

January 14, 1964

Normally the mind isn't willing to stop and look, to stop and know itself, which is why we have to keep training it continually so that it will settle down from its restlessness and grow still. Let your desires and thought-processes settle down. Let the mind take its stance in a state of normalcy, not liking or disliking anything. To reach a basic level of emptiness and freedom, you first have to take a stance. If you don't have a stance against which to measure things, progress will be very difficult. If your practice is hit-or-miss -- a bit of that, a little of this -- you won't get any results. So the mind first has to take a stance.

When you take a stance that the mind can maintain in a state of normalcy, don't go slipping off into the future. Have the mind know itself in the stance of the present: "Right now it's in a state of normalcy. No likes or dislikes have arisen yet. It hasn't created

any issues. It's not being disturbed by a desire for this or that."

Then look on in to the basic level of the mind to see if it's as normal and empty as it should be. If you're really looking inside, really aware inside, then *that which is looking and knowing is mindfulness and discernment in and of itself*. You don't need to search for anything anywhere else to come and do your looking for you. As soon as you stop to look, stop to know whether or not the mind is in a state of normalcy, then if it's normal you'll know immediately that it's normal. If it's not, you'll know immediately that it's not.

Take care to keep this awareness going. If you can keep-knowing like this continuously, the mind will be able to keep its stance continuously as well. As soon as the thought occurs to you to check things out, you'll immediately stop to look, stop to know, without any need to go searching for knowledge from anywhere else. You look, you know, right there at the mind and can tell whether or not it's empty and still. Once you see that it is, then, you investigate to see *how* it's empty, *how* it's still. It's not the case that once it's empty, that's the end of the matter; once it's

still, that's the end of the matter. *That's not the case at all.* You have to keep watch of things, you have to investigate at all times. Only then, will you see the changing -- the arising and disbanding -- occurring in that emptiness, that stillness, that state of normalcy.

The Details of Pain

December 28, 1972

To lead your daily life by keeping constant supervision over the mind is a way of learning what life is for. It's a way of learning how we can act so as to rid ourselves more and more of suffering and stress -- because the suffering and stress caused by defilement, attachment, and craving are sure to take all sorts of forms. Only by being aware with true mindfulness and discernment can we comprehend them for what they are. Otherwise, we'll simply live obliviously, going wherever events will lead us. This is why mindfulness and discernment are tools for reading yourself, for testing yourself within so that you won't be careless or complacent, oblivious to the fact that suffering is basically what life is all about.

This point is something which we really have to comprehend so that we can live without being oblivious. The pains and discontent that fill our bodies and minds all show us the truths of inconstancy, stress, and not-selfness within us. If you contemplate what's going on inside until you can get down to the details, you'll see the truths that appear within and without, all of which come down to inconstancy, stress, and not-selfness. But the delusion basic to our nature will see everything wrongly -- as constant, easeful, and self -- and so make us live obliviously, even though there is nothing to guarantee how long our lives will last.

Our dreams and delusions make us forget that we live in the midst of a mass of pain and stress -- the stress of defilements, the pain of birth. Birth, ageing, illness, and death: All of these are painful and stressful, in the midst of instability and change. They're things we have no control over, for they must circle around in line with the laws of *kamma* and the defilements we've been amassing all along. Life that floats along in the round of rebirth is thus nothing but stress and pain.

If we can find a way to develop our mindfulness and discernment, they'll be able to cut the round of rebirth, so that we won't have to keep wandering on. They'll help us know that birth is painful, ageing is painful, illness is painful, death is painful, and that these are all things that defilement, attachment, and craving keep driving through the cycles of change.

So as long as we have the opportunity, we should study the truths appearing throughout our body and mind, and we'll come to know that the elimination of stress and pain, the elimination of defilement, is a function of our practice of the Dhamma. If we don't practice the Dhamma, we'll keep floating along in the round of rebirth that is so drearily repetitious -- repetitious in its birth, ageing, illness, and death, driven on by defilement, attachment, and craving, causing us repeated stress, repeated pain. Living beings for the most part don't know where these stresses and pains come from or what they come from, because they've never studied them, never contemplated them, so they stay stupid and deluded, wandering on and on without end....

If we can stop and be still, the mind will have a chance to be free, to contemplate its sufferings, and

to let them go. This will give it a measure of peace, because it will no longer want anything out of the round of rebirth -- for it sees that there's nothing lasting to it, that it's simply stress over and over again. Whatever you grab hold of is stress. This is why you need mindfulness and discernment to know and see things for yourself, so that you can supervise the mind and keep it calm, without letting it fall victim to temptation.

This practice is something of the highest importance. People who don't study or practice the Dhamma have wasted their birth as human beings, because they're born deluded and simply stay deluded. But if we study the Dhamma, we'll become wise to suffering and know the path of practice for freeing ourselves from it....

Once we follow the right path, the defilements won't be able to drag us around, won't be able to burn us, because *we're* the ones burning *them* away. We'll come to realize that the more we can burn them away, the more strength of mind we'll gain. If we let the defilements burn us, the mind will be sapped of its strength, which is why this is something you have to be very careful about. Keep trying to burn away

the defilements in your every activity, and you'll be storing up strength for your mindfulness and discernment, so that they'll be brave in dealing with all sorts of suffering and pain.

You must come to see the world as nothing but stress. There's no real ease to it at all. The awareness we gain from mindfulness and discernment will make us disenchanted with life in the world because it will see things for what they are in every way, both within us and without.

The entire world is nothing but an affair of delusion, an affair of suffering. People who don't know the Dhamma, don't practice the Dhamma -- no matter what their status or position in life -- lead deluded, oblivious lives. When they fall ill or are about to die, they're bound to suffer enormously because they haven't taken the time to understand the defilements that burn their hearts and minds in everyday life. Yet if we make a constant practice of studying and contemplating ourselves as our everyday activity, it will help free us from all sorts of suffering and distress. And when this is the case, how can we *not* want to practice?

Only intelligent people, though, will be able to stick with the practice. Foolish people won't want to bother. They'd much rather follow the defilements than burn them away. To practice the Dhamma you need a certain basic level of intelligence -- enough to have seen at least *something* of the stresses and sufferings that come from defilement. Only then, can your practice progress. And no matter how difficult it gets, you'll have to keep practicing on to the end.

This practice isn't something you do from time to time, you know. You have to keep at it continuously throughout life. Even if it involves so much physical pain or mental anguish that tears are bathing your cheeks, you have to keep with the chaste life because you're playing for real. If you don't follow the chaste life, you'll get mired in heaps of suffering and flame. So you have to learn your lessons from pain. Try to contemplate it until you can understand it and let it go, and you'll gain one of life's greatest rewards.

Don't think that you were born to gain this or that level of comfort. You were born to study pain and the causes of pain, and to follow the practice that frees you from pain. This is the most important thing

there is. Everything else is trivial and unimportant. What's important all lies with the practice.

* * *

Don't think that the defilements will go away easily. When they don't come in blatant forms, they come in subtle ones -- and the dangers of the subtle ones are hard to see. Your contemplation will have to be subtle, too, if you want to get rid of them. You'll come to realize that this practice of the Dhamma, in which we contemplate to get to the details inside us, is like sharpening our tools so that, when stress and suffering arise, we can weaken them and cut them away. If your mindfulness and discernment are brave, the defilements will have to lose-out to them. But if you don't train your mindfulness and discernment to be brave, the defilements will crush you to pieces.

We were born to do battle with the defilements and to strengthen our mindfulness and discernment. We'll find that the worth of our practice will grow higher and higher because in our everyday life we've done continuous battle with the stresses and pains caused by defilement, craving, and temptation all

along -- so that the defilements will grow thin and our mindfulness and discernment stronger. We'll sense within ourselves that the mind isn't as troubled and restless as it used to be. It's grown peaceful and calm. The stresses and sufferings of defilement, attachment, and craving have grown weaker. Even though we haven't yet wiped them out completely, they've grown continually weaker -- because we don't feed them. We don't give them shelter. We do what we can to weaken them so that they grow thinner and thinner each time.

And we have to be brave in contemplating stress and pain, because when we don't feel any great suffering we tend to get complacent. But when the pains and sufferings in our body and mind grow sharp and biting, we have to use our mindfulness and discernment to be strong. *Don't let your spirits be weak.* Only then will you be able to do away with your sufferings and pains.

We have to learn our lessons from pain so that ultimately the mind can gain its freedom from it, instead of being weak and losing out to it all of the time. We have to be brave in doing battle with it to the ultimate extreme -- until we reach the point

where we can let it go. Pain is something always present in this conglomerate of body and mind. It's here for us to see with every moment. If we contemplate it till we know all its details, we can then make it our sport: seeing that the pain is the pain of natural conditions and not *our* pain. This is something we have to research so as to get to the details: *that it's not our pain*, it's the pain of the aggregates [form, feeling, perception, thought-formations, and consciousness]. Knowing in this way means that we can separate out the properties -- the properties of matter and those of the mind -- to see how they interact with one another, how they change. It's something really fascinating....Watching pain is a way of building up lots of mindfulness and discernment.

But if you focus on pleasure and ease, you'll simply stay deluded like people in general. They get carried away with the pleasure that comes from watching or listening to the things they like -- but then when pain comes to their bodies and minds to the point where tears are bathing their cheeks, think of how much they suffer! And then they have to be parted from their loved ones, which makes it then even worse. But those of us who practice the Dhamma don't need

to be deluded like that, because we know and see with every moment that only stress arises, only stress persists, only stress passes away. Aside from stress, nothing arises; aside from stress, nothing passes away. This is there for us to perceive with every moment. If we contemplate it, we'll see it.

So we can't let ourselves be oblivious. This is what the truth is, and we have to study it so as to know it - especially in our life of the practice. We have to contemplate stress all the time to see its every manifestation. The arahants live without being oblivious because they know the truth at all times, and their hearts are clean and pure. As for us with our defilements, we have to keep trying, because if we continually supervise the mind with mindfulness and discernment, we'll be able to keep the defilements from making it dirty and obscured. Even if it does become obscured in any way, we'll be able to remove that obscurity and make the mind empty and free.

This is the practice that weakens all the defilements, attachments, and cravings within us. It's because of this practice of the Dhamma that our lives will become free. So I ask you to keep working at the

practice without being complacent, because if in whatever span of life is left to you, you keep trying to the full extent of your abilities, you'll gain the mindfulness and discernment to see the facts within yourself, and be able to let go -- free from any sense of self, free from any sense of self -- continuously.

Aware Right at Awareness

November 3, 1975

The mind, if mindfulness and awareness are watching over it, won't meet with any suffering as the result of its actions. If suffering *does* arise, we'll be immediately aware of it and able to put it out. This is one point of the practice we can work at constantly. And we can test ourselves by seeing how refined and subtle our all-around awareness is inside the mind. Whenever the mind slips away and goes out to receive external sensory contact: Can it maintain its basic stance of mindfulness or internal awareness? The practice we need to work at in our everyday life is to have constant mindfulness, constant all-around present awareness like this. This is something we work at in every posture: sitting, standing, walking, and lying down. Make sure that your mindfulness stays continuous.

Living in this world -- the mental and physical phenomena of these five aggregates -- gives us plenty to contemplate. We must try to watch them, to contemplate them, so that we can understand them -- because the truths we must learn how to read in this body and mind are here to be read with every moment. We don't have to get wrapped-up with any other extraneous themes, because all the themes we need are right here in the body and mind. As long as we can keep the mind constantly aware all around, we can contemplate them.

If you contemplate mental and physical events to see how they arise and disband right in the here and now, and don't get involved with external things -- like sights making contact with the eyes, or sounds with the ears -- then there really aren't a lot of issues. The mind can be at normalcy, at equilibrium -- calm and undisturbed by defilement or the stresses that come from sensory contact. It can look after itself and maintain its balance. You'll come to sense that if you're aware right at awareness in and of itself, without going out to get involved in external things like the mental labels and thoughts that will tend to arise, the mind will see their constant arising and disbanding -- and won't be embroiled in anything.

This way, it can be disengaged, empty, and free. But if it goes out to label things as good or evil, as "me" or "mine," or gets attached to anything, it'll become unsettled and disturbed.

You have to know that if the mind can be still, totally and presently aware, and capable of contemplating with every activity, then blatant forms of suffering and stress will dissolve away. Even if they start to form, you can be alert to them and disperse them immediately. Once you see this actually happening -- even in only the beginning stages -- it can disperse a lot of the confusion and turmoil in your heart. In other words, don't let yourself dwell on the past or latch onto thoughts of the future. As for the events arising and passing away in the present, you have to leave them alone. Whatever your duties, simply do them as you have to -- and the mind won't get worked-up about anything. It will be able, to at least some extent, to be empty and still.

This one thing is something you have to be very careful about. You have to see this for yourself: *that if your mindfulness and discernment are constantly in charge, the truths of the arising and disbanding of*

mental and physical phenomena are always there for you to see, always there for you to know. If you look at the body, you'll have to see it simply as physical properties. If you look at feelings, you'll have to see them as changing and inconstant: pleasure, pain, neither pleasure nor pain. To see these things is to see the truth within yourself. Don't let yourself get caught up with your external duties. Simply keep watch in this way inside. If your awareness is the sort that lets you read yourself correctly, the mind will be able to stay at normalcy, at equilibrium, at stillness, without any resistance.

If the mind can stay with itself and not go out looking for things to criticize or latch onto, it can maintain a natural form of stillness. So this is something we have to try for in our every activity. Keep your conversations to a minimum, and there won't be a whole lot of issues. Keep watch right at the mind. When you keep watch at the mind and your mindfulness is continuous, your senses can stay restrained.

Being mindful to keep watch in this way is something you have to work at. Try it and see: Can you keep this sort of awareness continuous? What

sort of things can still get the mind engaged? What sorts of thoughts and labels of good and bad, me and mine, does it think up? Then look to see if these things arise and disband.

The sensations that arise from external contact and internal contact all have the same sorts of characteristics. You have to look till you can see this. If you know how to look, you'll see it -- and the mind will grow calm.

So the point we have to practice, in this latter stage, doesn't have a whole lot of issues. There's nothing you have to do, nothing you have to label, nothing you have to think a whole lot about. Simply look carefully and contemplate, and in this very lifetime you'll have a chance to be calm and at peace, to know yourself more profoundly within. You'll come to see that the Dhamma is amazing *right here in your own heart*. Don't go searching for the Dhamma outside, for it lies within. Peace lies within, but we have to contemplate so that we're aware all around -- subtly, deep down. If you look just on the surface, you won't understand anything. Even if the mind is at normalcy on the ordinary, everyday level, you won't understand much of anything at all.

You have to contemplate so that you're aware all around in a skillful way. The word "skillful" is something you can't explain with words, but you can know for yourself when you see the way in which awareness within the heart becomes special, when you see what this special awareness is about. This is something you can know for yourself.

And there's not really much to it: simply arising, persisting, disbanding. Look until this becomes plain -- really, really plain -- and everything disappears. All suppositions, all conventional formulations, all those aggregates and properties get swept away, leaving nothing but awareness pure and simple, not involved with anything at all -- and there's nothing you have to do to it. Simply stay still and watch, be aware, letting go with every moment.

Simply watching this one thing is enough to do away with all sorts of defilements, all sorts of suffering and stress. If you don't know how to watch it, the mind is sure to get disturbed. It's sure to label things and concoct thoughts. As soon as there's contact at the senses, it'll go looking for things to latch onto, liking and disliking the objects it meets in the

present and then getting involved with the past and future, spinning a web to entangle itself.

If you truly look at each moment in the present, there's really nothing at all. You'll see with every mental moment that things disband, disband, disband -- really nothing at all. The important point is that you don't go forming issues out of nothing. The physical elements perform their duties in line with their elementary physical nature. The mental elements keep sensing in line with their own affairs. But our stupidity is what goes looking for issues to cook-up, to label, to think about. It goes looking for things to latch onto and then gets the mind into a turmoil. This point is all we really have to see for ourselves. This is the problem we have to solve for ourselves. If things are left to their nature, pure and simple, there's no "us," no "them." This is a singular truth that will arise for us to know and see. There's nothing else we can know or see that can match it in any way. Once you know and see this one thing, it extinguishes all suffering and stress. The mind will be empty and free, with no meanings, no attachments, for anything at all.

This is why looking inward is so special in so many ways. Whatever arises, simply stop still to look at it. Don't get excited by it. If you become excited when any special intuitions arise when the mind is still, you'll get the mind worked-up into a turmoil. If you become afraid that this or that will happen, that too will get you in a turmoil. So you have to stop and look, stop and know. The first thing is simply to look. The first thing is simply to know. And don't latch onto what you know -- because whatever it is, it's simply a phenomenon that arises and disbands, arises and disbands, changing as part of its nature.

So your awareness has to take a firm stance right at the mind in and of itself. In the beginning stages, you have to know that when mindfulness is standing firm, the mind won't be affected by the objects of sensory contact. Keep working at maintaining this stance, holding firm to this stance. If you gain a sense of this for yourself, really knowing and seeing for yourself, your mindfulness will become even more firm. If anything arises in any way at all, you'll be able to let it go -- and all the many troubles and turmoils of the mind will dissolve away.

If mindfulness slips and the mind goes out giving meanings to anything, latching onto anything, troubles will arise, so you have to keep checking on this with every moment. There's nothing else that's so worth checking on.

You have to keep check on the mind in and of itself, contemplating the mind in and of itself. Or else you can contemplate the body in and of itself, feelings in and of themselves, or the phenomenon of arising and disbanding -- i.e., the Dhamma -- in and of itself. All of these things are themes you can keep track of entirely within yourself. You don't have to keep track of a lot of themes, because having a lot of themes is what will make you restless and distracted. First you'll practice this theme, then you'll practice that, then you'll make comparisons, all of which will keep the mind from growing still.

If you can take your stance at awareness, if you're skilled at looking, the mind can be at peace. You'll know how things arise and disband.

First, practice keeping awareness right within yourself so that your mindfulness can be firm, without being affected by the objects of sensory

contact, so that it won't label things as good or bad, pleasing or displeasing. You have to keep checking to see that when the mind can be at normalcy, centered and neutral as its primary stance, then -- whatever it knows or sees -- it will be able to contemplate and let go.

The sensations in the mind that we explain at such length are still on the level of labels. Only when there can be *awareness right at awareness* will you really be able to know that the mind that is aware of awareness in this way doesn't send its knowing outside of this awareness. There are no issues. Nothing can be concocted in the mind when it knows in this way. In other words,

*An inward-staying
unentangled knowing,
All outward-going knowing
cast aside.*

The only thing you have to work at maintaining is the state of mind at normalcy -- knowing, seeing, and still in the present. If you don't maintain it, if you don't keep looking after it, then when sensory contact comes, it will have an effect. The mind will

go out with labels of good and bad, liking and disliking. So make sure you maintain the basic awareness that's aware right at yourself. And don't let there be any labeling. No matter what sort of sensory contact comes, you have to make sure that this awareness comes first.

If you train yourself correctly in this way, everything will stop. You won't go straying out through your senses of sight, hearing, etc. The mind will stop and look, stop and be aware right at awareness, so as to know the truth that all things arise and disband. There's no real truth to anything. Only our stupidity is what latches onto things, giving them meanings and then suffering for it -- suffering because of its ignorance, suffering because of its un-acquaintance with the five aggregates -- form, feelings, perceptions, thought-formations, and consciousness -- all of which are inconstant, stressful, and not-self.

Use mindfulness to gather your awareness together, and the mind will stop getting unsettled, stop running after things. It will be able to stop and be still. Then, make it know in this way, see in this way *constantly* -- at every moment, with every activity. Work at watching and knowing the mind in and of

itself: That will be enough to cut away all sorts of issues. You won't have to concern yourself with them.

If the body is in pain, simply keep watch of it. You can simply keep watch of feelings in the body because the mind that's aware of itself in this way can keep watch of anything within or without. Or it can simply be aware of itself to the point where it lets go of things outside and lets go of sensory contact, and keeps constant-watch on the mind in and of itself. That's when you'll know that this is what the mind is like when it's at peace: It doesn't give meanings to anything. It's the emptiness of the mind unattached, uninvolved, unconcerned with anything at all.

These words -- unattached, uninvolved, and unconcerned -- are things you have to consider carefully, because what they refer to is subtle and deep. "Uninvolved" means uninvolved with sensory contact, undisturbed by the body or feelings. "Unconcerned" means not worried about past, future, or present. You have to contemplate these things until you know them skillfully. Even though they're subtle, you have to contemplate them until

you know them thoroughly. And don't go concerning yourself with external things, because they'll keep you unsettled, keep you running, keep you distracted with labels and thoughts of good and bad and all that sort of thing. You have to put a stop to these things. If you don't, your practice won't accomplish anything, because these things keep playing up to you and deceiving you -- i.e., once you see anything, it will fool you into seeing it as right, wrong, good, bad, and so forth.

Eventually, you have to come down to the awareness that everything simply arises, persists, and then disbands. *Make sure you stay focused on the disbanding.* If you watch just the arising, you may get carried-off on a tangent, but if you focus on the disbanding you'll see emptiness: Everything is disbanding every instant. No matter what you look at, no matter what you see, it's there for just an instant and then disbands. Then it arises again. Then it disbands. There's simply arising, knowing, disbanding.

So let's watch what happens of its own accord -- because the arising and disbanding that occurs by way of the senses is something that happens of its

own accord. You can't prevent it. You can't force it. If you look and know it without attachment, there will be none of the harm that comes from joy or sorrow. The mind will stay in relative normalcy and neutrality. But if you're forgetful and start latching on, labeling things in pairs in any way at all -- good and bad, happy and sad, pleasing and displeasing -- the mind will become unsettled: no longer empty, no longer still. When this happens, you have to probe on in to know why.

All the worthless issues that arise in the mind have to be cut away. Then you'll find that you have less and less to say, less and less to talk about, less and less to think about. These things grow less and less on their own. They stop on their own. But if you get involved in a lot of issues, the mind won't be able to stay still. *So we have to keep watching things that are completely worthless and without substance, to see that they're not-self.* Keep watching them repeatedly, because your awareness, coupled with the mindfulness and discernment that will know the truth, has to see that, "This isn't my self. There's no substance or worth to it at all. It simply arises and disbands right here. It's here for just an instant and then it disbands."

All we have to do is stop and look, stop and know clearly in this way, and we'll be able to do away with many, many kinds of suffering and stress. The normal stress of the aggregates will still occur -- we can't prevent it -- but we'll know that it's the stress of nature and won't latch onto it as ours.

So we keep watch of things that happen on their own. If we know how to watch, we keep watching things that happen on their own. Don't latch onto them as being you or yours. Keep this awareness firmly established in itself, as much as you can, and there won't be much else you'll have to remember or think about.

When you keep looking, keep knowing like this at all times, you'll come to see that there are no big issues going on. There's just the issue of arising, persisting, and disbanding. You don't have to label anything as good or bad. If you simply look in this way, it's no great weight on the heart. But if you go dragging in issues of good and bad, self and all that, then suffering starts in a big way. The defilements start in a big way and weigh on the heart, making it troubled and upset. So you have to stop and look, stop and investigate really deep down inside. It's like

water covered with duckweed: Only when we take our hand to part the duckweed and take a look will we see that the water beneath it is crystal clear.

As you look into the mind, you have to part it, you have to stop: stop thinking, stop labeling things as good or bad, stop everything. You can't go branding anything. Simply keep looking, keep knowing. When the mind is quiet, you'll see that there's nothing there. Everything is all still. Everything has all stopped inside. But as soon as there's labeling, even in the stillness, the stopping, the quiet, it will set things in motion. And as soon as things get set into motion, and you don't know how to let go right from the start, issues will arise, waves will arise. Once there are issues and waves, they strike the mind and it goes splashing all out of control. This splashing of the mind includes craving and defilement as well, because *avijja* -- ignorance -- lies at its root....

Our major obstacle is this aggregate of perceptions, of labels. If we aren't aware of the arising and disbanding of perceptions, these labels will take hold. Perceptions are the chief instigators that label things within and without, so we have to be aware of

their arising and disbanding. Once we're aware in this way, perceptions will no longer function as a cause of suffering. In other words, they won't give rise to any further thought-formations. The mind will be aware in itself and able to extinguish these things in itself.

So we have to stop things at the level of perception. If we don't, thought-formations will fashion things into issues and then cause consciousness to wobble and waver in all sorts of ways. But these are things we can stop and look at, things we can know with every mental moment....If we aren't yet really acquainted with the arising and disbanding in the mind, we won't be able to let go. We can talk about letting go, but we can't do it because we don't yet know. As soon as anything arises we grab hold of it -- even when actually it's already disbanded, but since we don't really see, we don't know....

So I ask that you understand this basic principle. Don't go grasping after this thing or that, or else you'll get yourself all unsettled. The basic theme is within: Look on in, keep knowing on in until you penetrate everything. The mind will, then, be free from turmoil. Empty. Quiet. Aware.

So keep continuous watch of the mind in and of itself, and you'll come to the point where you simply run out of things to say. Everything will stop on its own, grow still on its own, *because the underlying condition that has stopped and is still is already there*, simply that we aren't aware of it yet.

The Pure Present

June 3, 1964

We have to catch sight of the sensation of knowing when the mind gains knowledge of anything and yet isn't aware of itself, to see how it latches onto things: physical form, feeling, perceptions, thought-formations, and consciousness. We have to probe on in and look on our own. We can't use the teachings we've memorized to catch sight of these things. That won't get us anywhere at all. We may remember, "The body is inconstant," but even though we can say it, we can't see it.

We have to focus on in to see exactly *how* the body is inconstant, to see how it changes. And we have to focus on feelings -- pleasant, painful, and neutral -- to see how they change. The same holds true with perceptions, thought-formations, and so forth. We

have to focus on them, investigate them, contemplate them to see their characteristics *as they actually are*. Even if you can see these things for only a moment, it'll do you a world of good. You'll be able to catch yourself: The things you thought you knew, you didn't really know at all....This is why the knowledge we gain in the practice has to keep changing through many, many levels. It doesn't stay on just one level.

So even when you're able to know arising and disbanding with every moment right in the present: If your contemplation isn't continuous, it won't be very clear. You have to know how to contemplate the bare sensation of arising and disbanding, simply arising and disbanding, without any labels of "good" or "bad." Just keep with the pure sensation of arising and disbanding. When you do this, other things will come to intrude -- but no matter how they intrude, it's still a matter of arising and disbanding, so you can keep your stance with arising and disbanding in this way.

If you start labeling things, it gets confusing. All you need to do is keep looking at the right spot: the bare sensation of arising and disbanding. Simply make

sure that you really keep watch of it. Whether there's awareness of sights, sounds, smells, tastes, or tactile sensations, just stay with the sensation of arising and disbanding. Don't go labeling the sight, sound, smell, taste, or tactile sensation. If you can keep watch in this way, you're with the pure present -- and there won't be any issues.

When you keep watch in this way, you're keeping watch on inconstancy, on change, as it actually occurs -- because even the arising and disbanding changes. It's not the same thing arising and disbanding all the time. First this sort of sensation arises and disbands, then that sort arises and disbands. If you keep watch on bare arising and disbanding like this, you're sure to arrive at insight. But if you keep watch with labels -- "That's the sound of a cow," "That's the bark of a dog" -- you won't be watching the bare sensation of sound, the bare sensation of arising and disbanding. As soon as there's labeling, thought-formations come along with it. Your senses of touch, sight, hearing, and so forth will continue their bare arising and disbanding, but you won't know it. Instead, you'll label everything -- sights, sounds, etc. -- and then there will be

attachments, feelings of pleasure and displeasure, and you won't know the truth.

The truth keeps going along on its own. Sensations keep arising and then disbanding. If we focus right here -- at the consciousness of the bare sensation of sights, sounds, smells, tastes, and tactile sensations - - we'll be able to gain insight quickly....

If we know how to observe things in this way, we'll be able to see easily when the mind is provoked by passion or greed, and even more easily when it's provoked by anger. As for delusion, that's something more subtle... something you have to take a great interest in and investigate carefully. You'll come to see all sorts of hidden things -- how the mind is covered with many, many layers of film. It's really fascinating. But then that's what insight meditation is for -- to open your eyes so that you can know and see, so that you can destroy your delusion and ignorance.

The Deceits of Knowing *January 29, 1964*

You have to find approaches for contemplating and probing at all times so as to catch sight of the

flickerings of awareness, to see in what ways it streams out to know things. Be careful to catch sight of it both when its knowing is right and when it's wrong. Don't mix things up, taking wrong knowledge for right, or right knowledge for wrong. This is something extremely important for the practice, this question of right and wrong knowing, for these things can play tricks on you.

When you gain any new insights, don't go getting excited. You can't let yourself get excited by them at all, because it doesn't take long for your insight to change -- to change right now, before your very eyes. It's not going to change at some other time or place. It's changing right now. You have to know how to observe, how to acquaint yourself with the deceits of knowledge. *Even when it's correct knowledge, you can't latch onto it.*

Even though we may have standards for judging what sort of knowledge is correct in the course of our practice, don't go latching onto correct knowledge -- because correct knowledge is inconstant. It changes. It can turn into false knowledge, or into knowledge that is even more correct. You have to contemplate things very

carefully -- very, very carefully -- so that you won't fall for your knowledge, thinking, "I've gained right insight; I know better than other people," so that you won't start assuming yourself to be special. The moment you assume yourself, your knowledge immediately turns wrong. Even if you don't let things show outwardly, the mere mental event in which the mind labels itself is a form of wrong knowing that obscures the mind from itself in an insidious way.

This is why meditators who tend not to contemplate things, who don't catch sight of the deceits of every form of knowledge -- right and wrong, good and bad -- tend to get bogged down in their knowledge. The knowledge that deceives them into thinking, "What I know is right," gives rise to strong pride and conceit within them, without their even realizing it.

This is because the defilements are always getting into the act without our realizing it. They're insidious, and in their insidious way they keep getting into the act as a matter of course, for the defilements and mental effluents are still there in our character. Our practice is basically a probing deep inside, from the outer levels of the mind to the inner

ones. This is an approach that requires a great deal of subtlety and precision....*The mind has to use its own mindfulness and discernment to dig everything out of itself, leaving just the mind in and of itself, the body in and of itself, and then keep watch of them.*

* * *

The basic challenge in the practice is this one point and nothing else: *this problem of how to look inward so that you see clear through.* If the mind hasn't been trained to look inward, it tends to look outward, simply waiting to receive its objects from outside -- and all it gets is the confusion of its sensations going in and out, in and out. And even though this confusion is one aspect of change and inconstancy, we don't see it that way. Instead, we see it as issues, good and bad, pertaining to the self. When this is the case, we're back right where we started, not knowing what's what. This is why the mind's sensations, when it isn't acquainted with itself, are so secretive and hard to perceive. If you want to find out about them by reading a lot of books, you end up piling more defilements onto the mind, making it even more thickly covered than before.

So when you turn to look inward, you shouldn't use concepts and labels to do your looking for you. If you use concepts and labels to do your looking, there will be nothing but concepts arising, changing, and disbanding. Everything will get all concocted into thoughts -- and then how will you be able to watch in utter silence? The more you take what you've learned from books to look inside yourself, the less you'll see.

So whatever you've learned, when you come to the practice, you have to put all the labels and concepts you've gained from your learning to one side. You have to make yourself an innocent beginner once more. Only then will you be able to penetrate-in, to read the truths within you.

If you carry all the paraphernalia of the concepts and standards you've gained from your learning to gauge things inside you, you can search to your dying day and yet won't meet with any real truths at all. This is why you have to hold to only one theme in your practice. If the mind has lots of themes to concern itself with, it's still just wandering around -- wandering around to know this and that, going out of bounds without realizing it and not really wanting

to know itself. This is why those with a lot of learning like to teach others, to show off their level of understanding. And this is precisely how the desire to stand out keeps the mind obscured.

Of all the various kinds of deception, *there's none as bad as deceiving yourself*. When you haven't yet really seen the truth, what business do you have making assumptions about yourself, that you've attained this or that sort of knowledge, or that you know enough to teach others correctly?

The Buddha is quite critical of teachers of this sort. He calls them "people in vain." Even if you can teach large numbers of people to become arahants, while you yourself haven't tasted the flavor of the Dhamma, the Buddha says that you're a person in vain. So you have to keep examining yourself. If you haven't yet really trained yourself in the things you teach to others, how will you be able to extinguish your own suffering?

Think about this for a moment. Extinguishing suffering, gaining release from suffering: Aren't these subtle matters? Aren't they completely personal within us?

If you question yourself in this way, you'll be on the right track. But even then, you have to be careful. If you start taking sides with yourself, the mind will cover itself up with wrong insights and wrong opinions. If you don't observe really carefully, you can get carried off on a tangent -- because the awareness with which the mind reads itself and actually sees through itself is something really extraordinary, really worth developing -- and it really eliminates suffering and defilement. This is the real, honest truth, not a lot of propaganda or lies. It's something you really have to practice, and then you'll really have to see clearly in this way. When this is the case, how can you *not* want to practice?

If you examine yourself correctly in this way, you'll be able to know what's real. But you have to be careful to examine yourself correctly. If you start latching onto any sense of self, thinking that you're better than other people, then you've failed the examination. No matter how correct your knowledge, you have to keep humble and respectful above all else. You can't let there be any pride or conceit at all, or it will destroy everything.

This is why the awareness that eliminates the sense of self depends more than anything else on your powers of observation -- to check and see if there's still anything in your knowledge or opinions that comes from the force of pride in any sense of self....You have to use the full power of your mindfulness and discernment to cut these things away. It's nothing you can play around at.

If you gain a few insights or let go of things a bit, don't go thinking you're anything special. The defilements don't hold a truce with anyone. They keep coming right out as they like. So you have to be circumspect and examine things on all sides. Only then, will you be able to benefit in ways that make your defilements and sufferings lighter and lighter.

When we probe in to find the instigator -- the mind, or this property of consciousness -- that's when we're on the right track, and our probing will keep getting results, will keep weakening the germs of craving and wiping them out. In whatever way craving streams out, for "being" or "having" in any way at all, we'll be able to catch sight of it every time.

To catch hold and examine this "being" and "having" in this way, though, requires a lot of subtlety. If you aren't really mindful and discerning, you won't be able to catch sight of these things at all because the mind is continually wanting to be and to have. The germs of defilement lie hidden deep in the seed of the mind, in this property of consciousness.

Simply to be aware of them skillfully is no mean feat -- so we shouldn't even *think* of trying to wipe them out with our mere opinions. We have to keep contemplating, probing on in, until things come together just right, in a single moment, and then it's like reaching the basic level of knowing that exists on its own, with no willing or intention at all.

This is something that requires careful observation: the difference between willed and unwilled knowing. Sometimes, there's the intention to look and be aware within, but there come times when there's no intention to look within, and yet knowledge arises on its own. If you don't yet know, look at the intention to look inward: What is it like? What is it looking for? What does it see? This is a basic approach you have to hold to. This is a level you have to work at, and one in which you have to

make use of intention -- the intention to look inward in this way....But once you reach the basic level of knowing, then as soon as you happen to focus down and look within, the knowledge will occur on its own.

Sabbe Dhamma Anatta

July 9, 1971

One night I was sitting in meditation outside in the open air -- my back straight as an arrow -- firmly determined to make the mind quiet, but even after a long time it wouldn't settle down. So I thought, "I've been working at this for many days now, and yet my mind won't settle down at all. It's time to stop being so determined and to simply be aware of the mind." I started to take my hands and feet out of the meditation posture, but at the moment I had unfolded one leg but had yet to unfold the other, I could see that my mind was like a pendulum swinging more and more slowly, more and more slowly -- until it stopped.

Then there arose an awareness that was sustained by itself. Slowly, I put my legs and hands back into position. At the same time, the mind was in a state of

awareness absolutely and solidly still, seeing clearly into the elementary phenomena of existence as they arose and disbanded, changing in line with their nature -- and also seeing a separate condition inside, with no arising, disbanding, or changing, a condition beyond birth and death: something very difficult to put clearly into words, because it was a realization of the elementary phenomena of nature, completely internal and individual.

After a while I slowly got up and lay down to rest. This state of mind remained there as a stillness that sustained itself deep down inside. Eventually the mind came out of this state and gradually returned to normal.

From this I was able to observe how practice consisting of nothing but fierce desire simply upsets the mind and keeps it from being still. But when one's awareness of the mind is just right, an inner awareness will arise naturally of its own accord. Because of this clear inner awareness, I was able to continue knowing the facts of what's true and false, right and wrong, from that point on, and it enabled me to know that the moment when the mind let go of everything was a clear awareness of the elementary

phenomena of nature, because it was an awareness that knew within and saw within of its own accord -- not something you can know or see by wanting.

For this reason the Buddha's teaching, "*Sabbe dhamma anatta* -- All phenomena are not-self," tells us not to latch onto *any* of the phenomena of nature, whether conditioned or unconditioned. From that point on I was able to understand things and let go of attachments step by step.

Going Out Cold

May 26, 1964

It's important to realize how to focus on events in order to get special benefits from your practice. You have to focus so as to observe and contemplate, not simply to make the mind still. Focus on how things arise, how they disband. Make your focus subtle and deep.

When you're aware of the characteristics of your sensations, then -- if it's a physical sensation -- contemplate that physical sensation. There will have to be a feeling of stress. Once there's a feeling of stress, how will you be aware of it simply as a feeling so that it won't lead to anything further?

Once you can be aware of it simply as a feeling, it stops right there without producing any taste in terms of a desire for anything.

The mind will disengage right there -- right there at the feeling. If you don't focus on it in this way, craving will arise on top of the feeling -- craving to attain ease and be rid of the stress and pain. If you don't focus on the feeling in the proper way right from the start, craving will arise before you're aware of it, and if you then try to let go of it, it'll be very tiring....

The way in which preoccupations take shape, the sensations of the mind as it's aware of things coming with every moment, the way these things change and disband: These are all things you have to focus on to see clearly. This is why we make the mind disengaged. We don't disengage it so that it doesn't know or amount to anything. That's not the kind of disengagement we want.

The more the mind is truly disengaged, the more it sees clearly into the characteristics of the arising and disbanding within itself. All I ask is that you observe things carefully, that your awareness be all-around at

all times. Work at this as much as you can. If you can keep this sort of awareness going, you'll find that the mind or consciousness under the supervision of mindfulness and discernment in this way is different from -- is opposite from -- unsupervised consciousness. It will be the opposite sort of thing continually.

If you keep the mind well-supervised, so that it's sensitive in the proper way, it will yield enormous benefits, not just small ones. If you don't make it properly sensitive and aware, what can you expect to gain from it?

When we say that we gain from the practice, we're not talking about anything else: We're talking about gaining disengagement. Freedom. Emptiness.

Before, the mind was embroiled. Defilement and craving attacked and robbed it, leaving it completely entangled. Now it's disengaged, freed from the defilements that used to gang up to burn it. Its desires for this or that thing, its concocting of this or that thought, have all fallen away. So now it's empty and disengaged. It can be empty in this way right before your very eyes. Try to see it right now, before

your eyes, right now as I'm speaking and you're listening. Probe on in so as to know.

If you can be constantly aware in this way, you're following in the footsteps or taking within you the quality called "*buddho*," which means one who knows, who is awake, who has blossomed in the Dhamma. Even if you haven't fully blossomed -- if you've blossomed only to the extent of disengaging from the blatant levels of craving and defilement -- you still benefit a great deal, for when the mind really knows the defilements and can let them go, it feels cool and refreshed in and of itself. This is the exact opposite of the defilements that, as soon as they arise, make us burn and smoulder inside. If we don't have the mindfulness and discernment to help us know, the defilements will burn us. But as soon as mindfulness and discernment know, the fires go out -- and they go out cold.

Observe how the defilements arise and take shape -- they also disband in quick succession, but when they disband on their own in this way, go out on their own in this way, they go out hot. If we have mindfulness and discernment watching over them, they go out cold. Look so that you can see what the

true knowledge of mindfulness and discernment is like: It goes out; it goes out cold. As for the defilements, even when they arise and disband in line with their nature, they go out hot -- hot because we latch onto them, hot because of attachment. When they go out cold, look again -- it's because there's no attachment. They've been let go, put out.

This is something really worth looking into: the fact that there's something very special like this in the mind -- special in that when it really knows the truth, it isn't attached. It's unentangled, empty, and free. This is how it's special. It can grow empty of greed, anger, and delusion, step after step. It can be empty of desire, empty of mental processes. The important thing is that you really see for yourself that the true nature of the mind is that it can be empty....This is why I said this morning that *nibbana* doesn't lie anywhere else. It lies right here, right where things go out and are cool, go out and are cool. It's staring us right in the face.

Reading The Heart
March 15, 1974

The Buddha taught that we are to know with our own hearts and minds. Even though there are many, many words and phrases coined to explain the Dhamma, we need focus only on the things we can know and see, extinguish and let go of, right in each moment of the immediate present -- better than taking on a load of other things. Once we can read and comprehend our inner awareness, we'll be struck deep within us that the Buddha awakened to the truth right here in the heart. His truth is truly the language of the heart.

When they translate the Dhamma in all sorts of ways, it becomes something ordinary. But if you keep close and careful watch right at the heart and mind, you'll be able to see clearly, to let go, to put down your burdens. If you don't know right here, your knowledge will send out all sorts of branches, turning into thought-formations with all sorts of meanings in line with conventional labels -- and all of them way off the mark.

If you know right at your inner awareness and make it your constant stance, there's nothing at all: no need to take hold of anything, no need to label anything, no need to give anything names. Right where

craving arises, right where it disbands: That's where you'll know what *nibbana* is like.... "Nibbana is simply this disbanding of craving." That's what the Buddha stressed over and over again.

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<http://www.accesstoinsight.org/lib/thai/kee/inward.html>*

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Upasika Kee Nanayon
and the
Social Dynamic of
Theravadin Buddhist Practice
by
Thanissaro Bhikkhu

Upasika Kee Nanayon, also known by her penname, Kee Khao-suan-luang, was arguably the foremost woman Dhamma teacher in twentieth-century Thailand. Born in 1901 to a Chinese merchant

family in Rajburi, a town to the west of Bangkok, she was the eldest of five children -- or, counting her father's children by a second wife, the eldest of eight. Her mother was a very religious woman and taught her the rudiments of Buddhist practice, such as nightly chants and the observance of the precepts, from an early age.

In later life she described how, at the age of six, she became so filled with fear and loathing at the miseries her mother went through in being pregnant and giving birth to a younger sibling that, on seeing the newborn child for the first time -- "sleeping quietly, a little red thing with black, black hair" -- she ran away from home for three days.

This experience, plus the anguish she must have felt when her parents separated, may lay behind her decision, made when she was still quite young, never to submit to what she saw as the slavery of marriage.

During her teens she devoted her spare time to Dhamma books and to meditation, and her working hours to a small business to support her father in his old age.

Her meditation progressed well enough that she was able to teach him meditation, with fairly good results, in the last year of his life. After his death she continued her business with the thought of saving up enough money to enable herself to live the remainder of her life in a secluded place and give herself fully to the practice.

Her aunt and uncle, who were also interested in Dhamma practice, had a small home near a forested hill, Khao Suan Luang (Roya Park Mountain), outside of Rajburi, where she often went to practice.

In 1945, as life disrupted by World War II had begun to return to normal, she gave up her business, joined her aunt and uncle in moving to the hill, and there the three of them began a life devoted entirely to meditation. The small retreat they made for themselves in an abandoned monastic dwelling eventually grew to become the nucleus of a women's practice center that has flourished to this day.

Life at the retreat was frugal, in line with the fact that outside support was minimal in the early years. However, even now that the center has become well-known and well-established, the same frugal style

has been maintained for its benefits in subduing greed, pride, and other mental defilements, as well as for the pleasure it offers in unburdening the heart.

The women practicing at the center meet daily for chanting, group meditation, and discussion of the practice. In the years when Upasika Kee's health was still strong, she would hold special meetings at which the members would report on their practice, after which she would give a talk touching on any important issues that had been brought up. It was during such sessions that most of the talks recorded in this volume were given.

In the center's early years, small groups of friends and relatives would visit on occasion to give support and to listen to Upasika Kee's Dhamma talks.

As word spread of the high standard of her teachings and practice, larger and larger groups came to visit, and more women began to join the community. When tape recording was introduced to Thailand in the mid-1950's, friends began recording her talks and, in 1956, a group of them printed a small volume of her transcribed talks for free distribution. By the mid-1960's, the stream of free Dhamma

literature from Khao Suan Luang -- Upasika Kee's poetry as well as her talks -- had grown to a flood. This attracted even more people to her center and established her as one of the best-known Dhamma teachers, male or female, in Thailand.

Upasika Kee was something of an autodidact. Although she picked up the rudiments of meditation during her frequent visits to monasteries in her youth, she practiced mostly on her own without any formal study under a meditation teacher. Most of her instruction came from books -- the Pali Canon and the works of contemporary teachers -- and was tested in the crucible of her own relentless honesty. Her later teachings show the influence of the writings of Buddhadasa Bhikkhu, although she transformed his concepts in ways that made them entirely her own.

In the later years of her life she developed cataracts that eventually left her blind, but she still continued a rigorous schedule of meditating and receiving visitors interested in the Dhamma. She passed away quietly in 1978 after entrusting the center to a committee she appointed from among its members.

Her younger sister, Upasika Wan, who up to that point had played a major role as supporter and facilitator for the center, joined the community within a few months of Upasika Kee's death and soon became its leader, a position she held until her death in 1993. Now the center is once again being run by committee and has grown to accommodate 60 members.

Much has been written recently on the role of women in Buddhism, but it is interesting to note that, for all of Upasika Kee's accomplishments in her own personal Dhamma practice and in providing opportunities for other women to practice as well, socio-historical books on Thai women in Buddhism make no mention of her name or of the community she founded.

This underscores the distinction between Buddhism as practice and mainstream Buddhism as a socio-historical phenomenon, a distinction that is important to bear in mind when issues related to the place of women in Buddhism are discussed.

Study after study has shown that mainstream Buddhism, both lay and monastic, has adapted itself

thoroughly to the various societies into which it has been introduced -- so thoroughly that the original teachings seem in some cases to have been completely distorted. From the earliest centuries of the tradition on up to the present, groups who feel inspired by the Buddha's teachings, but who prefer to adapt those teachings to their own ends rather than adapting themselves to the teachings, have engaged in creating what might be called designer Buddhism. This accounts for the wide differences we find when we compare, say, Japanese Buddhism, Tibetan, and Thai, and for the variety of social roles to which many women Buddhists in different countries have found themselves relegated.

The true practice of Buddhism, though, has always been counter-cultural, even in nominally Buddhist societies. Society's main aim, no matter where, is its own perpetuation. Its cultural values are designed to keep its members useful and productive -- either directly or indirectly -- in the on-going economy. Most religions allow themselves to become domesticated to these values by stressing altruism as the highest religious impulse, and mainstream Buddhism is no different. Wherever it has spread, it has become domesticated to the extent that the vast

majority of monastics as well as lay followers devote themselves to social services of one form or another, measuring their personal spiritual worth in terms of how well they have loved and served others.

However, the actual practice enjoined by the Buddha does not place such a high value on such altruism at all. In fact, he gave higher praise to those who work exclusively for their own spiritual welfare than to those who sacrifice their spiritual welfare for the welfare of others (Anguttara Nikaya, Book of Fours, Sutta 95) -- a teaching that the mainstream, especially in Mahayana traditions, has tended to suppress.

The true path of practice pursues happiness through social withdrawal, the goal being an undying happiness found exclusively within, totally transcending the world, and not necessarily expressed in any social function. People who have attained the goal may teach the path of practice to others, or they may not. Those who do are considered superior to those who don't, but those who don't are in turn said to be superior to those who teach without having attained the goal themselves.

Thus individual attainment, rather than social function, is the true measure of a person's worth.

Mainstream Buddhism, because it can become so domesticated, often seems to act at cross-purposes to the actual practice of Buddhism. Women sense this primarily in the fact that they do not have the same opportunities for ordination that men do, and that they tend to be discouraged from pursuing the opportunities that are available to them.

The Theravadin Bhikkhuni Sangha, the nuns' order founded by the Buddha, died out because of war and famine almost a millennium ago, and the Buddha provided no mechanism for its revival. (The same holds true for the Bhikkhu Sangha, or monks' order. If it ever dies out, there is no way it can be revived.) Thus, the only ordination opportunities open to women in Theravadin countries like Thailand were as lay nuns, observing eight or ten precepts.

Because there is no formal organization for the lay nuns, their status and opportunities for practice vary widely from location to location. In Thailand, the situation is most favorable in Rajburi and the neighboring province of Phetburi, both of which --

perhaps because of the influence of Mon culture in the area -- have a long tradition of highly-respected independent nunneries. Even there, though, the quality of instruction varies widely with the nunnery, and many women find that they prefer the opportunities for practice offered in nuns' communities affiliated with monasteries, which is the basic pattern in other parts of Thailand.

The opportunities that monasteries offer for lay nuns to practice -- in terms of available free time and the quality of the instruction given -- again vary widely from place to place. One major drawback to nuns' communities affiliated with monasteries is that the nuns are relegated to a status clearly secondary to that of the monks, but in the better monasteries this is alleviated to some extent by the Buddhist teachings on hierarchy: that it is a mere social convention, designed to streamline the decision-making process in the community, and based on morally neutral criteria so that one's place in the hierarchy is not an indication of one's worth as a person.

Of course there are sexist monks who mistake the privileged position of men as an indication of

supposed male superiority, but fortunately nuns do not take vows of obedience and are free to change communities if they find the atmosphere oppressive.

In the better monasteries, nuns who have advanced far in the practice are publicly recognized by the abbots and can develop large personal followings. At present, for instance, one of the most active Dhamma teachers in Bangkok is a woman, Amara Malila, who abandoned her career as a medical doctor for a life in a nun's community connected with one of the meditation monasteries in the Northeast.

After several years of practice she began teaching, with the blessings of the abbot, and now has a healthy shelf of books to her name. Such individuals, though, are a rarity, and many lay nuns find themselves relegated to a celibate version of a housewife's life -- considerably freer in their eyes than the life of an actual housewife, but still far from conducive to the full-time practice of the Buddhist path.

Although the opportunities for women to practice in Thailand are far from ideal, it should also be noted

that mainstream Buddhism often discourages men from practicing as well.

Opportunities for ordination are widely available to men, but it is a rare monk who finds himself encouraged to devote himself entirely to the practice. In village monasteries, monks have long been pressured to study medicine so that they can act as the village doctors or to study astrology to become personal counselors. Both of these activities are forbidden by the disciplinary rules, but are very popular with the laity -- so popular that until recent times a village monk who did not take up either of these vocations was regarded as shirking his duties.

Scholarly monks in the cities have long been told that the path to *nibbana* is no longer open, that full-time practice would be futile, and that a life devoted to administrative duties, with perhaps a little meditation on the side, is the most profitable use of one's monastic career.

On top of this, parents who encourage their sons from early childhood to take temporary ordination often pressure them to disrobe soon after ordination if they show any inclination to stay in the monkhood

permanently and abandon the family business. Even families who are happy to have their sons stay in the monkhood often discourage them from enduring the hardships of a meditator's life in the forest.

In some cases the state of mainstream Buddhism has become so detrimental to the practice that institutional reforms have been attempted. In the Theravada tradition, such reforms have succeeded only if introduced from the top down, when senior monks have received the support of the political powers that be.

The Canonical example for this pattern is the First Council, called with royal patronage in the first year after the Buddha's passing away, for the express purpose of standardizing the record of the Buddha's teachings for posterity. During the days of absolute monarchy, reforms that followed this pattern could be quite thorough-going and on occasion were nothing short of draconian.

In more recent years, though, they have been much more limited in scope, gaining a measure of success only when presented not as impositions but as opportunities: access to more reliable texts,

improved standards and facilities for education, and greater support for stricter observance of the disciplinary rules.

And, of course, however such reforms may be carried out, they are largely limited to externals, because the attainment of the Deathless is not something that can be decreed by legislative fiat.

A modern example of such a reform movement is the Lay Nun Association of Thailand, an attempt to provide an organizational structure for all lay nuns throughout the country, sponsored by Her Majesty the Queen and senior monks in the national hierarchy. This has succeeded chiefly in providing improved educational opportunities for a relatively small number of nuns, while its organizational aims have been something of a failure. Even though the association is run by highly educated nuns, most of the nuns I know personally have avoided joining it because they do not find the leaders personally inspiring and because they feel they would be sacrificing their independence for no perceivable benefit.

This view may be based on a common attitude in the outlying areas of Thailand: the less contact with the bureaucratic powers at the center, the better.

As for confrontational reforms introduced from the bottom up, these have never been sanctioned by the tradition, and Theravadin history has no record of their ever succeeding. The only such reform mentioned in the Canon was Devadatta's attempted schism, introduced as a reform to tighten up the disciplinary rules. The Canon treats his attempt in such strongly negative terms that its memory is still very much alive in the Theravada mind set, making the vast majority of Buddhists reluctant to take up with confrontational reforms no matter how reasonable they might seem.

And with good reason: Anyone who has to fight to have his/her ideas accepted inevitably loses touch with the qualities of dispassion, self-effacement, unentanglement with others, contentment with little, and seclusion -- qualities the Buddha set forth as the litmus test for gauging whether or not a proposed course of action, and the person proposing it, were in accordance with the Dhamma.

In addition, there have been striking instances where people have proposed religious reforms as a camouflage for their political ambitions, leaving their followers in a lurch when their ambitions are thwarted. And even in cases where a confrontational reformer seems basically altruistic at heart, he or she tends to play up the social benefits to be gained from the proposed reform in the effort to win support, thus compromising the relationship of the reform to true practice. Experiences with cases such as this have tended to make Theravadin Buddhists in general leery of confrontational reforms.

Thus, given the limited opportunities for institutional reform, the only course left open to those few men and women prepared to break the bonds of mainstream Buddhism in their determination to practice is to follow the example of the Buddha himself by engaging in what might be called personal or independent reform: to reject the general values of society, go off on their own, put up with society's disapproval and the hardships of living on the frontier, and search for whatever reliable meditation teachers may be living and practicing outside of the mainstream.

If no such teachers exist, individuals intent on practice must strike out on their own, adhering as closely as they can to the teachings in the texts -- to keep themselves from being led astray by their own defilements -- and taking refuge in the example of the Buddha, Dhamma, and Sangha in a radical way.

In a sense, there is a sort of folk wisdom to this arrangement. Anyone who would take on the practice only when assured of comfortable material support, status, and praise -- which the Buddha called the baits of the world -- would probably not be up to the sacrifices and self-discipline the practice inherently entails.

Thus from the perspective of the practice, mainstream Buddhism serves the function of inspiring individuals truly intent on the practice to leave the mainstream and to go into the forest, which was where the religion was originally discovered.

As for those who prefer to stay in society, the mainstream meets their social/religious needs, while at the same time making them inclined to view those who leave society in search of the Dhamma with

some measure of awe and respect, rather than viewing them simply as drop-outs.

What this has meant historically is that the true practice of Buddhism has hovered about the edges of society and history -- or, from another perspective, that the history of Buddhism has hovered about the edges of the practice.

When we look at the historical record after the first generation of the Buddha's disciples, we find only a few anecdotal references to practicing monks or nuns. The only teachers recorded were scholarly monks, including participants in controversies, and missionaries.

Some people at present have taken the silence on the nuns as an indication that there were no prominent nun teachers after the first generation of disciples. However, inscriptions at the Theravada stupa at Sanci in India list nuns among the prominent donors to its construction, and this would have been possible, only if the nuns had large personal followings.

Thus it seems fair to assume that there were prominent nun teachers, but that they were devoted

to meditation rather than scholarship, and that -- like the monks devoted to meditation -- their names and teachings slipped through the cracks in the historical record inasmuch as true success at meditation is something that historians are in no position to judge.

So, for the period from Canonical up to modern times, one can only make conjectures about the opportunities for practice open to men and women at any particular time. Still, based on observations of the situation in Thailand before Western influences made themselves strongly felt, the following dynamic seems likely:

Meditation traditions tend to last only two or three generations at most. They are started by charismatic pioneers willing to put up with the hardships of clearing the Buddhist path. Because the integrity of their efforts takes years to be tested -- not all pioneers are free from delusion and dishonesty -- their role requires great sacrifices. In fact, if large-scale support comes too early, it may abort the movement. If, over time, the pioneers do embody the practice faithfully, then as word of their teachings and practices spread, they begin to attract a following of students and supporters. With the

arrival of support, the hardships become less demanding; and as life softens, so does the practice, and within a generation or two it has deteriorated to the extent that it no longer inspires support and eventually dies out, together with any memory of the founder's teachings.

In some cases, before the tradition dies out, its example may have a reforming influence at large, shaming or inspiring the mainstream at least temporarily into becoming more favorable to true practice. In other cases, the practice tradition may influence only a limited circle and then disappear without a ripple. For those who benefit from it, of course, the question of its historical repercussions is of no real consequence. Even if only one person has benefited by realizing the Deathless, the tradition is a success.

At present in Thailand we are watching this process work itself out in several strands, with the major difference being that modern media have given us a record of the teachings and practices of many figures in the various meditation traditions. Among the monks, the most influential practice tradition is the Forest Tradition, which was started against great

odds at the end of the last century by Phra Ajaan Sao Kantasilo and Phra Ajaan Mun Bhuridatto, sons of peasants, at a time when the central Thai bureaucracy was very active in stamping out independent movements of any sort, political or religious.

We have no direct record of Ajaan Sao's teachings, only a booklet or two of Ajaan Mun's, but volume upon volume of their students' teachings. Among women, the major practice tradition is Upasika Kee Nanayon's. Although she herself has passed away, the women at her center still listen to her tapes nightly and keep her teachings alive throughout society by printing and reprinting books of her talks for free distribution.

Both traditions are fragile: The Forest Tradition is showing signs that its very popularity may soon lead to its demise, and the women at Khao Suan Luang are faced with the problem of seeing how long they can maintain their standard of practice without charismatic leadership.

On top of this, the arrival of the mass media -- and especially television with its tendency to make

image more consequential than substance, and personality more important than character -- is sure to change the dynamic of Buddhist mainstream and the practice, not necessarily for the better.

Still, both traditions have at least left a record -- part of which is presented in this book -- to inspire future generations and to show how the Buddhist path of practice may be reopened by anyone, male or female, no matter what forms of designer Buddhism may take over the mainstream and inevitably lead it astray.

Source: Access-to-Insight

<http://www.accesstoinsight.org/lib/thai/kee/dynamic.html>

Note: Things are changing, presently, at least a little bit, under the influence of Thai Bhikkhuni Dhammananda's leadership. Dual bhikkhuni ordinations have now been taking place in Sri Lanka, for some number of years now. International support has been gaining for this movement, although the Thai Theravada Sangha has not yet taken up a position on the legality of such action.

Thus ends this text.