

A Map of the Journey

By Sayadaw U Jotika



E-mail: bdea@buddhanet.net
Web site: www.buddhanet.net

Buddha Dharma Education Association Inc.

Preparing the Mind

As I see most of you are in your thirty's, forty's and fifty's. You have done and experienced quite a lot in your life, you have had your own successes and disappointments. Now, I think you are ready for something better. In fact you have been doing this for quite a while, developing your inner qualities and spiritual nature. As today is our first day it is going to be an introduction.

Before we really meditate we need to prepare ourselves. Whenever we want to do something we need to be prepared, this is very important. It is something I learnt a long time ago, and I teach this to my friends and students: *be prepared*. If you really prepare for what you are going to do it is really surprising how natural and easy it becomes. Just like a farmer or a gardener who wants to grow flowers or any crop, first of all he needs to prepare the land. Without doing this if he just goes and scatters the seeds, some of them might sprout but they won't bear fruits, very soon they will die out. They cannot take root properly because there is not enough fertilizer, not enough nutrients for the plant and not enough water.

In the same way the person who wants to cultivate his inner qualities must do the same. The two have many similarities. Maybe you know the meaning of the Pāli word *bhāvanā*. One of the meanings is cultivation. Bhāvanā literally means to make something grow. The root of the word bhāvanā is *bhū* meaning to grow, i.e. cultivation. When you grow something it implies that you have the seed, either in the form of a grain or another part of the plant like a branch. So, you already have something to grow. If you don't have the seed you cannot grow anything. Just to have the seed is not enough; you also have to prepare the land. When you prepare the land first of all you pull out the weeds, clear the land. This is something we should also do in our life. It is very natural for weeds to grow. Look deeply into your life, into the way you are living and find out what kind of weeds are there. Some of them have been there for a very long time and have grown strong roots, it might take sometime to dig those roots out, just like a bad habit, taking intoxicants, drinking, etc. Pulling out weeds and removing stones is very important.

If you love doing something don't bargain. A lot of people ask me how long you need to sit in order to develop *samādhi* (concentration), how long do they need to meditate to attain *Nibbāna*. How can anybody tell how long? If you really love doing it, you are happy because you are doing it; this happiness and joy gives you a lot of motivation. Please don't bargain! People want to give as little as possible and get as much as possible. I think this is not the right attitude especially in meditation. In other areas of our life as well, like in relationships, if you want to give

a little and get a lot you won't get anything. The truth is that you get as much as you give. If you give a little you'll get a little, if you give yourself totally you'll really get a lot. When practicing meditation look deeply into your mind, why are you doing it? Are you really willing to do it? When you do something, no matter what, there are some sacrifices you need to make. You need to give up something in your life. Like for coming to this class, you have already given up something.

Our human nature is basically spiritual; within us we have very beautiful qualities like loving kindness, compassion, mindfulness, peace of mind. We already have the seeds and we want those seeds to grow. Human nature is very mixed, on one hand we want to enjoy sensual pleasures and on the other we don't want to enjoy anything at all. We want to give up!

*When the student is ready the Teacher will appear,
I have heard this saying and I like it very much,
I think it is very true.*

Look very deeply, a lot of us here are not so young anymore, we have done already many things in our lives and we know that there is nothing really fulfilling. We have never really found anything, either in possessions or pleasure that has given us any real lasting satisfaction. Really we are looking for something else. When we are truly ready to receive, what is needed will be available. Ask yourself "am I truly ready to receive?"

Before we meditate there are few things we need to reflect on in order to prepare our mind. In our daily life we get distracted by so many things. To make our mind suitable for meditation one of the things we need to do is to reflect on death. Life is very short, very soon we'll be gone, considering our age here, for some very soon life will be over. If we have awareness and clarity before we die, we can reflect on what we have done in our life. What would we find really satisfying? I have been very close to death a few times. Once when I was very sick with malaria for a few months, I was living in the forest and medicine was not available. I couldn't eat and my body was very weak and I was about to die. My friends were around me and they were saying: "he is unconscious, he is in a coma". I was able to hear but I could not move anymore. At that time I reflected on what I had done with my life and I felt that I hadn't done anything really satisfying. I had a degree, had a job, married and did many other things. In many ways I had been successful but all that didn't mean anything anymore. The only thought that came to my mind which was really meaningful was that I had learnt to meditate. At that moment I turned my mind to meditation and I felt that if I died it was ok, but I wanted to die mindfully, I wanted to die meditating. That was the only thing that gave me some peace of mind, something I could rely on, all the other things were not around me anymore.

To prepare our mind for meditation we need to reflect on the shortness of life. No matter how long we live, even one hundred is not very long. If we think of our life and compare it with the

life of this world it is like a split second. Think of the shortness of life and tell yourself that there is no time to waste, time is very precious and time is life. If we ask someone: “do you want to live a long life?” The answer would be “of course I want to live a long life!” What are you going to do if you live a very long life? For most of us we don’t have a clear answer, we don’t really know what we want to do with our life; we just want to live a long life. This shows our attachment to life but we don’t really know how to make the most of it. If we live really mindfully and make the best use of our time then we can achieve something. For example, something that would take someone five years to achieve we could do it in one year. We can make one year equal to five years. If we live for about sixty or seventy years and make the best use of our time it is like we lived for two — three hundred years. So much of our time is wasted because we are so unmindful.

*When we understand that life is short and
time is precious and if we will have developed
some understanding of the Dhamma,
it becomes more precious.*

*Do not procrastinate, do what should be
done today, we don’t know whether
we will be still alive tomorrow.
Today, now, do what should be done,
try to accomplish, to do.*

Ajj'eva kiccam ātappaṁ. ~ MN iii.187

*An earnest meditator doesn't procrastinate.
No matter where you are or what you are doing;
that is the time and the place to meditate.*

We should reflect on the qualities of the Buddha. The more you learn about the Buddha the more you know about His nature, His purity, His wisdom. When we think of the qualities of the Buddha the mind reflects the object of the mind, for example when we think about something that makes us unhappy, naturally we will become unhappy. The happiness or unhappiness of our mind depends on the object and how we look at the object. When we think of someone that we love we develop loving kindness, we feel love. In the same way when we think about the Buddha, His freedom, His wisdom, His peace, His purity, what will happen to our mind? A similar nature will arise. It is very important to find out more and more about the Buddha. When we think of the Buddha we appreciate His qualities and we ourselves would like to have them. It makes our mind attracted to them, and it can become our goal, "I want to be free, peaceful, and wise". Although we won't become a Buddha we will develop those qualities to a certain extent. When we become enlightened, in a certain way we become a Buddha.

*When we take Buddha as a teacher,
His purity, wisdom and freedom gives us a direction,
"Where am I going, what is my goal"?*

Reflect on the Dhamma as well, on what the Buddha taught. As you have been meditating for a while you have some experience of the Truth of the Teaching of the Buddha, you know that it is true. You know where it leads. His teaching is not something we listen to and we believe in, it is not blind faith. You can find it out for yourself; it is a very practical Teaching, reflect on it. Studying Dhamma and practicing meditation, it is worth doing. Sometimes we waver, “should I meditate or should I go out and do something”? If you really know the value of meditation you can let go of distractions, enjoyments and pleasures and give more time to meditation. Keep thinking about the benefits of meditation.

*When you've really see that meditation is worthwhile
you'll give your life to it. The more you give,
the more you get. Do it with all your heart!*

This is another requirement for success in whatever you do. If you do something whole heartedly you'll succeed. If you do it half heartedly, after a while, because you are not making much progress you'll think that although you have been doing it for a long time it hasn't taken you anywhere. You become discouraged. If you do it half heartedly you don't develop enough motivation to make any progress, and because you don't make any progress you won't believe in it anymore.

Another requirement is restraint. I know some people don't like to hear this word because they think that restraint is the

opposite of freedom; that is not true. If by freedom we mean to do whatever we want, this is not real freedom.

*Freedom really means knowing what is useful,
what is beneficial and worthwhile,
knowing what is wholesome and what is unwholesome
and choosing what is wholesome, good and right
and doing it whole heartedly.*

Restraint has many meanings and one of them is keeping the precepts. Why do we need to keep the precepts? For lay people it is five or eight precepts and for monks more than two hundred. In the beginning when we try to keep the precepts we feel very cramped, we feel as if we don't have enough room to move. We can't do anything! When we keep training our mind after a while it gets used to living with them. At this point we don't have to try anymore to keep them, actually it becomes our nature and we feel very free.

What happens when we don't keep the precepts? What happens when we kill, steal, commit adultery, tell lies or take intoxicants? What happens to that person? When a person does not take the precepts he does not have self respect. Naturally, deep inside us we know what is proper and what is not. We give in to the temptation; we give in to greed, to anger, and to other sensual pleasure. When we don't restrain ourselves we do things that are improper. We harm ourselves and we harm other people. In the process of harming others we harm ourselves because

there is no way to harm others and not harm ourselves. It is impossible. I have noticed this even in minor things. Once in my monastery it was raining and there was a foot mat outside my door and a little dog, (which I'll call he, because for me dogs are like people, they have consciousness and are also very sensitive). Because of the rain he wanted to be in a dry place just like me. When it rains I want to be in a dry place because I don't want to get wet. This little dog came up to my *kuti* (little hut) and slept on the door mat and whenever I wanted to go out I couldn't open the door because he was sleeping there and sometimes I got very upset. I thought I must teach this dog not to come and sleep here. Do you know what I did? I got a bucket of water, opened the door and threw it on the dog, just to teach him that he would get wet if he came here. When I was doing it, suddenly my awareness came and I caught my state of mind, "what am I doing?" I found that I was feeling some sort of pain. I was feeling like I was not a good compassionate person, actually I was very cruel. That feeling hurt me very much, it was very painful to be a cruel person and not to be a compassionate loving one. When I caught myself I realized that I was harming the dog, but by getting wet he is not really harmed, but what harmed me most was loosing my peace, tranquility and self respect.

That is more harmful. In many instances I have noticed this again and again. Sometimes I was not deliberately harming anybody, for example when somebody came I was not feeling very friendly, I didn't want to give my time to that person. This person came again and again, I didn't have any time for him,

and so I didn't go out and receive him. When I looked into my mind I found that I could give some time to this person if I wanted to, just a few minutes, but I felt very cold inside me, not loving, not kind, and not warm. When I watched that, I found it to be very painful. Ignoring a human being is very painful. Not acknowledging, not feeling loving and kind it is very painful. Whenever we do something like that we lose our self respect, this is very painful and harmful. It is true that in some cases we have to put a limit. But when we do that we should do it with understanding, with kindness and not with coldness.

*When we don't keep the five precepts
we harm others as well as ourselves.*

*These precepts are not imposed
by somebody. It is nature.*

Deep inside us we know that not keeping the five precepts is improper, harmful. Even though a person may not be keeping the five precepts, deep inside him he has respect for those who keep them. He has respect, admiration and appreciation for those who are loving, kind, and generous. When we lose our self respect we don't feel worthy. When we don't feel worthy what happens? Even though we do something, because we don't feel worthy we don't give ourselves whole heartedly, we do things half heartedly. Those who feel unworthy won't really try their best, they will feel themselves pretending that they are doing something but actually they are not. To feel worthy of

something it is very important to feel worthy of love, of freedom, peacefulness, deep wisdom, and understanding. You can only rise as high as your self esteem. This is very important.

So, how can you develop your self esteem? You do what is right. You avoid doing what is wrong. When you have self esteem you also have self confidence and self respect. With this you believe that you are a good person. When you do what is good and when you avoid what is not good then you feel you are a good person. We have to train ourselves not to do what is unwholesome and to do what is wholesome with right attitude, whole heartedly. Cultivating the quality of loving kindness towards anyone, animals included will nourish the heart and give a lot of energy. It will make you feel that you are a loving person, and at the same time you feel worthy of receiving love. To feel worthy of *mettā* (love), to feel worthy of something good it is very important; unless you have that you cannot meditate. Do something to develop that quality more and more.

*Let go of the past and be willing to
fully live in the present.*

*Be willing to change and to grow.
Often we are afraid to change, to grow,
and because of lack of confidence
we don't try our best.*

*We are responsible for ourselves and our lives,
no matter what happened in the past,
without blaming anybody.*

I have met many people who are always blaming others for their unhappiness, but they don't try to learn anything that will help them to become more happy and peaceful. Try always to think about wholesome thoughts although it is very difficult to do. Most of our thoughts are unwholesome: greed, anger, pride, envy, jealousy. During the day try to be aware of what you are thinking about without wanting to control it. Whenever you catch yourself thinking about something unwholesome about someone or about something, try to look at it from a different angle and see if you can learn something from that situation and become positive about it. You determine to think something positive as much as possible. All this is just preparation for meditation. If you think unwholesome thoughts all day and then sit and meditate and expect to be peaceful and happy, it is not possible because you have not prepared your mind. Thinking in a positive and wholesome way is reflecting and thinking properly.

It is a natural thing for every being to experience good and bad things in life, reflecting on this it helps to let go, to not get attached.

Another important thing is restraint of the senses. We see so much; hear so much, so limit yourself. Watching television, reading, do only if it is necessary, try to limit it. If we don't put a limitation in our daily life, we'll not have enough time and energy to meditate. To avoid agitation try to restrain the senses.

Purity of livelihood is very important, look after your needs in a proper way. A friend who is a meditator told me that in his office he used to use the copy machine for personal needs before he started meditating, but since he has been meditating and is very aware of his mental states he has noticed that whenever he used the machine for himself he felt guilty, he felt as if he was stealing. Although nobody said anything, the purpose of the machine was for office use, he stopped using it. It does not matter if other people do it, let them do it, but you are developing your spiritual qualities, and making yourself be worthy of real peace, real insight, real liberation.

Try to make your life as simple as possible, in eating, in clothing, in everything. Whatever you do, whatever you have, it demands your time and energy, and it may cause some sort of agitation. My teacher in his housing in the monastery has literally, nothing. He has only three robes on his body and washes them in turn. There is no furniture at all, the floor is very clean. If you live in an empty room your mind becomes empty. When you go to a supermarket what happens to your mind? In an empty room there are no distractions. If you want to develop in meditation as much as possible live a very simple life.

Meditation is like cultivating the land.

Look very deep into your mind every day, and try to weed, because every day seeds are coming in the mind. They will take root and if you let them stay there long, their roots will become

very strong and it will be harder for you to root them out, but if you can throw away the seed before it germinates it will be very helpful.

QUESTION & ANSWER:

In the beginning I won't suggest that you give it up completely. Give up little by little but be very honest. See if you can give up something, especially talking about music. I told you that I love music. I was a musician when I was young and because of my love for music I came in contact with another person who was a musician and also a very good meditator. You can be a musician and a good meditator. My first meditation teacher was a layman who was a music instrument maker and a musician. Even when he was making musical instruments, playing instruments he would do it with all his attention, with real care, real love. The kind of music he played was very soothing and calming. If you like music, find the kind of music which is calming and soothing for the mind. You don't need to give up everything; you can give up just as much as you can.

Do it slowly and gradually.

If music is your livelihood and it disturbs your meditation practice you have to make a decision.

QUESTION: By the way, what happened to the dog?

Answer: I gave him a proper place to sleep on. I felt very happy about it. Any time you show any kindness to any being it makes you very happy, it is very nourishing, it helps your practice. As much as possible be kind. Sometimes you might get angry or upset but we can learn from those experiences as well. Learn to forgive yourself. We'll never be perfect. Ask yourself "am I trying my best?" You all have been meditating for quite a while, try your best.

Every moment of peace has a tremendous effect on the mind. Peace of mind, no matter how momentarily is of great value.

Every time the mind becomes peaceful even for a few seconds it gives you a contrast. In life we are always making choices, so choose to be peaceful even for a few seconds. Every day, every moment I choose to be a monk. It is not easy being a monk. If it was, so many would not disrobe. Until the person attains *Anāgāmī-magga* (non-returner), a monk can always chose to be a layman. So, we choose to be mindful. All psychological problems are basically spiritual. If you have the right attitude and the right understanding you can do away with a lot of psychological problems. I have come here to spend four months. Coming here is also part of my learning process. It is necessary for my growth.

*In our life we need balance;
we need time for ourselves and time for others.
If we live only for ourselves we won't feel satisfied.
If you really want to be happy,
help others to be happy, in whatever way.*

The more you can give the more you become mature. The biggest disturbance comes from unwholesome thoughts and actions.

Basic Skills & Understanding



I want to remind you of what we talked last week, maybe some of you have good memories and will remember quite a lot. Memory lasts a very short time, some people say that if you hear something once, after one day you remember ten per cent, after two or three days you remember five per cent, after a week you remember one or two per cent. So to make your memory stronger you have to revise things again and again, especially when you get older it is difficult to remember things, especially short term memory. So, I want to remind you of a few things I talked about last week.

Do you remember the simile I gave about gardening? It is always very important to remember that simile, always to remember that meditation is cultivating... *bhāvanā* means cultivation, to make something grow. So, in order to cultivate you need to prepare the land, remove all the weeds, rocks, stones, all the rubbish, until the land becomes soft, then enrich the land, put some natural fertilizer especially, and water the land, prepare the land properly so that when you put seeds in it, seeds will sprout easily, will take root easily. Even after that you can't

forget about it, you can't leave it like that, you have to go and check every now and then to see if some weeds are growing again, because it is quite natural for weeds to grow easily, it is harder to grow a flower, a vegetable or a crop, than to grow weeds. Weeds grow naturally, weeds are very hard to kill, very hard to uproot. That's why farmers spend a lot of time weeding and weeding.

*When we meditate that is
what we do most of the time,
we are weeding most of the time, and
enriching the soil also.*

What do we do to enrich our mind? We cultivate mettā, *karuṇā* (compassion), to be more thoughtful, kinder, and more considerate to yourself and others. We do not have a right to be cruel even to ourselves. Some people say "I suffer for other people" I think this is not right attitude, I think nobody should suffer! So cultivate kindness to yourself and kindness to other people, and that means also keeping the precepts. If you are really kind to yourself and if you are really kind to other people then you are already keeping five precepts because you cannot break precepts without being unkind to yourself and to others. One person said... "I don't kill, I don't steal, I don't commit adultery and I don't cheat, but I drink...I am not causing harm to anybody. I just like to drink a little bit..." but then you are harming yourself and indirectly, when we are harming ourselves

we harm others too. We are all connected, related, you cannot harm yourself without harming other people, without harming your parents, without harming your spouse, without harming your children, without harming your friends.

So we are all related, connected.

*We cannot harm anybody
without harming ourselves or
without harming somebody else.
Not harming is very important.*

Here is a very beautiful poem which expresses what I am trying to say:

“What power of man can grow a rose?” this is the question “what power of man can grow a rose?” “Prepare the soil”, that is what I am talking about “and the rose itself will grow, brought into being by some force within”, so prepare the soil!!

To achieve peace it requires that we have the courage of our convictions; we have the courage to value something... So what do we value? As meditators we value mindfulness, peace and quietness of mind, we value contentment, we value deep insight, we value liberation, freedom and to use another Pāli word we value *Nibbāna*, ultimate peace, ultimate freedom.

So, if achieving peace requires we have the courage of our convictions it also requires an unrelenting consistency, very important...unrelenting consistency. If we really value mindfulness we have to try our best to be mindful always. It is very

important, unrelenting consistency... we cannot say that... well... now this is the time from four o' clock to five o'clock I'll be mindful and after five o'clock I'll be unmindful, we cannot say that.

*The person who really understands
what meditation means, what mindfulness means,
has no timetable for meditation.*

What does that mean? A person who really understands what it really means, what happens in the mind when it is really mindful and what happens to the mind when it is not mindful, if the person understands the difference, then he will never say that "this is the time to be mindful and that is the time not to be mindful", there is no choice.

To be unmindful, means you are allowing your thoughts to create all sorts of negativity, because in our surroundings there are a lot of things contributing negativity, contributing greed, contributing selfishness. They are making us become greedier, more selfish, more unsatisfied, and more discontent. When I talked about discontentment in America I said "If you are content you can reduce the cost of your living to half, because we are spending so much unnecessarily." One person said "If you reduce spending to half, that will cause a breakdown in the economy, you should not do that, you should spend more." They are only thinking about the spending for the economy only, not spirituality. Here you have to make a big choice, what do you

value? Is it to develop your inner qualities, your spirituality or just to keep up with the Jones's?

*There is no short cut to really
developing our inner qualities, there is no easy way.*

In America they advertise meditation courses: in three days you'll become enlightened, you have to pay a thousand dollars, it will take you only three days to become enlightened.... there is no short cut like that, you cannot buy enlightenment. You have to develop your inner qualities slowly, and slowly to understand very deeply about all the good things and all the bad things about yourself.

Even when you see bad things in you, you have to be very open and very compassionate, with acceptance you see it as something not personal, see all the greed, anger, frustration, pride, jealousy, as something natural. When you feel guilty about such kind of thoughts you are reinforcing ego again. When you can see greed, envy, jealousy and pride as something natural then this seeing mind has equanimity. It is not upset; it is not happy or unhappy about it.

*If you can see with mindfulness,
with equanimity then whatever comes up that
tries to take over, the ego does not feed the defilements.
Defilements are not afraid of being attacked.*

*No matter how much you try
to attack defilements they will not lose the battle,
they become even stronger.*

Defilements which mean greed, anger, frustration, envy, jealousy, pride are afraid of being looked at very straight, looked at with equanimity, looked at with wisdom, and looked at as something natural, not a being, not me, not mine, not myself. We have to be mindful all the time, doing the right thing all the time.

As a meditator, even when we are not really trying to concentrate on something we should at least maintain some sort of awareness all the time. Whenever thoughts come in we know what kind of thoughts they are and just by watching them sometimes they go away and sometimes if they don't go away, we can turn our mind to something wholesome.

In the Piṭaka texts it also says to read Dhamma books. Sometimes the emotions, the defilements are so strong that we don't know what to do. Then in that sort of difficult situation read a Dhamma book to divert your mind to wholesome thoughts. Or if that is not possible or you don't want to do that, then talk with somebody who is very mindful, very peaceful.

*To come into contact with somebody
who is mindful and peaceful makes you
become more peaceful and mindful.*

It is very important.

The Buddha talks a lot about a spiritual friend, to be in contact with somebody who is mindful and peaceful.

This is my experience too; my first experience with my teacher also was that he was very mindful and peaceful all the time even when he was working. I have told you often about my best friend, my first teacher who was a musician and musical instrument maker. I still think of him quite a lot, so mindful he was. I never saw him getting upset about anything at all. I never saw him doing anything in a hurry, always taking his time, doing things very mindfully and slowly, perfectly. He was always perfect in whatever he did. I never heard him boasting about anything, about any accomplishment or qualities or skills. He was a very skillful person too, but he never talked about himself or his skills. He never talked about money.

So, everyday choose some little thing that you can do to build up your confidence and put it into practice. This self confidence, self respect, feeling of worthiness is very important. If you don't feel worthy, even if you do something, you will not get good results especially in meditation and in other cases too. If you are not confident, if you don't respect yourself, don't feel you are worthy of something you will not achieve it. Don't forget that, to begin is half done and half won; make a start today.

*The nature of wisdom,
the nature of insight is such that
if you know that something is good and
you don't do it, you loose your insight.*

This is something very deep, we should understand it very well, if you know that something is good like meditation or generosity, morality and loving kindness anything that you know is good, do it! If you know that something is good and you don't do it, your mind gives it up. Maybe you sometimes get interested and you think, "Oh I'll do that someday", but you'll not do it. The nature of wisdom is like that, all of us are in some ways very intelligent and wise. Once in a while we know what to do but we get diverted to something else and we don't do what we think is good to do right away. So if you put into practice what you feel is a good thing to do then you develop deeper insight, even a small thing.

Especially with what happens in meditation. You sit and meditate; your mind becomes very calm and peaceful. Then a flash of insight comes into your mind, you see that you made a mistake, or you see that there is something you needed to do and you forgot to do it. Immediately get a piece of paper and write it down, don't let it be forgotten, it is very important. Our nature is that we are naturally and spiritually intelligent, but this forgetfulness and other things that make us greedy, very often take over our minds. So we forget to do good things. Whenever some flash of insight occurs in your mind, get it, catch it, get a piece of paper and write it down. Then try to put that into practice as soon as possible. In your meditation when you realise you have made a mistake or you have said something wrong, said something which is not really true; you must correct that mistake as soon as possible.

*If you want to develop deep insight,
put into practice as soon as possible what
you understand to be the right thing to do.*

*If you do just this one thing I assure you that you
can develop your very deep spiritual qualities.*

This is something that my teacher told me a long time ago and I found it to be true in my own practice.

Many people came to him and asked him many questions and he answered hundreds of questions every day. Some people even asked him very simple questions like “my knee hurts, should I go and see a doctor” Questions like that; they came and ask to my teacher because they cannot decide for themselves. But he was always very compassionate he always gave them the answer that they needed. Then many times he said,

*“Be more mindful, your mind will tell you
the right thing to do”.*

It sounds very simple, unbelievable, but if you really do the right thing that your mind tells you to do, it will tell you more and more. I call it ‘it’ as it is not something personal; your mind is not something personal. It will tell you the right thing to do because in our nature we know what is right and what is wrong, in most cases, I mean we know it.

Not only humans. I read a book about somebody training a chimpanzee, *The Education of Coco* they made it into a

television show. I know the trainer who trained the chimpanzee. They have many trainers but one of them was the chief trainer, an anthropologist I think. One of the trainers, when leaving his shift, said to the trainer who was taking over, that the chimpanzee that day was causing a lot of trouble, that he was very naughty, something like that. This chimpanzee was so intelligent that she could understand human language and she was so angry, jumping, because somebody was saying that she was bad. Then she said “no... telling a lie...lying... lying.” that the trainer was lying. Then when this first trainer left (she does not like this first trainer) the other trainer was more sensitive to the chimpanzee, she could understand the chimpanzee’s feelings more intimately. So she tried to calm Coco down and asked what happened, Coco said “I was bad” she admitted that. Even the chimpanzee knew she was bad, she got into trouble. How much more a human being can know!! Although we know what is right and what is wrong we don’t always do the right thing we don’t always try to avoid the wrong thing and if we know something and we don’t do it, what is the point of trying to know more and more.

*No matter how much
we know if we don't put it into practice,
what is the point of knowledge.*

Another day when the trainer came, the chimpanzee was very upset again. The trainer asked the chimpanzee what happened

and the chimpanzee said “cat bad”, (she can speak sign language,) the trainer asked why? The chimpanzee said “cat killed bird” she can make all the signs even speaking in sentences. You see the chimpanzee knows that it is not good to hurt another being, and she was very upset about it, because she felt for the bird. Another day many visitors came to see Coco, because she was becoming very famous, many people came to see her and one visitor looked at Coco and said “beautiful” (using sign language) and when the visitor said Coco is beautiful, do you know what Coco said? Can you guess? With American Sign Language she said “lying”. She scratched her nose, so they understood, “lying”, and she didn’t like that, for even a chimpanzee which is very close to a human being, can understand that it is not good to lie; it is not good to kill.

We know that, if we don’t put into practice what we know there is no point in trying to find out more. If you put into practice what you know is the right thing to do, then your mind will let you know more and more; this is very encouraging. When I first found out about this truth I felt very happy about it. I have the quality, the ability to know. When many people asked my teacher many questions my teacher said “try to be more mindful and your mindfulness will let you know the right thing to do”.

Unless you do something everyday to make yourself feel that you are becoming a better person, which means, to be more loving, more compassionate, more caring and sharing, more mindful, more understanding, then there is bound to be a feeling of failure. Unless you do that you may feel your life is a failure.

“What am I doing... just going around and around”. As you get older and older you feel the failure more and more. If we develop our inner qualities every day we feel better and better about ourselves. “Oh! Another day has gone and I have developed some good qualities. I am becoming more understanding more loving, more caring, more sharing, more compassionate” and that will make you very happy.

*Take small steps to improve yourself every day,
consistently and with determination,
it gets easier as you go on.*

*As long as you head in the right direction and
keep going you'll get there.*

Actually, we know quite a lot but many of us like to procrastinate. “I'll do it later”, many of us procrastinate like that hoping that if we delay we'll be better equipped to take up the job later. We need to learn more and more about how to do this... how to do that... we think that if we know more then we will be able to do it more easily, but that is not the truth. If you do what you know, that will make it easier for you to learn more and more. So, doing and knowing should go together. If you just do one thing that you know how to do, if you take but one step forward something will happen to make the second step easier.

*There is a power within you greater
then you realize, it awaits you,
NOW!*

*So do what you know now and it will make
it easier for you to do the next thing.*

As we use what is in hand, then greater opportunities are given. Use your knowledge now; if you use it, then you will get more knowledge, from yourself and also from your teachers too. Teachers will come to you, or you will be there where your teacher is, so, use what is yours to use today, your motivation, knowledge, ability, today's resources are sufficient for today's task and what you need tomorrow it will come, which means don't wait until tomorrow, you already know what to do now, do it now! This is the most important thing.

I got very simple instructions from my meditation teacher, just to sit very relaxed, deeply breathing in, breathing out... feeling more and more relaxed, keep the mind on breathing, very simple instructions like that. After that he said go through the whole body from the head to toes, check all the sensations in the body. Those simple instructions I practiced for six years, no more instructions; that was just enough. Just sitting breathing in and breathing out, feeling more relaxed and after that going through the whole body, seeing whatever sensation there is. It might be cold or hot, pain, tension, ache or it might be just feeling good. Sometimes it feels very good, so I am aware of that, feeling very relaxed... very peaceful... sometimes thoughts

come in... just watch the thoughts... see the nature of them and they will go away.

*Everything comes and goes,
we don't need to push it away,
and it will go away by itself.*

I did that for six years, not in a hurry and later another teacher told me that you can practice meditation while walking too! I didn't know about it before. I thought at first to meditate meant to sit in full lotus, so I tried to sit in full lotus and, actually it was not difficult for me. The first thing I heard about meditation was... you sit like this... and keep your hands like this... and meditate, I thought this is the only position that you can meditate. Then later somebody told me that you can meditate while walking, that was a surprise for me... so, I said "Really? How do you do that?" The person was actually my friend, we were living in a hostel in university". He was next to me and sometimes we talked about *Dhamma* and he said "You can meditate while walking"... "How do you do that?" He said "You can be mindful of breathing while walking... quite simple... you don't need to change your object of meditation, try to be mindful of breathing while you are walking" or he said "You can be mindful of each step... you can do that too". So, when everybody was asleep I just walked around the university campus trying, just very happy to experiment with it. I was very interested in doing that. It was very nice, quiet and cool also. I think it

was in December and in the northern hemisphere it is a cold season. Walking around the university campus very excited... “Oh really it works! It really works!”

Later we discussed about meditation and he said that you can meditate anywhere.

*No special place, but
if you have a special place it is good,
but if you don't it does not matter
you can meditate anywhere.*

There was a Chinese cemetery in the east of our university, a big cemetery, we crossed over the hill and went there. It was very nice like a park, even clean. We would sit and meditate there for a while and then come back. Sometimes late in the night when we could not go to the Chinese cemetery, I went to the tennis court where there were benches to sit and nobody there at night. So I meditated there, very peacefully.

*Learning a few things at a time and
immediately putting them into practice.
That is the most important thing to do,
don't wait for more knowledge.
Do what you know right now,
that will make you know more and more.*

So when you are really doing something and somebody gives you advice, you know the value of that advice because you are already doing it. If you are doing something and are having difficulty, and somebody comes and tells you... “Oh, if you do it like this it will solve your problems”, immediately you use that knowledge and solve the problem and you know the value of that advice. However if you are not doing anything and somebody tells you how to do something again and again, you won’t learn anything, you don’t value their advice.

It is very, very important to prepare. There are many things we should think about. What you eat affects your mind and body. A meditator should be aware of that and should be sensitive to that. Recently somebody told me that his meditation was very good. He felt very calm and peaceful and he asked me, why? In fact he should ask himself “What have I done right?”, and if it is not good you have to ask yourself “What have I done wrong.” You should think about how much you ate and if you ate a big meal before you sat and meditated, I am sure that won’t be a very good sitting. Even the quality of your food, if you eat for instance too much fried, oily fatty food it will make your mind dull, and it affects your mind. If you drink too much coffee it makes your mind agitated. It depends on the right balance. If you like to drink coffee, drink just the right amount, just to keep you alert, but don’t drink too much because it will agitate your mind.

Also what you talk about it is very important. If you talk about something that causes agitation in the mind, then you go and sit, your meditation will not be very good. It is quite natural that what

you talk about affects your mind very much. That's why in Burma (Myanmar) in some meditation centres, here also, the teachers instruct the students not to talk. In our daily life it is not possible for us not to talk, so we should be careful what we talk about and how much we talk. If we talk mindfully and we are talking about something not useful we will be able to cut it short.

*I am not trying to push you
to live an ideal daily life, it is not possible.*

*I understand how difficult it is for
a lay person to live daily life.*

*However if you are mindful
you'll know how and what you talk about affects
your mind, affects your meditation.*

If you talk about something unwholesome, something that makes you greedy, angry or upset, it makes you feel hopeless and depressed and it will affect your meditation. If possible, talk about something positive, something encouraging, and even though the situation is not a happy one, you can see it from a positive angle and learn something from it... “This is a lesson I need to learn... this is something that is teaching me to be more patient. This is teaching me to be more content”. Even when somebody says something bad about you... “Oh this person is testing my forgiveness, how much I can forgive, how much I can maintain my equanimity”. If you look at it from that point of view it helps your meditation.

*Your peace of mind also depends with
whom you are associating,
if you associate with those people who are loving,
kind, generous, mindful and peaceful,
it helps your meditation.*

But if you are associating with people who are unmindful, jumpy, talking about one thing after another or unkind, angry, upset, greedy or proud, they will affect you negatively. So whatever happens to us in our daily life affects our mind and affects our meditation.

*For meditation it is very important to
understand how food affects your mind.*

I do that all the time. I watch what I eat and how much I eat; sometimes I eat too much because I don't want to throw things away. When people throw away food I feel very bad about it. But very carefully as much as possible I try to get the right amount of food, the right kind of food. When I eat the wrong food my stomach won't digest, it will stay a long time in the stomach, I don't have energy, and the mind gets dull. If you eat the wrong kind of food it becomes poison to your body. For example I cannot eat anything made with milk because I cannot digest lactose. When I eat milk or anything made from milk my stomach becomes poisoned.

*Not only food but
what we see poisons our mind as well.*

We are more concerned about our physical body only. We think so much about our physical body but not enough about our mind. We are careful enough not to poison our body, however many people are poisoning their body eating the wrong food, junk food. Similarly what we see can poison our mind, what we hear can poison our mind because ideas are coming into our minds; ideas are poison for the mind. We need to be very careful of how our ideas affect our minds especially with our children. Be careful of what they are getting on the television, what they hear from their friends, what kind of ideas they are getting. Also be very careful about how, what you see and what you hear affects your mind. A good meditator should be careful of that.

*Clothing is important;
when you meditate it is much better to
wear loose fitting clothes, not very expensive,
just simple clothes.*

Food affects you, what you talk about affects you, what you see affects you, what you hear affects you, what you wear affects you and your surroundings affect you. It is best to meditate in a very peaceful and clean place.

*The place should be very clean,
like this, it is very clean here,
with a quiet peaceful atmosphere,
because a lot of people here are trying to
cultivate their spirituality and
that affects the place too.*

Sometimes we have no choice and the place is not suitable to meditate in. In that case what shall we do? I'll tell you what I did. It is very useful; I do it all the time, every day. I'll tell you the story so you'll get the idea very well. Once I was in America living in a monastery and there were about seven or eight monks and more than twenty people in the place. It had been a school for children but this meditation group bought that school and made it into a monastery, actually into a meditation centre. I was the only English speaking monk in that monastery and I talked a lot all day, from about five o'clock in the morning until eleven or twelve in the night. Sometimes I got very tired and distressed, sometimes so many people around making so much noise, it disturbed my mind. I told one friend it is very difficult to meditate here and to relax and sometimes I want to relax I can't ignore the noise and relax. So when I wanted to relax I wrote on a piece of paper 'please don't disturb' and I would stick that paper on the door outside my room. But there were so many people who needed to talk to me they would come and knock at the door, take off the paper and show it to me saying that "Maybe you forgot to take off the paper".

So no time to rest... all day... talking... talking... I want to run away, to go away, I can't do it anymore. I told my friend "What to do now? I can't go on doing like this for a long time," so my friend said... "I am very sorry! Let's go into the redwood forest". The monastery is in a redwood forest, we walked up the hill, it was a very nice place, the moment we walked outside it was forest, no houses. In that area they don't allow many houses. One house here and you walked one mile and found another house. We walked out of the monastery, the path was very simple, just rocks and gravel and up the hill we go, down the hill and then climb another hill and found a very nice spot. They had cut down the trees and when they did that small trees grew again from the roots, and they grew like a ring and inside that area the redwood tree needles filled the gap and it is like a bed, soft. We spread a cloth on there and we sat there and meditated. It is very nice to meditate in the redwood forest, very quiet and peaceful. Sometimes we lay down and took a nap in the afternoon and then came back to the monastery.

That helped quite a lot, but sometimes I could not go out so what I did was I just sat in my room imagining that I was back in my monastery in Burma. Don't think that imagination is useless... it affects my mind very much. So I sat there... breathing in, breathing out... relax and relaxing... the mind became a little bit calmer.... The way to my monastery goes through rice paddy fields, on the left and on the right green paddy fields, very wide and the wind blowing, very cool and I can hear the birds. I go slowly and slowly imagining that I was really there walking

on that road, feeling the temperature, the wind, the sound, the smell of the rice fields and then going across a small wooden bridge. There is a small waterfall near the bridge, in my imagination I would be there and sit there for a while, listening to the water falling and also the wind blowing very cool. Then from there after I crossed the bridge I climbed a very gentle slope going up the hill to my monastery. It goes through a small opening and on the side there is a cliff, so in between there a small road about eight or ten feet wide with bamboo groves and other small trees growing. So I would go through that place, climb the hill very slowly and I get to the top where it is flat. Not many big trees up there so I can look and see everything around. I look far away and see the mountains to the east, the Shan hills and I keep going slowly and slowly, feeling everything in that area in the surroundings and then after that I have to go slowly down the hill again to get to my monastery. The slope goes down slowly and slowly and as I go down into my monastery the trees are becoming bigger and bigger because people don't cut down trees in the monastery. Outside the monastery they are cut down. As I go into the monastery trees become taller and taller, shadier and also quieter because the trees absorb noise, so as you go into the trees it becomes quieter, cooler. Then I would go deep into my monastery. In the middle of the monastery there is a clear space without trees. Near that place is the shrine room and the meditation hall, not as big as this, it is quite small. I go into my meditation hall shrine room and close the door. As I go into my monastery, even physically when I go there, I feel that

I am leaving the whole noisy, busy world behind, ... the noisy, busy world... it has nothing to do with my place. My monastery is just outside the world. Not disconnected... it is in touch with the world but outside the world; that is the way we feel about it. I go into the monastery and I feel that the noisy, busy world is left behind. I get into the place, pay respect to the Buddha, sit down and meditate. That takes about five minutes to imagine but that imagination affects my mind very much. If you cannot find a suitable place to meditate, try to do that. You imagine that you are into your ideal meditation place. Take your time, slowly and slowly. When your mind believes that and accepts that it affects your mind.

*You know that you are imagining,
you know that it is not real but
even though it is not real
it has real effect on your mind and
that is the most important thing.*

You sit down and meditate; the mind becomes very calm and peaceful. If you imagine bad things it affects your mind in a bad way, if you imagine good things it affects your mind in a good way, it is quite natural, so try to do that.

Last week I talked about wholesome thinking: any kind of thought that is wholesome. We can't make ourselves not think about anything at all because thoughts are coming and going all the time, but sometimes we have a choice to turn our mind

towards wholesome thoughts. Try as much as possible throughout the day to do that. When you get used to doing that your mind will stay in that wholesome state mind more and more and whenever unwholesome thoughts come to your mind you find that your mind becomes uneasy, not peaceful, agitated, tired... you feel the difference.

Some people are so used to thinking unwholesome thoughts that they like to think unwholesome thoughts, they like to be angry and upset most of the time. I know some people like that. I asked one of them, "Why do you want yourself to get angry, you are making yourself angry, do you know that?" He said "Yes I know I'm making myself angry" and I asked him "Why do you do that?" This person knows that he is making himself angry, deliberately thinking about bad things, and he said that "When I am angry I feel I have more energy". Some people do that to make themselves angry so that they have more energy and this person will try to think about all the things that go wrong about government, weather, food, about everything in the newspaper, in the television, something is always wrong for him. I asked him "Why do you want to see all the faults?" We are very close friends and we can talk very openly. He said "If you don't know what is wrong then you are stupid!" What is he trying to prove? He is trying to prove that he is not stupid by looking at all the things that go wrong.

When we get upset, try to look deep inside.

Why are we doing that?

What are we trying to prove?

What do we get from that?

Whenever we do something we expect something,

so... what do we get from getting upset?

He was trying to prove that he is not stupid; also he wanted to be more energetic. Another thing I found out was that this person was not doing anything wholesome. When you are really interested in doing something wholesome and useful whether worldly or meditation, then you have no time to have unwholesome thoughts, no time to look around and find faults in people. Those who are not doing something wholesome will naturally do something unwholesome, you cannot stay in between. For most people there are only two ways: to be wholesome or to be unwholesome.

When you become used to keeping your mind peaceful and calm and relaxed, the moment any kind of unwholesome thoughts come into the mind you'll see the difference.

*You become unpeaceful agitated,
hot, you become tired.*

When I talked about keeping the five precepts with another person that person asked me "How long do I need to keep the five precepts intact to start to meditate?" This is a very valid

question, a good question. Some people say that first of all you have to develop your *sīla* (morality), you have to keep the five precepts, your *sīla* intact before you meditate but how long? It is very difficult to say how long, so I asked this question to some of my teachers, and I also tried to find out what the texts say and I got a very reasonable answer.

*The answer is it does not matter how long;
the only thing that matters is your sincerity.*

If you decide right now

*“I will not harm myself, I will not harm anybody else”
from that moment you can start to meditate.*

If you still have in your mind that you'll harm somebody even though you meditate you cannot really develop deep concentration, peacefulness and insight because you need the intention not to harm yourself and others. Intentionally make a decision and that is a necessity. Honestly make a decision “I'll not harm myself and I will not harm anybody else”, with sincerity.

*If you can make the decision from
that moment you are ready to meditate.*

*It all goes together, sīla, mettā and vipassanā bhāvanā
(morality, loving kindness and insight meditation),
they all go together, and you cannot leave
anything separate.*

We have a tendency to keep things separate.

*Each aspect of our life is connected with
other aspects of our life,
this is very important especially for meditators.*

*Each aspect of our life it is connected to
every other aspect of our life.*

*Whatever you do, it will affect your meditation,
either in a good way or in a bad way.*

*This truth is the basis for our awakened life.
This is the basis.*

Someone who was a member of a meditation centre in Burma, he was a business man and in his business dealings he was dishonest. So one of his friends pointed that out; “Look you are meditating to develop your spiritual qualities to attain liberation, something very noble and high but in your business dealings you are not really honest”. He was cheating a little bit and everybody does that; he was not exceptionally bad but he was just normally bad. So this businessman said “The two are different, when I go to the meditation centre I meditate and I try do develop my spiritual qualities to attain liberation but when I am doing business it is business, it is another matter!” No way can you do that!! Keep this in mind and see what you are doing and see if what you are doing is appropriate to your spiritual ideals, what your ideal is, and always keep your ideal in your mind and always check with everything you do whether what you are doing now will harm your spiritual practice or will support your spiritual practice.

What counts is how we live our daily life.

How constructively we use the resources that we have and how lovingly we treat the people around us. The two keys to successful living are attunement to spirituality and service to our fellow man, the two go together. If we harm anybody in any way it will harm our spiritual practice. *Sīla* has many aspects. Keeping five precepts and whenever we use something we have to reflect why we are using it. When we eat something we have to reflect on it, “Why do I eat?” When we use clothing also “why do I use this clothing?” If we don’t reflect on that then greed will take over, and we will eat greedily and we will wear clothes with greed, just to show off. Whenever we see or hear something try to be very mindful, so that we will not react automatically. When you go down the road, go down to busy shopping centres try to be mindful. See what happens. Our eyes looking here and there all the time and we try to listen to many things. We are not trying to be mindful at that moment and when we are not mindful then we become more and more agitated.

There are other things that hinder our spiritual attainments. One is killing one’s mother. If one has killed one’s mother one cannot attain *magga-phala* (the path and fruition), one can meditate and he will not achieve supramundane consciousness, because to kill a mother, to kill a father, to kill an *Arahant* and to cause injury to a Buddha affects the mind very badly. Wrong views are also very important! If somebody thinks that there is no such thing as wholesome or unwholesome actions, everything is

the same, if somebody believes that if you do something good it will not give any good result, if you do something bad it will not give you any bad results, if a person believes that sort of wrong view he cannot attain any spiritual goal. I know you don't have those sorts of wrong views.

If even mentally you have accused anybody, any fellow meditator even, if you have any bad thoughts about that person, remember that, and ask for forgiveness. Please tell yourself "I have made a mistake". It is very important to have positive thoughts about each other. If you have any negative thoughts about each other or any other people who are meditating, that unkind negative thought can hinder your progress. That's why when we sit and meditate first of all we try to develop this feeling of belonging, connectiveness, support, loving kind thoughts. It is very important to do that. Whenever we sit and meditate whether in group or alone, first think of those people and try to develop mettā for them, "I support their practice". If you don't support their practice then you feel isolated, you feel very selfish. When some meditators accuse each other, I have noticed that that caused them guilty feelings and agitation and that destroys their concentration.

This is another important point here; somebody asked me a similar question few days ago. There are some people who have been meditating for quite a long time but mostly they are doing only one thing for example sitting and trying to be mindful all the time of breathing, breathing in and out, just one thing.

*The Buddha said
 “Cattāro Satipaṭṭhānā (MN i.56),
 Four Foundation of Mindfulness”*

We have to practice all four foundation of mindfulness not just one. To really develop deep insight we need to develop all four. The first is *kāyānupassanā*, mindfulness of the body and I'll go into that later in detail, the second is *vedanānupassanā*, mindfulness of feelings, even in *kāyānupassanā* there are many aspects. Another is *cittānupassanā*, mindfulness of thoughts; another is *dhammānupassanā* which generally means the content of any consciousness. Try to develop as much as possible all four.

*The Satipaṭṭhāna meditation is all inclusive,
 it is not exclusive.*

*Samatha meditation is exclusive,
 you choose one thing and you leave everything else out.*

But *vipassanā* meditation is that first you start with one thing slowly and slowly you take in more and more, be aware of everything happening in your body and in your mind, in your eyes, ears, nose, tongue, body, everywhere.

Whenever we want to learn how to do something we need a method from somebody. We have enough methods in the Pāli texts and there are a lot of teachers around as well. To learn the method is not very difficult anymore.

However one important thing is to clarify whether you have understood it well or not, you must ask questions.

Don't just listen and make notes and go away; ask questions. This is the best way to learn. Either in meditation or any other kind of learning, those who really ask more questions, I mean really thinking and asking questions and really listening, do understand more. And asking again and again until you get it very clear is the best way to learn. Discussion is very important. Learn the method; ask questions to clarify and practice; and as you practice you'll find some difficulties coming up. Whenever you have difficulty ask your teacher, talk with your teacher, take their advice.

In most cases if you keep on practicing you get your own answers, this is true. We lived in the forest most of the time and we were very far away from our teachers. We can only see our teachers once a month. So, when we meditate and have difficulties we say "I will ask this to my teacher when I go to see him" and then we go on meditating and one day the answer comes in the mind and we don't have to ask anymore. With many other of my students also, I go to their city sometimes and when I go away and they have difficulties, they write down their questions about their difficulties thinking that "I'll ask my teacher when he comes", but they keep meditating really earnestly, honestly, whole heartedly and then they find their own answers. So when I go and see them many of them say "I wrote down a lot of

questions to ask you when you came but as I keep meditating I find my own answers so now I don't have many questions just one or two".

If you keep meditating you'll find your own answers.

A good friend; a good teacher is a good friend, a teacher and a friend they are the same, not two different things. Even Buddha talked about himself as a good friend. To have a good teacher, to have a good friend, to be in touch with the teacher to ask him questions, to take his advice all this is very important. Without a teacher and without a friend, without a guide it will be very difficult for us to go on this path. We'll make a lot of mistakes, we'll sidetrack a lot.

In the beginning stage of meditation naturally we'll try to keep our mind concentrated on one object. For example breathing in and out, we try to keep our mind there as much as possible. As we keep our mind there, slowly and slowly we develop more concentration, our mind stays on that object longer and longer. As our mind becomes a little bit calm we can see the changes in the nature of this sensation, of this object. Even in this mindfulness of breathing there are many steps. If you do each step systematically it is much easier to develop mindfulness and concentration.

For example the first thing you know is that you are breathing. If you know that you are breathing, then you have taken one step because most of the time although we are breathing we

don't know it. Why? Because we are thinking about something else all the time, thinking... thinking... What do we think about most of the time? Sometimes we don't even know what we think about. Most of the time we don't know what we think about, it happens so unconsciously. Whenever we know that we are breathing, it helps to bring our mind back to this present moment... "I am breathing"... that is one step. The next step is breathing in and you know that you are breathing in, breathing out, you know that you are breathing out, another step... breathing in and out.

The next step is, when you breathe in, it takes about three or four seconds if you breathe in slowly, breathing out takes another two or three seconds, in that time two or three seconds, your mind can go out many times. To help your mind not to go away you can do another thing. You can break down your breathing in into five sections so that you can be mindful five times. You can bring back your mind five times when you breathe in and also the same thing when you breathe out. You count five times; it helps you to be more aware of your breath. There is a misunderstanding about this method. Some people say when you breathe in and out count one and when you breathe in and out again count two. That means that you are counting how many times you breathe. It also helps you keep your mind on breathing, but the real purpose is that you are trying to be more aware of your in-breath, so that your mind cannot go away in between. If you are aware of your in-breath five times then it is more difficult for your mind to wander away. Sometimes

when you breathe in you are aware in the beginning and you are not aware in the middle and in the end, it can happen. So in order for that not to happen, you count in your mind again and again, five times at least. It can be more than five but the maximum should not be more than ten because if you count ten times then you count very fast and it causes agitation. Depending on how long you breathe in and how long you breathe out you count a minimum five times and somewhere between five and ten. The number does not matter. You need to understand the purpose of counting; the purpose is to keep your mind again and again on the breathing. Don't try to reach the number, this is very important. Don't try to count faster so that you'll finish counting as you finish breathing; just count naturally, evenly.

Keep your mind there and when you keep your mind there where do you keep it?

*Keep your mind on the sensation, not on the concept,
breathing is actually a concept, an idea;
in Pāli it is called paññatti, and
I will explain this word again and again.*

Paññatti and Paramattha these two words need to be explained quite a lot because in many cases instead of keeping the mind on paramattha most meditators keep the mind on paññatti because that is what they have been doing, keeping the mind on paññatti. I have tried to translate this word many times and I discussed about this with Venerable Nāṇavasiṭṭhi. In translation

they say paññatti means concept. What does concept mean? When you hear the word concept, how do you understand it? A word, a name, we tried to find out the meaning and we couldn't really find a really exact translation in English and so Venerable Nāṇavīsuddhi suggested the word 'designation'.

Names are paññatti, any name is paññatti; in and out direction is paññatti; when you call something air that name is paññatti, because in fact what you call air it is a combination of many elements.

*So when you take things together,
give it a name or understand it as one thing then
you are understanding paññatti
not real paramattha.*

When you breathe in, the direction is not important, naming it is not important because both of them are paññatti. What is paramattha is what you feel directly. What do you feel when you breath in? Where does that sensation, that feeling happen; sensation is what is real! What do you feel when you breathe in, breathe out? Something gently touching, rubbing, pushing, these sensations are the real things to keep your mind on. Temperature also, coolness, warmth... Around your nose somewhere you can feel something happening when you breathe in and when you breathe out. Keep your mind there and try to keep your mind there many, many times bringing it back as you breathe in and as you breathe out. Do that for a short time only

because even the counting is another paññatti. Numbers are all paññatti not paramattha. When we use the numbers we break down our breath into smaller pieces so that we can be more continuously aware of it. That is the most important point, to be continuously aware of the breath without any break in between. If you understand the purpose of a method then you can let go of the rest of the things and just do that.

*Keep your mind on when the air comes in and goes out,
keep your mind on where it touches,
keep it there continuously, without any break...
try your best!*

Only in the beginning, try to count or to say “in” and “out,” but after a while let go of “in, out” and let go of the counting and try to be just with the breath, without any ideas.

As you develop a certain level of concentration you become aware of the changing nature of the breath... I mean the sensation... even what we call breath is paññatti. What we directly know is the sensation. Check and see whether you are doing that when you are meditating. Where is your mind? What are you thinking about? If you have any questions about this it is very important to ask and make it clear because if you are not keeping your mind on paramattha, then although your mind can become calm, peaceful and concentrated, you cannot see reality.

*There are two parts in meditation.
 The first part is to calm down,
 to develop concentration so
 that your mind does not get distracted,
 to calm down the thoughts and
 keep the mind on one object...
 that is the first object,
 the first purpose of meditation.*

*And the second which is more important is
 to understand the way things are,
 whether you call it reality or whatever,
 to understand the way things are...
 sensations, thoughts, feelings...
 to understand things as they are.*

If we keep our mind on paññatti we can get calm and peaceful and concentrated but we will not see nāma (mentality) as nāma and rūpa (materiality) as rūpa, we are not trying to be in touch with the nature of nāma and rūpa, we are just keeping our mind on paññatti ‘a designation’. Shape, size, small or big are paññatti; east, west, north, south are paññatti; to give you more idea of what paññatti means... Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday etc they are all paññatti, just names.

*When you meditate and keep your mind on
what you can really directly experience,
all that disappears.*

Sometimes you don't even know where you are sitting whether you are facing east or west, we don't know that anymore. Sometimes very strange feelings happen; you don't even know who you are sometimes, because who you are is another idea you created in your mind. But to get to that point you need to have deep insight of *anatta* (non soul, non self). When your mind has developed this wisdom of *anatta*, sometimes you don't even know your name. You have to think about it for a while. It takes time to think about it... but that will come later.

If you have any questions about *paramattha* and *paññatti* please ask, it is very important. We discuss about this in the night sometimes, it takes many days to discuss, very interesting... Venerable Nāṇavīsuddhi and I... we sit and discuss about *paññatti* and *paramattha* and the object of *vipassanā*. Sometimes it takes a long time, we forget about time even... we sit and discuss about it from nine o'clock in the evening thinking that we will have a discussion of about one hour and we forget about time because time is *paññatti*. When we look at the clock we realise it is about eleven thirty. If you have more questions, please ask. Now is the time to ask questions. Is there any question? Please feel very free...

QUESTION &

ANSWER: Long and short (breath) is paññatti. This is a very good question, thank you for asking that. When we think about long what do we mean?

*The important thing is not
to keep your mind on the word.*

*The important thing is
when it is long you know the whole thing
from the beginning to the end.*

You keep your mind on the touching sensation, the place where the in-breath and the out-breath touches and keep your mind there no matter how long it takes, whether it is short or long. In the beginning only, you know that it is long, you know that it is short... this is only in the beginning stage. Just to know that you are breathing, it is the first stage; just to know that you are breathing in, that you are breathing out is another stage; just to know that you are breathing in long, breathing out long is another stage; or breathing in short, breathing out short; but after that you let go of long and short, but be with the breath continuously from the beginning to the end.

The counting should not be more than ten... don't try to count to a certain exact number. How many numbers is not important. The important point is that your mind stays there.... This is only in the beginning.

Once you get to a certain level of concentration, let go of the counting and see if your mind can stay there. Because we have the habit of thinking so much and it happens so quickly and easily that when we breathe in a long breath we'll be aware of breathing in. In the beginning we number one, two, three, and forget about four, five, six, seven, eight etc... we forget and we think about something else. In order that we don't slip away we try to catch it back again and again and keep it on our breath; that is the purpose of counting... then we let go of the counting and stay with the breath...

*...and if you can stay with the breath
without counting don't count anymore, because
counting becomes another hindrance later;
because it is just numbers...
we are not trying to understand numbers...
we are trying to understand the bodily sensations.*

QUESTION &

ANSWER: Yes, to know that you are breathing is paññatti; in and out is paññatti; to keep your mind on counting is also paññatti; long or short is another paññatti. This is good in the beginning. And when you can stay with the breath without thinking of any word that is the best thing to do... without thinking of any word, because long and short is another idea.... It is comparison...the main thing that we should do is be with the breath continuously; if you can stay

with that let go of everything else! Short, long, in out, does not matter!

QUESTION &

ANSWER: Just to help your mind from being distracted, to help your mind to quieten down. Only in the beginning stage when you sit for a while, just for a few minutes try to do that and then let go! Because we have been going around doing so many things that naturally our mind has speeded up... is thinking too much.... When you begin sitting meditation... breathing in... breathing out... then try to count a little bit only...

*... see if you can stay with the breath,
if you can stay with it, let go of all the words,
all the ideas.*



three

The Way into **Vipassanā Meditation**

Welcome to the class. I am very happy to see you. As I told you before, the most beautiful thing to see is a person sitting and meditating, very beautiful. Since I was a young boy whenever I saw someone meditating, I just wanted to stop and look at that person; sitting so still, his body is still and also so balanced and dignified. Sitting like this it looks like a pyramid to me, so stable, so firm, unshakable; it represents the mind also, so stable, so still. The posture of the body helps the mind; it makes you go towards stability, calm and peace.

*When I see a Buddha statue,
a Buddha meditating, it makes me very peaceful.
I have collected some pictures,
Buddha images that look very peaceful.*

Before I go on talking about meditation objects and different kinds of samādhi (concentration), I want to answer one question that somebody asked me last week, which is a very important thing to remember. It has also a deeper meaning...

about the nature of our mind.... I tried to find out in some books about meditation, experienced meditators have made records, and they have found that just as the stillness of meditation is coming to him or her, the mind is becoming still, the thoughts slowing down, you become unaware of the surroundings — it means your mind is becoming more and more collected.... You are going towards the samādhi state of mind — but just as that happens; do you know what happens next for some people? Just as the stillness of meditation is coming to him or her, the beginner... [A beginner does not mean a person who is just starting meditating, a beginner means a person who has not gone beyond that; so you may have been meditating for a long time, but if you haven't gone beyond a certain stage you are still in the beginning stage. This is very humbling, to understand that, because if we have been meditating for a long time we want to think that we know everything, we have gone very far. If you haven't overcome a certain stage you are still in the beginning stage.]

So, just as the stillness of meditation is coming to him or her, the beginner suddenly is brought back to material realities. Material realities mean the ordinary reality... so... brought back to ordinary reality by a sudden jerk of the whole body and why does that happen? It happens to some people; it used to happen to me. Sometimes it happened like this... I am very still... and then suddenly I hear some noise and become shocked... and wake up!

When you meditate, you go into a different world, into a different reality, and this is something you should understand. It is very similar to ‘a trance state’, a kind of hypnotic state but not really a hypnotized state. It is very similar to that. Some doctors understand very well. When you stop thinking and you are paying attention to one object, slowly and slowly your mind becomes collected and you go into a different kind of reality. So, on the threshold of that reality, you find a lot of difficulties. Your mind goes back and forth because we are so familiar with our ordinary reality. We feel safe in this ordinary reality and we want to take hold of it, keep hold of it, we don’t want to let go of it... this is a protective reaction. We want to protect ourselves.

*One way of protecting ourselves is
to keep ourselves in our conscious mind,
to keep our surroundings in our conscious mind,
we want to know what is going around, and
we want to know the state of our body too.*

“How is my body now?” When you meditate and your mind becomes very collected, slowly and slowly you lose awareness of your surroundings. When you get more and more collected you lose awareness of your body too sometimes. I mean... you are aware of the sensations but you are not aware of the shape anymore. Sometimes the shape and size of your body dissolves because shape and size is paññatti. The mind puts it together it makes it into an idea; paramattha has no shape, no size.

If you find that difficult to understand I will give you a simile — an example from physics, Newtonian science. When you read that, you find that there is shape, size, and movement, everything is there. You can predict everything according to Newtonian physics: the planets move around, you can predict any time, say ten years from now, that a certain planet will be in a certain place, you can tell that. It has shape, size and movement regularity. But when you get down and down to subatomic particles you lose all that. There is no shape, and you cannot tell anything for sure, you can only say that there is a certain percentage of probability for a certain thing to happen. Only probability, nothing is sure anymore.

In meditation also it happens like that. In our ordinary state of awareness we are aware of the surroundings, the shape, size, being, people, east, west, north, south, time, day, and year.

*When we meditate we forget about
what year it is, what day it is,
what day and time it is and sometimes also
we forget about where we are.*

*We are not aware of that anymore,
because all these are just concepts.*

You don't know where you are sitting; you don't know whether you are facing east or west. Sometimes very strange, you don't know where you are and that is very scary and it sounds like a kind of mental sickness. Some people forget who

they are because they are mentally sick, but in this state also sometimes when you go beyond ordinary reality, who you are does not matter anymore.

'I' is just an idea, you lose all that too.

As you go into that state you come back again and again because you are very scared of it.... I have to know who I am.... I have to know what is happening around me because otherwise I am so unprotected. We try to feel secure by trying to know what is happening around us and by trying to know what is happening to our body, by trying to be conscious of our body or self, this is paññatti actually. This is very important to understand because if you don't, you fear more and more... "I am afraid to meditate".... This happened to me, suddenly with a jerk I woke up and I had tremendous fear! We are afraid to go beyond this ordinary reality, although we want to experience something deeper, something beyond. Although we are meditating just for that, the moment we cross that threshold some people are afraid and feel very insecure.

We feel secure by being in control of our body and our surroundings. One way of being in control is to know what is going on, we want to know what is going on around us and we want to know what is going on in our body. This is a protective reaction.

When we have been tense for a long time, we become accustomed to holding on to ourselves. This happens more to people who are anxious and insecure.

Imagine for example that you are in a deep forest and there might be tigers, snakes, and other animals around; I lived in the forest and there were tigers. [Now hunters say that tigers are afraid of human beings and run away]. When we first go into a place which is new to us we feel very insecure because there is real danger: the tigers, the snakes... tigers we can protect ourselves if we are in an enclosed area. But snakes, it is very difficult because they are so small and they can squeeze in and come into your hut because the huts are made of bamboo, not really sealed. Crawling insects, animals can come in.... So when you sit and you hear noises like shi... shish..., suddenly you wake up and you are really afraid, your body reacts; "what is that?" You feel very insecure. When you find out that it's just a lizard then ok you go back and meditate but still your mind is not totally in your meditation, you are still keeping alert. If you keep yourself alert and try to find what is going on in your surroundings it is very hard for you to develop deep samādhi. You are still aware, you are mindful to a certain extent only. You cannot go beyond that.

*To go beyond that you need to
develop some kind of trust and security;
this is very important.*

It is very good to meditate with another person whom you trust, your teacher, a family member or a good friend... you feel that if "anything should happen to me, somebody is around to help me," for beginners this is very important. In Burma when we meditate many teachers say surrender your body to Buddha. Symbolically you give yourself away to the Buddha; it is not mine anymore, so if it is not mine anymore I don't need to worry about it. This is symbolical giving away. Try to find out some ways to make yourself feel secure and to trust your surroundings. In this place you don't need to be afraid of anything. Everybody around here is a meditator and the place is very safe and secure. Before you meditate it is important to develop some kind of mettā (loving kindness), because mettā makes you feel quite secure.

I live in the forest sometimes with no building, no dwelling place. Sometimes sitting under a tree, sometimes just a simple hut, sometimes made from robes. We sit and meditate and when we develop strong mettā, that strong mettā, makes us feel very secure. I have been living in the forest for more than twenty years and never been hurt by anything, real deep forest sometimes, only a few huts surrounding, to get my food. I want to get deeper and deeper into the forest, far away from civilization, because civilization is so disturbing.

Anyway... if you trust yourself, that means you feel more secure... trust yourself, trust your practice!

For beginners it is very important to find very secure surroundings.

So we become accustomed to holding on to ourselves, we become so attached to ourselves, we try to protect ourselves all the time... keeping a grip of ourselves... see if you can really feel that "I am trying to be in control of my body and mind", we are all trying to be in control, but in meditation if you try to do that you cannot develop deeper understanding and go beyond.

*You learn to let go...
let whatever happens happen, because
some of the things you experience in meditation are so
extraordinary that if you try to be in control you back off.
You cannot go further! "Keeping a grip on ourselves"
we do this unconsciously, that is the problem.*

Because consciously you try to give up the control, to let go, but unconsciously you are afraid, you are insecure. So you are still trying to be in control because this fear, anxiety has been ingrained in us. We don't know how long, it might be millions of years, it is ingrained in our DNA I think; this is not an easy thing: to unconsciously guard against the threat of psychological disintegration.

'Psychological disintegration' what does that mean? Integration means we have the idea of who we are. Disintegration means it is anatta, no self; no control. Are you willing to go into that stage?

*There is no self, there is no control,
there is just physical and mental process going on!
The moment you try to control it you are out of it,
you are out of your meditation...
Meditation is a kind of surrender.*

We always want to be in control of ourselves “I know who I am, I know what I am doing” with that attitude we cannot cross the threshold! There is no ‘I’ anymore, there is no ‘I’ meditating anymore, and you are not in control of your meditation even. You are just purely aware of what is happening, just purely aware without control, just like you are looking at the road. You are sitting outside and looking at the road, you are not in control of any car. They are just coming and going, you can just sit and watch... I know what is going on but I have no control! You need to develop that kind of mental state, no control, that is why I try to tell people don’t resist, don’t control, just let go and be just an uninvolved observer.

The moment we see we are losing control, the moment we don’t feel ‘I am’ anymore, we have a certain kind of fear developing. But this does not happen to everybody. Only to some people it really happens. Then, we let go into the meditative process.... Whenever that happens try to calm down again and just tell yourself that there is no danger, no fear. Trust yourself, trust your practice, and go on. We are no longer holding on to ourselves. When we are meditating we are not holding on to ourselves, or keeping a grip of ourselves. See if you are doing

that, trying to be in control, trying to do something. Our mind suddenly feels that we are in danger and the sudden jerk of the body is a protective reaction to put us on guard again. So the moment we cross over to another reality we wake up with a jerk, we want to be in control again. This is a kind of protective reaction of body and mind. This sudden jerk of the body it is not very common but it may be quite frightening. Just tell yourself, encourage yourself that it will go away as you develop deeper peacefulness and deeper wisdom, it will go away. This will happen a few times, going back and forth.

Sometimes the beginner may be disturbed by a sudden feeling of acute panic. The first thing is that your body wakes in a jerk, your body reacts, but in other cases the body is still very quiet, it does not shake. The body is in a still position but the mind reacts. Sometimes the beginner may be disturbed by a sudden feeling of acute panic just when the stillness of mind comes to him. The meditation is abruptly brought to a halt, it comes to a stop; you wake up. This is another variety of the unconscious protective reaction. The person who is chronically tense and anxious feels that if he was to let go something terrible would happen to him mentally. He feels that "If I let go I don't know what will happen, maybe something very strange can happen and I may not be in control, I may not be able to come back to my normal way of being", there are many such a people among us.

That is why in order to develop self confidence and courage we need to practice, to keep five precepts, that makes you feel very courageous.

*If you are keeping the five precepts
you have less fear, this is real.*

*If you believe that you are a kind, virtuous person,
it gives you a lot of strength and courage.*

Also develop mettā, when you are a loving person it makes your mind very calm and peaceful. We are protected by our own mettā. Sometimes you feel there is a kind of protection around you, like radio waves, like a magnetic field, you feel like you are protected by your loving kindness. Whoever comes into this field will not hurt you. Even though they come to you with the intention to hurt you, when they cross into your field of kindness, they change their mind... “Oh, I am not going to say anything, I am not going to do anything”, this is very real! Try to develop loving kindness. The stronger you try to develop this kindness the stronger your field of mettā will be and you will feel protected by your own mettā. Many people ask me “How do I protect myself?”

*You protect yourself by developing mettā and
also by developing mindfulness.*

*Both of them can protect you and also
trust in the Buddha, trust in the practice.*

Before you go into deep samādhi, sit down and reflect on your good qualities. Develop mettā and reflect on the qualities of the Buddha and then tell yourself “I will go deep into my practice but if any real danger comes I will wake”. You can determine that and if you do that a few times you’ll find that if something happens, you are already awake. This is very real because in some places where we live we have to do that, not only for danger but if you wish to get out of your samādhi at a certain hour you can do that too. You sit and meditate, and before you meditate you say “I am going to sit for two hours after that I will wake up” and you go deep into samādhi and meditate and when the time comes you are already awake. Look at the clock and you see it is the right time, just one or two minutes plus or minus.

When you go into real sleep also, many meditators can do that... You have meditated and you want to go to sleep, normal natural sleep, so you tell yourself “Now I am going to sleep but after four or five hours sleep I will get up”. With that determination in your mind slowly go to sleep and you’ll wake up at the determined time. Maybe you have heard or read about these things. This is real, you can do this. The same thing you can do if any real danger comes, “I will be awake, and I’ll know what to do”. In some cases when people meditate for a long time — sometimes they can meditate all day without getting up even — they have to do that. In the meditation instruction books they say that you have to do that, you have to do this kind of determination because there can be real danger. What happens

if a fire breaks out in the forest? It is quite a common thing to happen, so you determine that “If there is any danger I will wake up”. So, this is a very good question somebody asked last week. Please ask me questions like this and give me time to prepare so that I can give you a very clear answer.

This week I would like to talk a little bit more about paññatti and paramattha again and then I would like to talk about three different kinds of samādhi.

Paramattha is something you experience directly without thinking about it.

Paramattha is that inherent quality of mental and physical process.

In fact paramattha is the qualities and you cannot know anything beyond qualities.

Scientists are trying to find out what is ultimate reality. Until now they have not found it because the deeper they go the more it becomes illusive; matter has no shape, no size. The smallest particle of matter, something like photons; light is photons, just packets of energy that have no mass. Can you imagine something with no mass? Just pure energy, this is light; what is beyond that nobody can tell. The only thing we can know about it is the quality, nothing more than that.

In meditation also, direct experience is the quality.

For example when you touch something what do you feel? You feel it is warm, that is the quality. You feel it is soft, that is also the quality. You feel some sort of vibration, movement, which is also the quality. But we cannot touch leg. Leg is something you put together in your mind. You cannot tell the quality of your leg. You cannot even touch your leg actually. Try to understand this. In the beginning it is very hard to understand this. “What... I cannot touch my leg? Here it is!!!” But how do you know that this is a leg? It is because you put together many ideas. If you touch something, you close your eyes... and touch something... can you tell what it is? Can you tell the shape? You cannot, you can only tell the shape only when you get in contact... it is a flat surface... but you cannot tell the shape of the ball! How do you tell the shape of the ball? Because you look at it and put the idea together, or you can touch and you can say that... “Oh I know the shape... it is a round ball... it is hollow inside... it is about one cm thick....” How do you tell that? You put so much data together, but if you take only one datum you cannot tell anything, except the quality... it is hard... it is cold... nothing more than that.

*In meditation we come down to
this simple pure sensation, nothing added.*

That is what I tried to talk about Thursday, but I don't expect that people can understand it right way.... Nothing added, just direct experience, that is what we are trying to

get because this is really what is happening all the time. The moment we experience something we try to put together many ideas, to form an idea about it from the past memories, from the eyes and from other information too. Try to understand the idea of what paramattha is, because this is the object of our vipassanā meditation.

Unless you can keep your mind on paramattha you cannot really develop deep insight. You can develop deep samādhi by concentrating on any object: sound or shape, colour, a word, an idea, even nothingness. Once I tried to meditate on nothingness, tried to develop some samādhi by practicing *ānāpāna* (concentrating on the breath at the nostrils), and then tried to develop some samādhi by staring at a disk, a light brown earth colour disk, staring at it and keeping my mind into it and even when I close my eyes it is in my mind. So I try to get inside that image. Later I got a piece of wood and cut a circle inside and put that on the window, so that I cannot see anything outside, trees or houses, and look at the hole and see that this is a hole. Hole means.... there is nothing there, so just staying in the hole and thinking that there is nothing there... nothing is there; and it is very strange, your mind can get absorbed in this nothingness and it becomes very peaceful, very, very peaceful. Even now I would like to do that; however I don't want to do that anymore because you cannot develop deep insight; you can get absorbed and get very peaceful. Do you know why it is peaceful? Because where there is nothing, there is nothing to disturb your mind... you cannot think about nothingness... it is the

end of everything! It is very similar to but it is not Nibbāna. You are just looking at nothingness and trying to keep that nothingness idea in your mind. Sometimes you close your eyes and you can still see a bright hole and you are thinking nothing... just nothing... hard to talk about but it feels really peaceful. What I mean is that you can develop samādhi by concentrating on any object; you can just sit and recite “coca cola, coca cola”... the whole day. Your mind can get absorbed... any word, any sound, any shape, any image, any idea; once you can get absorbed into it you develop samādhi.

*So that is the meaning of samādhi...
to get absorbed into some concept,
some non changing sensation or idea even.*

*When you want to develop deep insight about reality;
you have to be in touch with reality.
But in fact we are always in touch with reality; always.
But we change that reality into a concept.
All the time we are changing reality into concept.*

What do we see? We see reality actually, but immediately after that we change it into concept. We see only colours — black, red, brown, white — but from our past experience we know this is a human being and this is somebody I know. If you forget about your memory you don't know who it is; if you see something you haven't seen before what idea do you form? For

example here people bring many different kinds of fruits and cakes and bread. Sometimes I don't know what these things are, I have to ask people... what is this? I want to know, what I am eating! I feel insecure if I don't know what I am eating. When we don't know something we feel insecure, we want to know... what is this... how do you make this... is it agreeable for me, I want to know... if people bring something and put it down... fruit, cake... any kind of pastry very beautiful shapes... it looks like a prawn... and I was looking at it... what is this? Sometimes they bring swine meat but if they don't tell me I won't know and before I eat it, can I guess the taste? No way!! I can sit there and think about what it tastes like and spend the all day and will never find out. Can I ask another person "Tell me what it tastes like?" This person will be telling me the whole day what it tastes like and I would be listening and still wouldn't know. The only way to find out is to put it into your mouth, chew and then you will know what it is.

We are always in contact with reality but immediately we change it into concept. When I see some very strange fruit I have never seen before like kiwi. The first time I ate kiwi was here in Australia. I don't know what it is but I can see the colour and when I put all the different colours together I get the shape. In painting there is a system called pointillism; you take a very sharp something and then you make a small point and then you put the points together and then make a picture, so to take this as an example. We see only small colours then put it all together and create a shape in our mind. It is our mind which creates a

shape. Our eyes cannot see shape. This is also another difficult thing to understand. If you take away colour what is there to see? Nothing left, everything disappears. It is the same thing with sound. We hear sound which is real, we don't hear words. Words are something we create in our minds; we learn... it is a learning process, depending on our memory. When you go to a country where people speak a language you don't understand you hear the sound but you don't understand the meaning.

*The sound is real but the words and
the meaning are something we create...*

*It is very useful, I don't mean that it is useless but
when we want to develop deeper understanding of
the reality which is beyond the reality of ordinary reality
we need to go beyond words and meanings.*

When a meditator is meditating and he is really mindful and really sharp on the point, on the moment, if somebody speaks nearby, this person can hear the sound but will not understand the meaning, this is one of the tests.

In some monasteries in Burma they do that. When somebody develops some sort of samādhi; the teacher will say "go and sit near a group of people talking and meditate." Deliberately the teacher puts the student in a noisy place, like you go and sit in the kitchen and listen to people talking and if you can really become mindful you can hear the sound but you don't understand the meaning. It does not disturb you anymore, because

it does not create any idea in your mind; just sound passing away... passing away.... For a beginner it is difficult. Even here there are cars going along the road, you get disturbed "Oh, so many cars going along the road" but when you become really mindful you hear the sound but it does not disturb your mind. Try to find that out more and more, what paramattha is, and what is paññatti.

You cannot see movement even.

*This is another thing very strange to understand,
because we always think that we see movement.
Movement is the domain of your bodily sensation,
not the domain of your eye.*

How do we think that we see movement? Something appears and disappears, another thing appears and disappears. Let's say you have a computer screen and you have a program which will flash a very small dot and it will disappear, another flash very close to the same dot, not on the same space but very close nearby; flash it disappears; another dot flash and it disappears. It happens very quickly; what do you see? You see a dot moving, but actually it is not a dot moving. Try to understand this; there is no such thing as movement. We cannot see a movement; something appears and disappears, another thing appears in a different place and disappears; another thing appears in a different place and disappears. Now let's take another example; light a candle. Can you move the flame from this place to that place?

Think of the flame only, don't think of the candle, and try to get your mind on the flame. The flame is something burning and disappearing all the time, so you cannot move the flame of a candle from this place to that place. When you brought it here that flame disappeared a long time ago but something gives that continuity, keeps burning... try to get closer and closer to this idea of impermanence.

*That's why Buddha said “niccam navāva saṅkhārā”,
all conditioned phenomena are always new,
there is nothing old.*

Old means the same thing, there is no such thing as the same thing. You might have read in some philosophy books, I don't remember who said it, but someone said that "you can't get into the same river twice"; but I would like to say that you can't even get into the same river once. Where is the river? What do you mean by you? When you take the big picture of a river, you get the idea of river. When you take that of a person as something enduring then you can say that this person goes into that river and he comes back again and he cannot go back into the same river again because the water is moving. Even the idea of river is something you put together in your mind and the idea of a person also is something you put together and it is always changing all the time.

Take another example so that you'll have many examples and get the meaning very clear. Take a big canvas bag, fill with

sand, very fine sand and tie it with a rope and hang it on a long rope; make a small hole at the bottom. What will happen? The sand will fall down, what do you see? You'll see a line. Is that line real? Is that line really there? No; it seems like a line and then you take hold of the bag and push it again. What will you see? You'll see a line moving. Is that moving line real? No, there is no moving line. There are just fine grains of sand falling in different places, an illusion of a line moving back and forth, but there is no line, only fine grains of sand... falling... falling.... If you forget about the bag of sand and look at the line you get a better idea, there is no line actually.

*It is the same thing with our body;
it is always arising and passing away.
The shape is not the domain of your eye;
it is something the mind puts together.*

Also smell; you can smell the smell and we say “this is rose”, but the smell is not rose. Rose is an idea that we create in the mind. The smell is real, but the name is something you have learnt and you put this smell with the shape and colour of the rose, ordinary reality rose. If you don't put things together how do you understand pure sensations only? Sometimes my teacher asked me “Is sugar sweet?” He asked me again and again when I was studying meditation. I said what a question to ask.... I said “Yes, sugar is sweet”; he said “Really?” I thought “What does he mean by that? I can't understand that question, why is he

asking me if sugar is sweet”; he said “is the name sugar real or is that a concept?” I said “The name is just a name, concept,” then he said “The name is not sweet....” I said “Yes, you are right... the name is not sweet.” Then he said “What is sweet?” It is not sugar anymore. You can only say that sweet is sweet and even this name sweet is a name only, and what is that; some sensation on your tongue which you call sweet and you put that idea together. If you show it to somebody without telling the name or the taste and ask what is the taste of this? He will not be able to tell you.

*We create our own reality, this is necessary,
important for functioning in our ordinary way of being
but it becomes a hindrance in understanding
extraordinary reality.*

This reality is also reality; I am not invalidating this ordinary reality, because Buddha spoke about different levels of reality. There is agreed upon truth or conventional truth. It is a truth, it is not a lie but when you want to understand paramattha reality, which is a kind of transcendental reality, we have to go beyond this ordinary truth. But we get stuck in this ordinary truth we don't want to let it go. We get trapped in this ordinary truth. So my teacher many times he tells me that we are trapped in concepts, we are imprisoned by concepts. When first he spoke about that I could not understand what it meant. We are trapped, we are imprisoned in concept... but I tried to understand... what

does he mean? How are we imprisoned in concept? After a few months I began to understand....

*Yes, we are imprisoned in concepts;
ideas are what makes you happy or unhappy.*

*If you really get in touch with paramattha
there is nothing to make you happy or unhappy.*

So I found out; all the idealisms all the *isms* — communism, democracy, Buddhism — are actually a prison. Whatever ism... because we get attached to the idea; we are imprisoned, we are not free. You can function even better in this ordinary reality because you are not imprisoned anymore; you know what is going on; you can function very well; adapt in any place. It is much easier if you understand the other reality. We take this reality so seriously that it hurts; we cannot let it go because it hurts.

*Try to understand why we are meditating,
what we are aiming at, and
what kind of reality we are trying to understand.*

This is just another step from this conventional reality to another... how do I say it... the real reality, because I don't want to use the word '*ultimate reality*' because I've discussed about this with Venerable Nāṇavīsuddhi about this word '*ultimate*' and we got so confused, that we had to drop the word ultimate.

What do we mean by ultimate? It is very difficult to talk about. It is a deeper reality which is not created by our mind. Even then we have to understand this reality and go even beyond that, there is another reality there, which is beyond mental and physical process. From this conventional reality we go to paramattha reality where there is just process, just phenomena, nothing lasting, not being. From there we go into another reality where there is no phenomena... which is also another reality which is very difficult to understand and very difficult to talk about, but that will come later. I'll try my best to talk about it and hope that I won't make you more confused because they are things that are beyond words. We try our best to talk about it. Later we will talk about this paramattha more and more.

Now I will talk about the three different kinds of Samādhi (concentration).

The first samādhi that I want to talk about is *jhāna*. You have heard about the word *jhāna*. *Jhāna* is, to get absorbed into some idea, like mettā.

You develop mettā by thinking of loving thoughts... "May I be happy... may I be happy... may I be peaceful," and after a while you really feel that... "I really want to be happy", but it is very strange... people are very strange... do you really want to be happy? We should ask these simple questions again and again; do you really want to be happy? What do you mean by happy and do you know how to get this happiness? Whatever we do every day we are doing it because we think that it will make us happy. We have been doing that for so long. Have

you found that happiness? We can develop that happiness... “I want to be happy” and you can share that wish with other people also... “Just like me, he also wants to be happy, she also wants to be happy”, so, you are putting yourself and another person on the same level, you are not making any difference. “Just as I want to be happy... he wants to be happy... she wants to be happy, no difference! Can I have the same equal wish for another person, no better or no worse?” You cannot say “I wish other people happier than me”, no... That is not real mettā, we have to be together. So after a while you can really feel that... “Oh...I really want that person to be happy.” In the beginning it is difficult to have that sort of kindness towards total strangers, so just think about your parents, your teachers or your brothers, sisters or your spouses.

This is another difficulty again. Because I once tried to teach mettā meditation to somebody and that person said “I don’t want to think about myself”. I said “Just develop mettā to yourself; may I be happy;” and that person said “I want to forget about myself, I hate myself”, because she had done so many terrible things... she was very aggressive and unkind, she cannot even be kind to herself. I asked her “Can you have mettā for your parents?” She said “I hate my father. He was an alcoholic he left the family and he died, so we were very poor and we had a difficult time when we were young; he didn’t care about us, he didn’t love us.” So I said “What about your mother?” “Oh; when my father left her she went to live with her boy friend”... “So what happened to you?” “My brother and I somehow we tried

to survive, and my mother sometimes came and gave us some money to eat." I said "what about your teachers?" She said "I can't think of my teachers, I can't think of them as somebody who has done something good to us." Very difficult for her to have real mettā for herself and others; I felt so disheartened. I thought this is something very strange, because normally we think we love ourselves and at least we love somebody. There is somebody in our life that we love, but this person says that there is nobody that she can love, nobody for whom she has loving-kindness. At last I asked her "Is there anybody in this world that you can really feel kindness for?" After a while she said "Well... I love my dog, and it is not my dog actually, it is a dog of a person with whom I share the house. It is not really my dog, but I love that dog." I found out slowly and slowly that some people find it is very difficult to develop mettā.

Mettā meditation it is very important for vipassanā.

That is why I try to emphasize it.

*If you don't have mettā your heart is dry,
you cannot even practice vipassanā.*

You need the base, the foundation: mettā and also trust, respect for Buddha, trust and respect for yourself and for your teacher and trust in the practice, also the method you are practicing. If you don't have those things there is no point in practicing meditation. Sometimes you can fool yourself just imagining "I am happy, I am peaceful", but you cannot get beyond that,

you just imagine; it is not real and you can get absorbed in any idea, even mettā.

Also Buddha, sometimes I get very absorbed in thinking about the qualities of the Buddha, it makes me feel very happy, very peaceful; because the state, the quality of your mind depends a lot on the object of your mind. When you think about somebody that you hate you feel hatred, you feel anger, you don't feel peaceful but when you think about somebody who is very loving, kind and peaceful, somebody like the Buddha... just imagine somebody like that. I don't have any direct contact and relationship with the Buddha but I had a personal relationship with my meditation teacher, my first meditation teacher. I don't know whether he is still living, he was a layman, a musician a musical instrument maker and everyday I think about him because he made a big turning point in my life. He was so calm and peaceful all the time, it is not so amazing to see a monk calm and peaceful, it is not something extraordinary to see; but it is to see a layman so calm, peaceful and so kind. I never saw him becoming upset or arrogant, putting down another person, getting angry, saying bad things about people... he kept five precepts without effort, he never talked about that and he was kind to everybody but he never spoke about mettā. That is something very extraordinary; he does not say "I am a very loving person". People love him very much but he was not biased to anybody, a very unusual person, a very highly developed person, he does not get attached to anybody, young or old, he treats everybody equally. He was not married; he was living with his mother, an

old mother. He said “as long as my mother lives I will look after her, after that I will become a monk”. He loved his mother very much and he was the only son and his father had died. He is really looking after his mother very lovingly, with real mettā not just as a duty. His mother loves him very much also. To see somebody like that also makes you understand something very deep. It is beyond words. Even to talk about loving kindness is also very difficult. I had a very bad relationship with my parents; many times I really hated them for not doing enough for me. This person, my teacher loved his mother with all his heart and this mother loved her son with all her heart, they were really devoted, but not too attached, this is very unusual... not too attached. Whenever I think of him it makes me very peaceful... this person is extraordinary!

Another teacher was an old Sayādaw who died when he was ninety years old. He was also very mellow, kind and sweet. He never treated anybody with disrespect. I never saw him getting upset or worried about anything. Sometimes I got worried; when I went to America with him, just before we went, the time was getting very close, we already had our plane tickets and flight schedule but we didn't have our passports... so, I said “Sayādaw, in a week we have to leave but we don't have our passports yet”; he said “don't worry” very simple, don't worry. How can he just say like that without worrying? It was very hard for me to understand in the beginning. People just loved him. He could not speak a word of English. Many westerners looked at him and felt very amazed... “Look at this person”, so gentle,

so mellow, even in his voice he didn't have any tension, very soft and sweet voice, very calm, but with a lot of energy and strength, not weakness; it is gentleness and softness together with strength and confidence. You cannot learn something like that from a book. You have to be with that person, and you can see that, he is like this and I can be like him. That gives you a lot of courage, hope.

It is very important to learn meditation from a teacher. Although you can learn basic meditation instruction from any book, basic instruction is not very difficult to learn. But to really develop these higher qualities you have to be with a teacher, who is a living quality, a living example of loving kindness, living example of contentment, serenity, peacefulness, liberation and he is so free. You have to live with that person for a long time. I lived with my teacher for about five years. The longer you live with that person the more you learn this is real; he is not playing a role. Anybody can play a role, you can watch a movie and somebody is there, he is acting the part of a very serene and developed person, but this is just acting... only after you have lived with that person for a few years then you really find out.

When you think of the Buddha try to find out more and more about the Buddha, his purity, his freedom, his wisdom, his mettā, his karuṇā (compassion) and his selflessness, get immersed in his qualities and you'll feel them.... Because the mind consciousness depends on the object, when you keep a symbol, this is a symbol, an idea, Buddha is an idea for us. We

think about it... the idea of the Buddha, his purity, his freedom, his serenity, his wisdom, his mettā and karuṇā,... The more you think about it the more your mind will tune into that quality and you feel that quality in you, inside you, because the more you think about the Buddha mettā, the more you feel it. It becomes yours and you aspire to that sort of thing... “I want to be like that”... so you set a goal... “this is my ideal... although I will never be able to reach that high ideal like the Buddha, at least I can get to a certain stage.”

*Anybody who becomes enlightened,
a disciple of the Buddha even, is called a follower.*

*He was the leader you are a follower,
He was enlightened and you can also be enlightened;
you are also enlightened if you have attained
enlightenment.*

To have a very clear idea of what we want to do and what our goal is, is very important. Being vague; “Oh well, I want to meditate and I want to be happy” you don’t have a very clear idea, you don’t have enough energy. The more you can define your goal, your ideals, the more energy you’ll have, the more you can put time and energy into what you do. Be very clear about what you want to do. I am giving you just a general idea so that you can develop it.

Before you meditate, just for a few minutes reflect on the purity, the serenity, the peacefulness, the freedom, the wisdom,

the mettā and karuṇā of the Buddha, and you can get absorbed into that, feel very calm and peaceful. After that if you meditate on a vipassanā object, your mind will stay there longer, because this idea of the Buddha conditions your mind to let go of other worldly cares and you don't think that they are important anymore... about my car, about my business, about this and that... those things can wait... Because sometimes when you sit and meditate you start thinking... "I have to pay that bill... I need to make a call, it is very important"... just when you start to meditate something important comes into your mind that is distracting. That is why I am telling you to prepare your mind.

This preparation is very important.

Don't think that you are wasting your time because you are preparing, because the more you prepare yourself the easier it is for you to meditate.

You can let go of all those things... that bill is not important, that phone call is not important anymore, it can wait for two hours, or any other thing.... You'll find the best way to deal with it, but right now leave everything behind.... You can let go of all that.

When you think of somebody like the Buddha who is so free, it makes it easier for you to let go of other things.

For me my real experience is my teacher. When I think about him I can let go, I get some feeling of his freedom, of his detachment, his contentment. Prepare your mind like that.

When you can get really absorbed in this object, a disk white or brown or just even a hole or even mettā meditation or meditating on Buddha... when your mind gets really absorbed and stays there without getting distracted that is called jhāna.

*Jhāna has two meanings,
one is getting absorbed and another meaning is burning.
It burns the defilements, temporarily at least.*

You get really absorbed and forget about anything else, your mind really gets into that object and stays with it, it is unshakeable. Sometimes you cannot even move the mind into another object. It goes back into the same object and stays there, very, very strong absorption but that is quite difficult to develop. But you can develop access concentration quite easily. Access concentration, means closer, you are not inside but very close. Like you come to this place, you are not inside this hall but you are just near the door. Access concentration is like that, very close to absorption, which means that your mind can stay with that object for a few minutes then you get distracted for a while and you come back again... get a little bit distracted... come back again... it goes on and on like that. This is enough to practice vipassanā.

To be able to practice vipassanā you don't really have to develop absorption jhāna, but you need a certain amount of quietness and stability of your mind.

Even if you haven't developed that amount of samādhi you can just go ahead and meditate on a vipassanā object. Let's say when we meditate, we concentrate our mind on breathing, one breath... two... for quite a long time you can stay with your breath. In the beginning when I meditated I tried to breathe in very deeply, unnaturally. I knew it was unnatural, but it was very useful because when I breathe deeply like this I stay with my breath easier. You cannot run away because it takes up your whole mind. You stay with it but you cannot do it for too long because you get very tired after a while and the body gets very hot. In the beginning I sat only for ten minutes doing that deep breathing. It is tiring in the beginning, but after you do it for a while you don't get so tired anymore. You don't even feel that you are breathing in very hard. You are very calm and your body is doing the breathing. The mind is with the breath. You are not thinking about anything anymore. You cannot think about anything anymore.

After you develop a certain level of concentration, go back to normal breathing because if you stay with this gross false breathing you will be aware of this gross sensation and your samādhi will be gross because samādhi depends on the object. When the object is very gross the samādhi also is very gross,

very coarse. When you breathe normally your breath becomes very soft and slow. If you can stay with that soft and slow breath your concentration becomes stronger and stronger. The more the object becomes subtle the more you can stay with that subtle object, the stronger your concentration becomes. The false breathing is useful but you have to let go of it after a while. You need to know what is useful and when to let go of it. If you do that without developing any samādhi you can develop some sort of concentration and after a while you feel this air moving in and out, you can really feel it, you can feel it as just pure sensation. In the beginning you think that "I am breathing". The air is coming in, the air is going out. I feel it near my nose. After a while you forget about I am breathing. There is no 'I' and no breathing anymore. There is no air coming in, there is no air going out. There is no nose any more. There is sensation and awareness and that becomes pure sensation and pure awareness, not thinking about sensation anymore. You are directly in touch with this sensation and it is just sensation, not even air anymore. Air is an idea, nose is an idea, coming in is an idea, going out is another idea, and "I am meditating" it is also another idea. All of that goes away and your mind is directly in touch with one sensation and there is pure awareness, nothing added, no concept added. You are not even thinking about arising and passing away, you are not even thinking about sensation and awareness even.

Don't think about anything at all because we are in the habit of thinking, trying to understand by using this thinking process.

This thinking process happens in our left side of our brain, if you want to get a clear idea, an interesting idea, we think and we use the left side of our brain; but meditation is intuitive. So when we meditate we use the right side of our brain. If you understand how these two sides of the brain work you'll understand what you are doing when you are meditating. Be very clear about this; when we are really meditating we are not trying to understand anything intellectually. No intellectual process. Thinking is an intellectual process. We have to go beyond that. If we still try to use or take the help of this intellectual thinking we will be stuck in this ordinary reality, because thinking is ordinary. If we really want to experience extra-ordinary reality we have to let go of thinking.

Before you meditate, read books, try to find out what *samādhi* means, what *nāma* means, what *rūpa* means, what *anicca* (impermanence) means, what *dukkha* (suffering or oppression) means, what *anatta* means.

But when you really meditate, let go of all that.

*Just be directly in touch with whatever is;
be very, very simple!*

You have to be as simple as possible. Just be in touch with the sensation don't try to think whether it is arising or passing away, whether it is *dukkha* or *anatta*, whether is *nāma* or *rūpa* even. Without thinking, if you can stay like that for a long time it will appear spontaneously, intuitively, what it is and 'what it is',

is something you cannot talk about. You cannot really talk about anicca. You cannot think about anicca actually, because when you really experience it; it is something you cannot talk about. The moment you try to think about it, it is not there anymore. That's why when you are meditating you cannot say "Oh... something is arising and passing away, that is anicca." At that moment you are not meditating anymore, you are using your thinking process; you are in ordinary reality again.

It will happen, naturally many, many times in your meditation practice because we are used to thinking and analysing. We think that only when we think about something that we can understand it. We try to go back to think, analyze and understand. It will happen many, many times and when it happens just look and just say... "thinking".... Even thinking "this is nāma", this is a thought and when you think, "this is rūpa" this is also a thought. If you think "this is arising and passing away, this is anicca", it actually is another thought.

Watch those flashes of thoughts coming into your mind.

The more you can see the more you can let go.

*It won't go immediately, it is very difficult, but gradually
those flashes of naming will go away slowly and
slowly and then with no words arising in your mind
you can be directly in touch with what is and
you understand it without conceptualizing.*

If you can do that the rest is quite easy. The difficulty is that we always try to think about it and we get distracted. If we can be really in touch with one sensation, one awareness, the rest will come quite easily.

Gradually I'll explain about the stages of *vipassanā nāṇa* (insight knowledge), how they develop. It is very interesting, very natural, although it is better for you not to know about this and just meditate. Before I meditated I didn't read these things. I just went to the forest to meditate and my teacher told me not to read any books. Quite often I would go and listen to his dhamma talks and after a while he said "don't come to dhamma talks". He wouldn't let me come and listen to dhamma talks even, "go away and just meditate, if you have any questions, come, if you don't have any questions just meditate". Sometimes I tried to get a book because I liked to read, and tried to hide the book somewhere, and then some days he would ask me "are you reading?" "Not much... not much"... because I was really scared that he asked me, he said "don't read, you have got enough to do and you'll have more time to read later, give up reading, just meditate, be in touch with your body and mind". After I had meditated for three years I started reading Dhamma books and found out that it was really true... what is in the book, I have experienced all those things and now I find out it is in the books. Then I have more confidence in the teaching ... this is real!

What did I do when I meditated? I did something very simple, actually. I didn't do anything. I just tried to be in touch with

what is happening right now; when I found myself thinking I tried to get in touch with my thoughts. At first I would be thinking for a long time and then I remembered “I am thinking”... and I thought “where did I start?” And then I would try to trace back the thoughts. It was very interesting, how it links one thing to another, thoughts and ideas they link. Then when I got to the starting point I thought “I started here, ended there and the two have not anything to do with each other!” And then slowly and slowly I would start thinking and catch myself thinking and it stopped... It is very hard to stay in that state. I had to get in touch with some other sensations immediately otherwise I would start thinking about another thing. Then slowly, in slow motion I see the words forming in my mind. It is very interesting, slow motion words, ideas coming in my mind, one word after another and then stop thinking again!

Later I found out that whenever I think about a word there is some sort of emotion that comes with it, which is beyond words. Later I found out that before I think about something there is already some vague idea in my mind about what I want to think, whether about a person, about food or about something to do. Before I form a word in my mind I have a very vague feeling of what it is, something is coming up, it is very subtle. When I become aware of it, something coming up, it disappears again... and I settle down again. Because there is something coming up I was not in a really settled state. My mind has some sort of agitation. It is jumping, and something is pushing. When I become aware of this feeling or emotion or a desire

to do something, even a desire to drink a cup of water, I can see the desire and it disappears. Sometimes, I see the image of the cup of water in my mind. When I want to drink I see the image of the water pot, the cup of water and I feel the thirsty sensation and when I become aware of that, it disappears again and my body and mind settle down again. All the time there is something churning inside like a pot boiling. The more you become aware of that the more it settles down and then I just stopped thinking, not doing anything.

*The awareness is just there,
not trying to be aware of anything... just there,
like a big piece of mirror, everything that passes in front
of the mirror is reflected in the mirror.*

The mirror is not trying to take any object.

The object passes, sensation happens and automatically it is aware of it and it goes away. The awareness is just there. You are not doing anything. At that stage meditation is not something that you do. Meditation is something that is happening naturally. But it will take sometime to get there. One person said “You have been meditating for a long time and maybe you forgot how hard it is for a beginner”; I think that is true. When I think about all that again I remember that in the beginning I wanted to run away. I felt so hopeless and I thought “this is not for me although I really want to do it”. I had the habit of thinking too much; I liked to read psychology, philosophy, comparative

religions, which had me thinking too much. I wanted to become a writer also. Sometimes I would be sitting and I would be writing an article, a dhamma article, wonderful thoughts coming in my mind, wonderful ideas developing in my mind. I thought “oh... this is wonderful, I have to write this. Nobody has ever thought like me!! I can really explain this, I can really inspire”. Then my teacher said “don’t write, don’t even make a record of your meditation,” because if you try to keep a record when you sit and meditate you’ll think “uh ha... this is wonderful, I will write it down” and at that moment your meditation is gone. You can’t go beyond that.

*You even have to let go of your insight,
“this is happening, ok, let go, let go”.*

*Do you see how much you have to let go?
We get attached to our understanding,
our deep understanding.*

QUESTION &

ANSWER: The word *khaṇika samādhi* is very difficult. Most people don’t understand clearly what it means because when you translate it, it means momentary concentration, and what does the word momentary mean? It has this name, *khaṇika samādhi* so that we can talk about different *samādhi*. In *jhāna samādhi*, *appanā-samādhi* or *upacāra samādhi*, absorption concentration and access concentration, the

mind is in touch with a concept that does not change. The object of samādhi is something that does not change. The object of vipassanā is a process, not a thing, which means the object of vipassanā is something changing. Something changing means it stays for a while and it goes away. For the time being the object is there and the awareness is there. The awareness of that object is there, because awareness and object arise together. When the object is not there anymore, the awareness of that object is not there anymore. But a new object arises and the mind is aware of that also. Because the object lasts only for a moment the awareness or samādhi for that object lasts only for a moment, naturally. This awareness repeats again and again on different objects; it might just be brief but is continually aware of it.

In breath and out breath are two different things. Even the sensation that is happening in one breath is changing. It takes about two three seconds. It changes quite a lot. Even though the same thing repeats again and again there is a kind of change. For example you touch like this many times. Even though you felt the same thing every time, it is a new sensation. If you are aware of every time you touch yourself like this you'll develop khaṇika samādhi and you can stay with this khaṇika samādhi for long time. It might be for a few seconds and it will become a few minutes and it can become a few hours even. Some people when they develop very deep samādhi in meditation, vipassanā meditation, the awareness and the object become like glue; it is like

something very sticky that you throw to the wall and sticks there. In the beginning it is like you are throwing a tennis ball to the wall. It touches the object and bounces back. But after a while you throw something and it stays there. Although the object is arising and passing away your awareness is continuously aware of that arising and passing away. There is continuity there. Because the object is changing we call it *khaṇika samādhi*.

It does not mean that just by developing a few minutes of concentration we can develop deep wisdom or attain liberation. But we begin with a few seconds of concentration and develop it into more and more seconds and it becomes one, two, three minutes and so on. It will stay for one or two minutes and you get distracted for a few seconds and you become aware of that and you are back; it happens like that. In *jhāna samādhi* you can determine that “I will be with this object for an hour without distraction”. It is like you are hypnotizing yourself and giving yourself suggestions, and you can stay with that object for one hour without moving. But with *vipassanā* the object is always changing. No matter how many changes in objects it does not matter, as long as you are aware of it, it is ok.

In a certain stage of *vipassanā* meditation when you have developed awareness so that you are aware of one thing after another arising and passing away in front of you, just like you are sitting looking out from the window and you see one car after another passing. You are not trying to

think about the car whether it is a Toyota, Mazda, yellow or white. You are aware of that, one thing after another going away, no choice.

*In the beginning of meditation
you choose a suitable object of meditation —
breathing, rising and falling or touching sensation
in your body, whatever is suitable — and
after a while you have no choice anymore.*

You stay aware!

*The objects might change all the time but
your awareness is continuous.*

*In meditation things always change.
The meditation experience does not stay
the same all the time.*

Sometimes your mind can get absorbed into one thing and you see the same type of sensation — not one thing but the same type — for example, you touch like this, it is the same type of sensation although it is not one sensation, but the same type of sensation arising and passing away. You can see the object, you can see the awareness both arising and passing away, very quickly. Sometimes you become aware of different things arising and passing away, not the same type of object, different types of objects arising and passing away very fast, but no matter how fast they arise and pass away, you can keep up with it just like a juggler, juggling

balls and rings, many things at the same time. The awareness becomes like that.

Don't expect that your meditation will be the same always. Sometimes your awareness becomes very broad; sometimes it closes down and down to one thing only, to one very subtle thing. Sometimes you need to understand when the scope is too broad and you cannot keep up with it anymore, you lose your concentration, you get distracted; at that time you should understand "now I need to close down". When you close down and down to one thing, the more you become concentrated on one object, the more subtle the object becomes and after a while it seems it is disappearing, you cannot experience it anymore. It happens sometimes, the samādhi becomes too strong and you lose the clarity of the object. In that kind of situation you need to choose another thing, two things so that you keep awake. Sometimes you get absorbed and it becomes like samatha. You don't see arising and passing away anymore. You get absorbed and you stay there.

In vipassanā samādhi just to be absorbed and still and calm it is not enough, we need to see the characteristic of the object.

There are two characteristics of the object in meditation.

*One is the natural characteristic and another
one is the shared characteristic.*

Natural characteristic means, let's say hardness, softness, heat and cold. Hotness and coldness are not the same as heat and cold, they are different, but what is common is that both arise and pass away. That is common, shared. This natural, inherent characteristic is a shared characteristic, meaning whatever it might be, everything arises and passes away, and they are common in that regard.



four

Approaching the First Insight

Awareness of Consciousness and Object

It is nice to see you coming here, learning Dhamma. Seeing you meditating makes me feel very happy. You want to be joyous, and of course we all want to be joyous and satisfied, we are looking for satisfaction, we are trying to look for satisfaction all our life. If you really ask “have I found any thing really satisfying, lasting, which gives me lasting satisfaction?”... most of us will say “no”. We do one thing after another and we feel satisfied for a brief period, maybe a few hours, maybe a few days, and after that, that satisfaction is gone. If you want to be joyous, satisfied and fulfilled (that is the most difficult thing to do; to be fulfilled, to be full, to be filled, not wanting anymore, not lacking anything anymore; to be fulfilled is the opposite of to feel empty. Fulfilled is full and filled, to feel full, to be satisfied) be in touch with the spiritual part of yourself. Don’t go and look for something out there to make you feel fulfilled. We need many things to survive, to live, to be healthy.

But to feel fulfilled, don't go out and look for things out there. Nothing out there will make you feel fulfilled.

*The only thing that can make you feel fulfilled
is to get deeply in touch with your spiritual nature,
very noble nature, very beautiful nature.*

We human beings have two different natures so to speak; lower nature and higher nature. If you study Abhidhamma you'll find that there are two different categories for the mental factors. One is 'beautiful', and the other is 'not beautiful'. We have both of those qualities. Let's say selfishness is not beautiful but generosity is very beautiful, hurting other beings is not beautiful, restraint is very beautiful, unmindful is not beautiful. If you look into your mind you'll see that, when you are unmindful the mind is very agitated, going here and there, like a homeless person, going around, going nowhere, living here and there, doing things that are not healthy.

*When the mind is not mindful it feels like
a homeless person, very insecure, very unhappy.
When you are mindful, you feel really at home,
so, mindfulness is my home.*

*When you are mindful you are at home, when
you are not mindful you are on the road going nowhere.
Get in touch with the spiritual part of your self,
the beautiful part of yourself... be mindful.*

If you want something badly enough there is a way to get it. This means, if you really want to be mindful there is a way to do

it, not difficult... if you really want to be mindful.... We need to make very clear our object or goal; do you really want to be mindful? Unless we become more and more mindful there is no way to feel happy, joyous or fulfilled.

The world is a place for opportunities. Yes, it is an opportunity to be here, to be in this human world as a human being. When I read some of the stories about Bodhisattvas, I found that Bodhisattvas don't want to live in a place which is perfect. Why is that? I think it is quite easy to guess! You have nothing to learn. Everything is perfect. Deliberately they go to places where they face difficulties. When I read about Buddha and his cousin who gave him a lot of trouble, who was that? Devadatta, he gave a lot of trouble to Buddha. I am very grateful towards Devadatta just for doing that. It might sound very paradoxical, why is that? Because of Devadatta we know more about the good qualities of the Buddha. Otherwise how would we know? In some ways he made it possible for Buddha to manifest and show his perfection.

This world is a very good place to learn because there are so many difficulties and imperfections.

The world is a place for opportunities and I look forward to opportunities for learning and growing. Every difficulty is an opportunity for learning and growing. If you really understand this one thing you'll never feel that your life is meaningless no matter what happens. Whether things are going well or whether

things are going badly, you can always learn something and grow and actually we learn and grow more when we face and overcome those difficulties properly, in a proper way. If we react to difficulties and make more unwholesome actions then we don't learn we don't grow.

*Difficulties are opportunities to learn,
to grow and to become a better person.*

*If you see your life as a long learning process,
nothing that happens in your life will be meaningless.
Everything will be meaningful.*

That is what we are doing here, to be mindful all the time, all day... seeing... hearing many things and our minds reacting.

*Just from watching how our minds react to
all these experiences, just by doing that
we learn and we grow.*

Start thinking about yourself as a lifetime student at a large University... your curriculum is your total relationship with the world you live in, from the moment you are born to the moment you die. It is an informal school. Each experiment is a valuable lesson to be learnt, and each experience also is a valuable experience to be learnt. The trick is simply to make whatever place you are in, your educational forum.

*Learn everything you can about yourself
and the world around you.*

Actually this is true education:

*to learn about yourself and
to learn about the world around you and
the relationship between you and the world.*

*The world includes everything living and non living.
This is the highest education.*

Now we know that our object of meditation is paramattha which is the natural quality of mental and physical phenomena. Let's take for example, seeing... everybody has sight, everybody sees but a meditator sees things very differently. What do you do when you meditate; awareness of seeing; you look at something and you are totally in touch with that without thinking about it. This is very important, without thinking about it. Thinking is not *vipassanā*; it could be *samatha*; be very clear about these two things. Some people read about meditation and they say when you meditate you think about something. Yes, this is one type of meditation which is *samatha*; like *mettā-bhāvanā*; you think about people and you think about your loving thoughts. *Buddhānussati-bhāvanā* also, you think about Buddha and his qualities and when you get absorbed in the qualities of the Buddha, your mind automatically is in that quality, and it has that quality somehow, to a certain extent. Even with *mettā*. Sometimes when you develop *mettā*, and you get used to doing that and sometimes even though you don't think about anybody

or any thoughts you feel some sort of feelings of love. You can get into that state; that is a higher state of mettā actually; you don't think about it anymore but you feel it. You feel very warm, kind, soft and generous.

So, there is a kind of meditation in which you think, and there is another kind of meditation where you don't think, and vipassanā is not thinking. But we are so used to thinking that even when we are practicing vipassanā, in between, thoughts come in again and again, even about vipassanā or about other things. We comment on our experience. There is something in our mind which likes to comment, a commentator, like when you watch the news or a movie, there is somebody talking, explaining what is happening; it is like that in our mind.

*Our mind is always explaining things:
this is this, this is good, and that is bad.*

A commentator is always commenting in our mind.

You are meditating and things are going well and the thought comes, "Oh, it is so nice now, things are going so well."

When we meditate, we need to know that we don't need to think; thoughts will come, but do not encourage thinking, no matter how beautiful. Sometimes when I was a beginner meditating, such beautiful thoughts came into the mind, one thing after another, with very beautiful connections, very interesting connections. I got so attached to these Dhamma thoughts that I could not let them go. I loved them, I wanted to remember

these thoughts, but that became a big hindrance. When I meditated together with my friends, many of them are not so intellectual and don't read many books, they read some Dhamma books, but they don't read much about any other subject and they don't think so much. And especially because when I was young, I wanted to write articles, thoughtful articles, good Dhamma articles; because of that ambition, aspiration, when I meditated beautiful Dhamma thoughts would come in my mind and I cannot let them go. I want to write them down. Because of that reason it took me much longer than all my friends, who were not very well educated, who were not intellectuals. They developed deeper samādhi and got in touch with the reality and developed very deep samādhi. Sometimes I felt very ashamed, "these people who have no education are doing better than me". Competition starts coming into the mind, "he is doing better, and I am not doing as well". When we went to see our teacher, the teacher would ask me "how is your meditation?"; "Nothing very special" I said "but I feel happy"; I didn't have anything to say apart from feeling a little bit happier.

Once, a very simple and clear insight came into my mind, which was that I was always afraid of something. My mind became very calm and peaceful for a few moments, and after that I could remember I had never felt that peace before in my life. It was not a deep insight, not any kind of *ñāṇa* (knowledge) actually; it was just calmness, mindfulness, totally mindful, calm and very much at ease, not thinking about anything, not thinking about the future or the past, but right in the moment, very

calm and peaceful for a few moments only. When I came out of that state, I knew that I had never felt this peace before. All my life I was afraid of something. I was afraid of not becoming a successful person, not loving, not being loved, many fears. Sometimes it is very vague; you cannot even talk about it but you feel it, you are carrying fear. Anyway, when we meditate, we don't think, when a thought comes, we just acknowledge that thought and let it go. Later when you practice another kind of *vipassanā*, *cittānupassanā*, you can look into that, but for beginners, do not follow thoughts, because if you follow thoughts it will go on and on.

For example, when we are seeing something, what do we really see? We see only colours, and this colour is the reaction of our retina. Scientifically explained, it is the reaction of our retina which our brain interprets as colour. So what is it that comes into and strikes the retina? That is *rūpa*. *Rūpa* is not out there, and we don't know what actually is really there. When we see, it is something happening in our eye, also in our brain and in our mind. They are all connected together. It is photons with different energy, different frequency to which our nervous system reacts and produces different intensities of electrical impulses and that creates colour. Those who are colour blind, although you show them different colours, they cannot see all the colours, and they will see only a few shades of colour. The colours are there so to speak, but they don't experience colour. What we mean by colour or what we mean by seeing, is our experience, not something out there, try to understand this

idea. What we see is our experience only; we don't really see something out there. There might be something out there, there is something out there, which is the basis for our experience but we don't really know what that is. We experience something falling on our retina and there is a reaction, the retina produces some impulse and the nervous system carries that impulse into the brain. With the brain in connection with the mind, we interpret. It is very difficult to explain about these things. When we see a human being that is an interpretation of our mind, not of our eye; the eye does not know anything beyond colour.

*The Buddha gave a very concise
meditation instruction, “when seeing only seeing”
(diṭṭhe diṭṭhamattam bhavissati ~Udn 8);
there is only seeing, nothing added, no interpretation.*

When we meditate, that is what we try to do; we try to be aware of what we see. In the beginning thoughts will be going on: this is beautiful, this is nice. After a while as you watch these thoughts coming, they will slow down, slow down and then they stop. When you stop thinking in the beginning you don't feel like you are experiencing anything; the experience becomes very vague, without thoughts. It becomes meaningless; actually it is meaningless! We create meaning; at a certain level it is important for us to create meaning, but when we are meditating vipassanā, we are trying to experience something which is beyond normal experience, not normal reality, natural but not normal.

We create meaning, we interpret, and actually we understand our own interpretation. When we understand something, it is our own interpretation. We agree our interpretation with many people. You interpret something in a certain way and I interpret something in a certain way. We have an agreement there, and we think ‘yes, that is it’ but actually it is just agreement on interpretation. We don’t really know what is out there. We just agree on interpretation.

*When we meditate, we become very simple,
the mind becomes extremely simple.*

Thinking is very complicated.

*Without thinking, experiences, sense impulses
become very simple. We go down to that simple level.
We just look at something without thinking about it.*

If I look at the carpet like this, without thinking, then when thinking stops I am aware of what I see, which is colour and patterns, even the pattern is a kind of put together and I don’t think about carpet anymore. Then there is no carpet anymore. There is only what I see. There are only different colours, no carpet anymore. When you get to that level, you are in touch with paramattha. For a beginner it is not so easy to do.

So when we see something we are aware of the object so to speak, coming in the eyes and when you stop thinking and become more and more aware of it, you become aware of this awareness which is aware of this object. There is something

which knows that something is there. You become aware of awareness! This is very important. Only then the process becomes complete. The object, you are aware of the object and you are aware of the awareness of the object: two things going on. This will happen slowly. This is what we are trying to do.

For a beginner when you see something, immediately the mind starts interpreting it “Oh, this is nice... I like this, this is beautiful.” It could be a painting or an apple, a car, a man or woman, anything. Immediately you see that you have interpreted. What do you do when that happens? You don’t get upset. Immediately when that thought comes you are aware of it. If we don’t like something, when the thought comes, “I don’t like this, this is terrible”, immediately you are aware of that thought, not liking, aversion, disappointment. It goes on like that, it will go on for a long time, you interpret... you react, you interpret... you react, but if you stop interpreting you won’t react anymore.

*Keep doing that for a long time until
you stop reacting and interpreting.
You’ll see that there is only the object and
there is the awareness.*

After a while you will see that because of this object this awareness happens. You shut your eyes, you are aware of something else, you can see some sort of vague image in your eyes, but you are not aware of whatever is out there. Although your memory tells you that there are a lot of people sitting there,

about sixty people sitting there, but that is your memory saying it. When you shut your eyes you are not aware of that object anymore. You open and suddenly there is awareness. This awareness is conditioned by this object: this object, this awareness. Also when you turn around you can see that, because of this awareness, awareness of the object happens. Without this awareness you cannot see that there is an object, you cannot know that.

You look from both sides, sometimes you look at the object and see that there is an object and this is awareness, because of the object there is awareness and because of awareness you can tell there is an object.

You are aware of the awareness too.

How does this object affect your mind? When you see something beautiful it attracts your awareness, it attracts your consciousness, you want to see more, you don't want to turn away, you want to be with that object, with that sensation. You know that, these images, these rūpas (matters) attract the consciousness, so you turn your mind to the object. It is the mental factor (which in Abhidhamma is called *manasikāra*) which turns your mind, gives you a direction. So you know that because of the object, the mind turns to the object. When you cannot see something clearly, you try to look.... There something there. What is it that is making you look like this? Attraction of the object; the mind, the consciousness is attracted to the object.

You know that this object has some power. It attracts your consciousness.

Whatever happens in the whole process, try to be in touch with it! Try to do it again, close your eyes, there is no awareness of an object out there... you open your eyes; and if you do that a few times very mindfully, you'll find that as soon as you open your eyes something happens in your mind, immediately the awareness appears. You experience that immediate appearance of the awareness. We are in the habit for doing it for so long that we don't really know that. When I do that, I sit in a chair looking outside into the forest and the hill, keep my eyes opened and I try to get in touch with this awareness of seeing, aware of the object, aware of the colours. Then I close my eyes it disappears! The object disappears and the awareness disappears.

We tend to believe that although we close our eyes there is somebody inside who was aware of it and who is still there. We give it continuity. When we do that very mindfully, we close our eyes, the object disappears and the consciousness disappears. Then another consciousness is arising there, another one, a new one. As I told you last week, everything happening in this world is always new.

All the conditioned phenomena are always new!

Nothing is old.

*Always new, means always arising and passing away,
because if it does not pass away
it cannot be new!*

*It has to be old; if something stays for
a long time it becomes old.*

*To say that something is always new it means
that it arises and passes away.*

To be new means to arise and to pass away.

What happens when I keep my eyes opened? Is the consciousness always there? No, it is not always there, it is arising and passing away so quickly that we think that it is always there because it is the same type of consciousness. Because the type is the same, we have the feeling that it is the same. It is not the same; just the type is the same. The two things are very different. After you practice for a long time you come to experience this... this awareness itself that is arising and passing away has a gap between.

For a beginner it is not easy to do this. After you practice meditation for a long time, many days, you can experience that there is a gap always there. When you see things like 'this' it appears very solid, but when you become more and more mindful you don't experience solidity anymore. Everything becomes shaky and moving. Our retina also is always on and off, on and off, going like that, and then you become aware of something happening inside your eyes. It is like watching a television tube, dots arising and passing away. You become more and more aware of that. Some people when they get to that stage complain that there is something wrong with my eyes, "I can't see things clearly, I cannot focus my eyes". If that happens to

you, just remind yourself that this is natural to happen. As we become more and more mindful, things that we don't normally feel become very obvious.

It is the same with hearing. When we sit and meditate, we should learn to meditate with open eyes as well, but for a beginner it is better to close the eyes.

*Buddha taught meditation of hearing, seeing, tasting,
smelling and feeling on the body and thoughts also,
all six, nothing left out.*

Train yourself to be mindful of all these six senses.

But for a beginner it is good to keep the eyes closed. When you sit you can't switch off your hearing, you hear sounds. In the beginning you interpret them: this is a truck, this is a man talking, and this is somebody walking there. You interpret that. Whenever you interpret you react, you don't like that somebody walking, "somebody talking so loud, it is so noisy here, so many cars going by on the road, what shall I do now," all sorts of thoughts coming in the mind. Just be aware of thoughts coming in the mind, and see that you are interpreting and commenting. When you become more and more mindful of the reaction, of the interpretation of your mind it will become less and less. After a while, the moment you start interpreting and reacting you are aware of it and it stops! After doing that for a few times you stop reacting. For a while you hear something but you don't interpret. If you don't interpret for a very long time, something

strange happens again. It seems that you are not experiencing things very well. Your experience, it is not strong anymore.

Because of our thoughts we experience something more intensely. So when we stop thinking and just become aware of it we don't really feel anything anymore. What I mean to say is that, things don't have intensity anymore. Even with pain, say you have pain in your knee when you are sitting and meditating; the more you react the sharper it becomes. When you stop thinking about it and just be in touch with it, without trying to do anything, not trying to overcome it, not interpreting it, just being with the pain, after a while you feel that the pain becomes vague; it is not as painful as before. Our thinking process makes the sensations stronger.

When you stop thinking and just get in touch with it, it becomes so vague, that we feel that something is missing.

We want to take hold of something.

For example, if you have a big round ball, can you hold it with one hand? You cannot. It is a big round slippery ball. But if you put a handle on it you can grab it by the handle. The name, the tag, the interpretation is just like the handle. With the handle we grasp things very strongly, we won't let it go but, without that handle everything is slippery, you can't hold to it. When you stop thinking, you get in touch with it, you can't grasp anything anymore. It becomes slippery and vague, that is the way it should be.

So, stop interpreting the sounds, get in touch with it and you'll know that because of that sound there is hearing going on. Where does hearing happen? In the beginning you feel that hearing happens in your ear. You can even feel the sound waves hitting your ears. You can really feel it. When you become very sensitive you can even feel the sound waves on your body skin, not only on your ear, but it comes and touches your skin. You become very sensitive to sound and after a while it is very painful as well. One of my friends who is a good meditator and also a doctor, (I think that doctors work very hard and because of this they get into the habit of working hard. In fact to become a doctor you have to work hard and when they meditate they work very hard as well) said that "when I meditated at first I thought there is a sound out there (he lives in a very crowded area where there is a lot of traffic, just like here, also on a corner) and the sound is coming to me, and I feel it in the ear". Later he thought "the sound is happening in the ear" and later after a while he noticed that the sound is happening in the mind. He could feel it in the mind. Your consciousness of the sound and the object itself, they touch each other, you feel the impact, the object and the consciousness touching each other. Try to do that. Be very mindful of the noise, the different kind of sounds. Don't think about it. In the beginning you'll feel that there is a sound out there. After a while you'll find there is a sound happening in the ears. After a while again you'll feel that it is in the mind.

*Without mind you cannot experience anything at all.
Because of this awareness arising you feel
you experience sound.*

Try to experience the whole process, and in that process you might react with liking or disliking, so be aware of that too.... I like this sound, I don't like this sound. Whenever you react like that be aware of that too... this is nice to hear, this is so terrible; it is so painful to hear this sound. Normally our eyes don't experience pleasant or unpleasant sensation. The eyes experience only neutral sensations. But, when we see we interpret and when we like it we feel happy, when we don't like it we feel unhappy, that is not eye consciousness; that is mind consciousness. When we don't interpret that way, when we stop where the eye consciousness stops, we don't experience any pleasure or displeasure. Everything becomes neutral. When we see something there is nothing pleasant or unpleasant. Only the interpretation makes it pleasant or unpleasant. When we see something very bright like welding it is very painful to the eyes. The question arises whether this is an eye object which is painful or rūpa which is painful. Actually it is not the retina which is interpreting the pain; it is another part of the body which feels the pain. The same thing happens with the ear. It is aware of the sound only, not the pain but they are all together in the same place. They are all homogeneously mixed.

Try to understand these things very clearly because these are the classical commentaries that I want to give explanation of.

*When you meditate
you don't need to think about these things,
only now try to understand what happens.*

*When you meditate you don't think
and try to understand,
you just get in touch with it directly.*

The same thing with your nose, with smell, for example when you sit and meditate sometimes, you smell something burning because mostly in the meditation hall we burn incense. Some people like it and some people don't like it. You feel the smell and then you think about it. This is sweet, good, and sometimes when you don't like it you say "these people like this terrible smell. Why do they burn these things? It is not good for your lungs;" you start thinking. When you start thinking like that, be aware of that thought; liking and not liking is our interpretation. We are conditioned to liking something; we are conditioned to not liking something, and so, it is our conditioning. If you really feel that it is not really good for your lungs — some people are allergic to smell — then you can sit in some other place.

The important thing is not to react, not to interpret.

When you smell something, you are just aware of it: because of this smell there is this consciousness; because of this part of your body which is sensitive to smell this consciousness arises. Object, sense base and consciousness, you can be aware of all

these three, in your meditation, but don't try to think of these three different things. Any of these three you can be aware of and if you are aware of one it is enough. Don't try to see all these different things. For some people, it is easy to see one aspect of it, another person will see another aspect of it but it is the same process. As long as you are aware of one aspect of it, it is enough. If you try too much you get agitated, you start thinking about it.

The same thing with your body, you feel something on your body, be in touch with it without interpreting it.

Normally when we sit and meditate we don't taste anything particularly. Sometimes we might feel sour taste in our mouth but not very obviously, so it is not really important. But when we eat, if it tastes good we like it, and when it doesn't taste good we don't like it. There is a reaction going on. We get the smell of the food we like it or we don't like it. Normally when we sit in the meditation hall there is no eating; we don't need to do that. We feel something on the body all the time. For example when we breathe in and out that is a kind of feeling sensation; very gently the air rushes into your nostrils and it rushes out of the nostrils, there is some sort of sensation going on there. So, we get in touch with that sensation, without thinking about it, it may be long, it may be short, but the main object is to be aware of the whole process. In the *suttas* it is said, when you breathe in long you know that you are breathing in long (*Dīghan vā*

assasanto: dīgham assasāmīti pajānāti ~MN i.56). If you read that, it sounds that you have to think about it “I am breathing in long, I am breathing out long”. If you try to do that you’ll get agitated; you are doing too much. For a beginner it is helpful just to say “breathing in”, or just “in” and feel the whole breath from beginning to end.

Feel it, don’t think about it.

When you really stop thinking and start being in touch with it, immediately the mind shifts into another kind of mode, a different mode (in your television you have many different modes), the mind has also a different mode of working.

Whenever we use a word we are functioning in this ordinary reality. When we stop using any kind of word or any kind of shape or image, our mind works in a different mode and in meditation we are working in a different mode. We try to understand things in a different way, not in the normal way that we used to. As soon as you use a word you are bringing your mind back to the ordinary way of working and seeing. This happens in the beginning of meditation. We cannot eradicate it immediately. Whenever it happens, become aware of it.

Also, thinking, labeling, naming is useful for a beginner but after a while we have to let go of it.

Just like using a walking stick when you walk. When you feel weak you need something to support you: a walking stick or even a rope. Some people who are disabled, or with some injuries when they are rehabilitating, learning to walk again, they need to hold on to something so that they won't fall down. They hold on the rope and then walk slowly. But after they have learnt to walk they don't need a rope, they let go, because if they keep doing that what happens? They become dependent on it and it becomes a hindrance. Let's say you are walking and you are using a walking stick. Each step you take you put down your walking stick and then you take another step and you put your walking stick down again. If you are very weak and you walk very slowly it is very useful and helpful but when you have learnt to run and you try to do that, to take a step and put down your walking stick and then take another step and put it down again, can you do that? If you try to do that you have to slow down. So, you just put the walking stick away. It was useful but now it is not necessary.

You need to be very skillful in the way you practice.

For a beginner it is useful "breathing in, breathing out, (labeling) breathing in... breathing out", it is very useful because your mind is so scattered and agitated. To keep your mind on

one breath is difficult, so you use the word to bring your mind back again and again to breathing.

*After you have learnt to stay with the breath,
let go of this long breathing in, just use 'in' 'out'.*

*After a while let go of that even,
no need to say anything anymore.*

For a beginner there are many ways of developing some concentration and awareness. As I told you before, even in one breath you say one, two three, four, five, six, up to ten. Try to do that. As you breathe in you count in your mind, the minimum five and the maximum ten. Why do you do that? Because you want to keep your mind on breathing; breath after breath. If you don't do that, one second you are aware of it and another second you are away, thinking of something else. In order not to go away, not to think of something else you try to count. So, it is useful for a beginner.

*After a while you do not need to count,
you don't need to name,
you don't need to do anything anymore.
Just be with the breath.*

As you are meditating, you'll feel sensations in your body. Sometimes you feel hot, sometimes you feel cold, sometimes tingling sensation, sometimes just pain. When the sensation

becomes very strong, naturally your mind goes to that sensation. You cannot stop it from going there. When it goes there, be with it, no problem. Vipassanā can change object. As long as you are aware of the object, as long as you don't think; it is ok. That is why vipassanā concentration it is called *khaṇika samādhi*; it is translated as momentary concentration. Momentary concentration means that the object changes, but the concentration is still there. One object lasts for a few moments, and you are with that object, it disappears and your mind is on another object, which lasts for a few moments, for a moment actually and you are with that too.

*Momentary concentration does not mean
that you are aware of it only for a moment;
that your concentration lasts only for a moment.*

*It means that your concentration is:
moment... moment... moment... moment... moment,
it goes on like that, without any break.
Without any break means without getting distracted,
that is khaṇika samādhi.*

When any kind of very strong and obvious sensation happens, whether it is a sound, whether it is a pain, be with it, no problem.

When you meditate whatever is happening right now is the object of your meditation; not what happened before or what will happen next. This is a very good example: on a rainy cloudy

day and there is thunder all the time, if you go out and look at the sky, once in a while you see a flash, and it lasts for a few seconds and disappears. You cannot tell what shape it will be. When it happens you are aware of it. When it is not there, it is not there any more and you don't have to think about it.

*Be ready, be present and objects will come
and you are aware of them.*

*Don't expect what will happen next,
don't try to create experience,
don't make your meditation experience better,
but be with whatever is happening, completely,
that is the most important aspect of meditation:
to be with whatever is.*

We cannot sit all the time. Our body needs to move, needs some exercise, change of posture, it is very important, because Buddha said, when you keep your body in one position for too long — I don't know how long is too long, it depends on the person — it becomes painful and when the body becomes painful, unbearable, the mind gets agitated, when the mind gets agitated there is no calmness or peacefulness, there is no samādhi anymore and without samādhi no insight, no insight no liberation! When the pain becomes unbearable you don't have to be with it. Change your posture. When you change your posture do it very mindfully. From sitting you want to move a little bit, you can do that. Slowly move and as you move you can see the pain

getting less and less. Feel that pain getting less and less; don't change your posture immediately, without being aware of the changing and lessening of the pain. If you do that there is a gap you are not aware of, not mindful of. When there is pain in your limbs, your mind does not like it. You want to get rid of it. This is the habit but actually it is useful as well because if you don't do something about it you might hurt yourself. For example, when we pick up something very hot we immediately let go of it, because if we don't do that it will burn. This is a kind of survival reaction that we have learnt. When sitting and meditating we know that there is no real danger.

*When you experience pain,
as long as you can be with the pain to endure it,
see how your mind reacts.*

This is a very important learning process.

Buddha gave a very deep and profound teaching, “although my body is in pain my mind is not in pain” (*āturakāyassa me sato, cittam anātaram bhavissatī* ~SN iii.1). This is something you should practice! We cannot really get rid of all the pain in our body. As you grow older and older you know that you have to live with pain. People have arthritis; there is no way you can run away from pain. If you take too much medicine it will destroy your liver, kidneys and many other things. If you want to take medication it is ok; that is not what I am saying. For normal pain it is not going to hurt you very much, so, try to be

with the pain and see how the mind reacts. In some cases, we try to move not because the pain is unbearable but because we are restless. We move because we are not in the habit of being in touch with the pain.

When you feel pain, without thinking of pain, without even using the word pain, although in the beginning you can use the word pain, but I have noticed that when you use the word pain it becomes more painful, because you are interpreting it as 'pain'. Pain is something that you don't like. So automatically you react to the word pain.

*If you stop using the word pain and
just get into the pain, be with the pain,
you'll find that it is very interesting,
your mind can stay there for a long time.*

Some of my friends, who are very scared of pain, don't want to meditate because they think it will be very painful. Slowly and slowly they have learnt how to meditate and after a while they come in touch with the pain and stay with it, and found out that it becomes very interesting. They get absorbed in the pain.

*If you are willing to be with the pain,
it is not so unbearable; if you are unwilling it
becomes more and more unbearable.
It is the way that your mind looks at experience.*

Whenever you feel pain, be with it, it will not kill you, actually. When you find that “this is my limit” and I can’t really go on sitting like this anymore, move very slowly, move a few millimeters and see the pain getting less, the whole experience, and the mind also. When the pain gets a little bit less your mind becomes a little bit relaxed, “Oh... It is nice now... feeling better now”, then move a little bit again; feeling better now. Move again, and then you find another position where you don’t feel pain anymore, you feel happy, you feel very relaxed and then you continue to meditate; sitting for an hour or sometimes even for two hours. In Burma some people sit for five, six hours and some people sit even more than that, you may not believe it. Some people sit for twenty four hours, without eating or drinking.

When I see people that can’t even sit for one hour, if they want they can train their body, but they think that they cannot do more than this. When you think that this is your limit, when you come to that point, your body reacts too much.

*When you know that “I can do more than this”
your mind does not react.*

Slowly you can learn to stretch your limit.

After you can sit for three hours you find that meditation can get very deep, very, very deep. It becomes more and more clear. You stop thinking, you get deeper and deeper in touch with the reality and you can see very fine subtle things happening. It is important to learn to sit longer and also to do standing

meditation. Here I don't see people standing. I see people sitting on the floor or sitting on a chair. Try to meditate standing for a while, but if you are afraid that you'll fall down, try to put your hands on a rail or a table that will help you to keep balance. Sometimes it is very good to do standing meditation. Stand as long as you can and then you walk and when you walk also do it very mindfully.

Begin from the intention to walk. When you stand for a long time, your body really wants to change the posture. You really want to move and that intention is very strong. You can't stand anymore. You don't want to stand anymore. Feel that energy, the energy of wanting to move. Sometimes you feel like your body is moving although your feet are not. You feel like your body is pulling, something is pulling. You can feel that energy in the mind and in the body. The moment that your mind thinks of moving, immediately something happens in your body. That part of the body that is going to move becomes very different. All the nerves and the muscles become immediately ready to move. You feel the energy there, the blood, the nerves and muscles becoming tense and when you become aware of that you let go of it. After a while, a few seconds, that desire, that urge to move comes back again and you know that desire coming, you feel something rushing up and then after a few times you really decide to move.

When you move, move very slowly and see the feeling, the sensation, the tension; you feel something happening in your muscles. Get in touch with the feeling, not the shape, you say...

'Walking'..., 'walking'..., 'walking'..., for a beginner it is ok. Here you are not beginners. This is a class for advanced meditators but I want to go back to the beginner stages also. When you say "left, right, left, right", it is just words. You call this 'right' and you call this 'left', it is just a name and you are also aware of the shape, this long and round leg, moving forward, stretching and moving again. For a beginner it is ok. After a while it is not the shape, it is not the name, it is the sensation while you move, it is the sensation which should be the object of meditation. How do you feel in your muscles, and also how do you feel in the mind? When you try to do it very mindfully you'll find that even to move you think a little bit and you need the cooperation of your whole body; without the cooperation of your body and mind you cannot move even an inch. Let's say you are standing there and you have decided to move; what is happening? You shift the body weight on to the other leg; that leg has got to take the whole body weight and to feel the cooperation between the two legs.

*To move it is not very simple;
there is a very complex process going on.
Get interested. Do not be in a hurry to do anything.
What you are doing is to see what is happening in
your body when you take just one step.
Do it with deep interest. What is happening now?*

If you do that you can get very interested and because of the interest the mind becomes calm and absorbed. Because of this absorption, samādhi, you also feel more energy. Sometimes a kind of joy too, because joy is very close to interest. If you have no interest you have no joy. One translation of *pīti* is interest. So, get very interested. What happens if I try to move? See what happens to the whole body and mind, before you move even. If you do that and let's say you walk from here to there, do it very slowly. You can get very absorbed. Samādhi can become very strong. Some people say that walking meditation is not good because you don't develop samādhi. Maybe that person has not tried to walk with deep interest. If you do it with a deep interest you develop very strong samādhi.

Buddha said that the samādhi that you develop from practicing walking meditation is much stronger than the samādhi you develop while you are sitting (caṅkamādhigato samādhi ciraṭṭhitiko hoti ~AN iii.30).

This is very important to know, because in the moving process, when you can stay with it, your awareness is stronger.

When you change posture, when you hear, you see, try to be in touch with the whole process as much as you can, without thinking about it. In that process you'll find that there is the intention, the decision, the desire, the wanting arising in your mind, the wanting to move, wanting to see, wanting to listen,

wanting to drink. Sometimes you are sitting and meditating and you feel so thirsty, you want to drink; that desire is very strong. You feel the desire, sometimes you see a glass of water, and it would be so nice to drink a glass of water! Sometimes you are sitting and you feel itching somewhere in the body, you want to scratch; before you scratch you can see the wanting to scratch. Once you have decided to move your hand, before doing it you'll feel very different, feel the change in energy in the hand, something is happening there. In your mind image you also see your hand moving but your real hand has not moved yet. Become aware of all this. Move slowly, scratch and slowly put back your hand and continue meditating.

*What I am explaining now is actually extremely simple,
 but it is hard to do simple things,
 we make things more and more complicated.
 To meditate is very simple, can you do that?
 Are you willing to be simple?*

Now I will give you a chance to ask questions. When I spoke about consciousness and object it is actually *Nāma-rūpa-pariccheda-ñāṇa*, the first insight, no being, no name, no shape, just sensation and awareness. You know that there is a sensation and there is awareness. Sensation is nature, natural phenomena and awareness is also natural phenomena. This consciousness is not a being. You are not creating it. It is happening because of the conditions. When you see the two things very clearly that

is the first insight. I'll try to talk about the first four insights again and again to get them very clear; I don't want to leave anything out. After the fourth the rest is quite simple. There are ten insights; the first four are the most important ones.

*Awareness of object and consciousness,
seeing them as natural phenomena,
not a being, not a man, not a woman,
this is the first insight.*

QUESTION & ANSWER:

Buddha talked about walking meditation and said that it gives you samādhi and it is very strong, because you are moving all the time, you need to have more energy, you need to put in more energy to be in touch with the process. When something is stable it is easier to be with it and you can just relax. When something is changing and moving you have to put more effort, more energy into it and once you have developed that sort of energy, effort and developed that sort of mindfulness and you go and sit, it is quite simple and easy.

If you do that yourself you will find why. If you have a place where you can walk ten steps it is enough to do walking meditation, because each step will take a long time. Do it with deep interest and then you go and sit mindfully and see what happens. You'll get calmer, more peaceful and

more mindful. I suggest that you do walking meditation first and then do sitting meditation; you'll really feel the difference. For beginners it is very important to do both. But as you develop deeper and deeper samādhi, after a while you can sit for two hours and walk for one hour, and after a while you sit for three hours and walk for one hour just to give your body some exercise and you can get deeper and deeper in your samādhi.

QUESTION & ANSWER:

AIn the section of Satipaṭṭhāna, there is one section about walking meditation and if you can find the commentary of that section it will give you more detailed instructions.

QUESTION & ANSWER:

The sensitivity of the body, the skin actually, also deep in the muscles you feel something. Whatever you feel on your body you feel it because of the sensitivity of the body. Sensitivity of the eyes, sensitivity of the ear, sensitivity of the nose; the nose is sensitive to smell, the tongue is sensitive to taste, the eye is sensitive to light and colours, the ear is sensitive to sound-vibration, the body is sensitive to hot or cold, hard soft, movement, vibration, tension.

QUESTION &

ANSWER: Yes, vedanānupassanā means you are aware of the pain; not only pain, *sukhā-vedanā*, *dukkhā-vedanā* and *upekkhā-vedanā*. What I am saying is that you are with the pain but you are not naming it anymore. In the beginning you are naming it, but after a while you don't name it anymore, you are with the pain, whether it is dukkhā (painful), sukhā (pleasant), or upekkhā (neutral), you are with the pain. Being with the pain is vedanānupassanā; you are doing it without naming it.

QUESTION &

ANSWER: I see... three kind of vedanā, in the body you feel all three, dukkhā, sukhā and also upekkhā. Most of the time there is some sort of light pain in the body all the time, but we don't pay attention. When we pay attention we feel it. When there is no pain anymore you feel very light. Sometimes in meditation you feel so peaceful and calm and so light, all the pain is gone: that is sukhā-vedanā. Sometimes there is upekkhā vedanā, neither pleasant nor unpleasant. In the eye, for the sensitivity of the eye, the vedanā is only upekkhā. For the smell also; the smell comes into your nose you don't really feel pain there. You are aware of the smell only, so there is no sukhā or dukkhā. When you smell something terrible, your body and mind reacts to it, which is another process.

One of my friends had an accident and after that he couldn't smell anything anymore. He might be working in a place with very bad smell but he does not react.

QUESTION &

Answer: You feel more weight on another leg? Heaviness you mean, when you lift? Because it has weight you have to overcome gravity, you have to overcome the resistance, and you have to put in some effort to lift it. You know, we are so used to moving that we don't really know how much effort it takes. To give you an example, a long time ago, we friends agreed to arrange a situation where one of us could meditate without doing anything at all for a month; it meant we just put out the bowl in front of the door, closed the door and sat and meditated. A monk took away the bowl, put in the food, and filled up all the water pots, cleaned everything and brought them back and left the bowl there. When we felt ready to eat, we opened the door, took the bowl and ate. Nobody would come and disturb us. We did that for a long time, just sitting and meditating many hours and just going out to get exercise, walking for a few minutes only to stretch your legs and then come back and continue to meditate. The eyes just dropping, the whole body becomes so relaxed that after a while it is difficult even to open your eyes. It takes so much effort to open the eyelids; you need so much energy to open your eyes. When we started talking again, you needed to develop so much energy just to talk.

The cheek muscles also became so soft, even smiling is so difficult! We are so used to this burden that we do not really know what it takes.

QUESTION &

ANSWER: Not really, actually. In the beginning, if you do that for a few months and you start thinking, you find that it is difficult to think. It is only for a while, because we do it again and again. When I lived in my place in Myanmar, I lived there alone for at least four months. When you come out of that in the beginning it is a little bit difficult, because you don't want to think. It is not necessary to think. But when you have to say something, you know exactly what to say without going around. You stay short and to the point, you are clear. When you want to say something you get in touch with what you want to say and say it very clearly.

*Also, before we meditate we take these names,
ideas, and associations very seriously but after
you meditate you know that these are just
interpretations and don't take them very seriously.
But you know the meaning.*

You interpret in the same way, in the right way; you use it appropriately without taking it too seriously. You use it without being imprisoned by the concepts, ideas and names. Concepts, idea, names, are prisons, they are useful but they

are also prisons. If we really want to free our mind we have to know what the limitations are. This is one form of reality. It is important for our survival; if we don't interpret things in the right way we will not survive. In the evolutionary process we have learnt to interpret things in the right way. Especially in the forest, you are sitting there and you hear something, if you don't interpret it the right way you'll be eaten up by a tiger. When you hear a tiger you just shut the door. If you keep it open maybe you'll be in trouble.

*To interpret things in the right way is useful but
when you want to go beyond ordinary reality
you need to leave all that behind.*

QUESTION &

ANSWER: Yes, that is true. If you can do that it is very useful to develop deep insight. For beginners I would not suggest doing that, because it is better to develop gradually. If suddenly you ask a person go and live in that cave, in a small room, don't come out, we will bring food, stay there for four months, that person will go crazy. We are always trying to run away from ourselves. We can't face what is inside; there are so many things inside, all sorts of memories, emotions, feelings and desires; so much inside. If you suddenly do that, everything will explode.

*Gradually learn to do that.
 It is not easy to be with yourself all the time.
 If you have learnt to live with yourself,
 just watch and let go, without reacting.
 You can develop very deep samādhi and
 very deep insight.*

QUESTION & ANSWER:

...it comes naturally actually, you don't have to deliberately do anything. It happens.

*If you can just do one thing, honestly,
 be aware of what is happening without
 misinterpreting anything, the rest will happen.*

*That is the beauty of the practice.
 You know that if I am mindful honestly the rest
 will happen naturally.*

Whatever difficulty comes into your mind, if you can be aware of that difficulty, a question comes into your mind... I don't know what to do... be aware of that question and let go. If you can do that your mind becomes calm again. After a while you know what to do, you find out what to do without thinking.

Many people when they practiced with my teacher kept coming and asking one question after another. He was very patient, very kind and he answered every question but

after a while he said “be more mindful, you’ll find your own answers”. That is really very important, because now he has passed away, who is going to answer the questions?

The real name of my teacher is Venerable Dhammadandiya.

QUESTION &

ANSWER: Yes; when you become very, very mindful, your mind sometimes cannot think especially when you develop some sort of samādhi and insight, although you try to divert your mind to another object it will not go there, it will come back! What do you do? Just leave it, stay there for a while and after when you feel ready to do other things, do them. When the mind is not ready to do it, don’t force it. It is something like a hypnotic state. When you are in a hypnotic state you should not come out quickly. It is a kind of absorption so take your time and slowly come out of it.

*In vipassanā also you can get very absorbed,
when you are in that state; don’t force yourself
to come out quickly. Take your time.*

*A few minutes are enough;
just prepare your mind to come out of it.*

Thinking is a burden. If you are very calm and peaceful, if there is no thought, no agitation, it is ok to stay there. It is so nice to go away from the world.



five

First & Second Insights

Awareness of Consciousness and Object &
Comprehending the Cause of Phenomena

Welcome to meditation class, I am glad to see you. Some of you come here quite early and sit and meditate. It is very encouraging to see people coming here to meditate. It shows that you really want to meditate, that you really like, love what you are doing.

I am only here to help you, not really here to teach you.

Only if you really want to learn you learn.

*Nobody can really teach you,
this is very important thing to understand.*

To begin today's meditation class I would like to begin with a question, a very simple question and the answer also is very simple. But think for a while. What is the biggest burden we are carrying? Just take a few minutes to think about it. It is very important to ask the right question and also it is very important to live the question. This idea, to live the question it is very important. Only if we live the question will we get a living answer and then we have to live the answer again. Only if we

live the answer we will find another very deep and meaningful question. And, we live the question again. Living the question is the right way to find the answer. Do you have a question? Are you living a question? Any kind of question, but the question must come out of your life; it must come out from your heart. It must be a living question, not just a theoretical or hypothetical question; it must be something very real.

*Those who have real questions and
those who live the question live their life very seriously,
very meaningfully, very deeply.*

*After they have lived the question for a long time,
their life will give them the answer.*

*It is your life that gives you the answer;
you cannot find real answers from books or
from somebody else.*

They may give you some hints only, but to see the truth of the answer you have to look into your life again.

*The truth of the answer does not lie in the sentence;
it lies in your life.*

The question again, what is the biggest burden you are carrying around? Have you asked that question to yourself? If not, just ask it now, what is the biggest burden that I am carrying around? Can you guess?

*Right, the biggest burden
we are carrying around is 'I'.*

Do you feel that? If you can just let go of that 'I' you'll feel light again. That is the biggest burden! That is why the first thing we learn in meditation is to see that there are only natural phenomena: pure mental and physical phenomena. One phenomenon is mental which is very distinct from another phenomenon which is physical or material.

The first insight is to see that there are just phenomena, nothing permanent, no being, no entity, no 'I', no ego, no personality, just pure phenomena. That brings tremendous relief, it unburdens the mind. This 'I' is the creation of the mind, it creates its own burden. The first stage of enlightenment totally eradicates this I-ness, the wrong view of I-ness, *sakkāya-ditthi*. It does not eradicate greed, this is an important point to notice, and it does not even eradicate anger or competition like pride. It eradicates the wrong view of 'I'. Sometimes people say "these people are meditating but they are still very greedy." Yes, they can still be very greedy, but that greed has no backing of 'I'. Even though they are greedy they will not go and steal or cheat. They will get what they want properly, in a proper way. I'll review what I have said last week and continue from there.

Nāmarūpañam yāthāvadassanam ditthivisuddhi nāma.

~Vsm 587

Nāmarūpañam is a compound word, *nāma* and *rūpa*. Nāma is a process, not an entity or a being, not permanent. It is not always there. Nāma is something that arises. Rūpa also is not a thing. Rūpa actually is a quality. Please keep this in mind. Whenever we use the word *rūpa* we are not talking about a thing. We are talking about a quality, like heat, is a quality not a thing, cold is not a thing, it is a quality and it is a process. It is something going on and on continuously. It has continuity but it is arising and passing away, arising and passing away. That is why it is called a process. These two processes, *nāma* and *rūpa* are distinct, they are not the same. Sometimes I hear about this non duality, saying that there is no such thing as *nāma* or *rūpa*, both of them are the same. That is not true. They are not the same. They are very distinct. Nāma is a kind of consciousness, knowing. Rūpa is just an object without this quality of knowing; it doesn't know. Nāma is that quality which knows; *rūpa* does not know anything, it is just pure material quality. They are two different things, material and mental.

In the meditation practice, the mind becomes very quiet and still although sometimes a few thoughts might come and go, the mind stays on the object for a long time. It begins to focus on one thing; it does not put things together. This not putting anything together is very important.

*When we put things together we get a concept,
we get paññatti. When we don't put things together,
when we see something purely as it is;
then we are really seeing the quality,
either nāma or rūpa.*

When the mind becomes so still and sees pure quality, we can see that this is just pure quality, not a being, not a man, not a woman. This is the first insight, it is very important. Unless we can get to this first insight, there is not hope of any progress. We come to see that there is this consciousness which is aware of this object. For example, this sound, when I make a sound, this sound is pure physical quality, it is a process. You can hear the ringing going on and on and then it goes away.

Before I make a sound there is no awareness of this sound. This awareness arises because of this sound. You can see the two very clearly, very separately. And the awareness arises now. It is not already there, to be aware of. It is not waiting to hear the sound. The awareness arises when the sound arises. Before the awareness of the sound there is another awareness, which is also a condition for the next awareness to arise. But they are not the same. We think that there is some sameness all the time, something that is always there. This is the way we create continuity in our mind. Thoughts create continuity and they create this idea of sameness. When we totally stop thinking and become mindful and concentrate and pay attention to whatever is happening right now, we see that something is arising right now. It

was not there before. It is right now.

“Nāmarūpānam yāthāvadassanam ditṭhivisuddhi nāma”: Yāthāva means truly, properly rightly, as it is. Dassanam means to see. To see nāma and rūpa, mental and physical phenomena as they are, truly, properly, rightly is called ditṭhivisuddhi. Ditṭhi means view. Visuddhi means purity or purification. And here the (second) word nāma means “it is called.”

When we see this Pāli word Nāma, we have to keep in mind that it has many meanings, a different meaning in different contexts. In some cases, some people translate nāma-rūpa as name and form, which is wrong translation. I discussed this with Venerable Nānāvisuddhi and it took us two days. We went through many translations. Nāma does not mean name. Name is a concept. But another meaning of nāma is name. And in another case it means ‘it means’. In the beginning of the sentence, nāma means mental process. In the same sentence (at the end) nāma means ‘it means’.

So to translate this Pāli sentence, it means ditṭhivisuddhi (purification of view) means seeing as it is, truly, properly, rightly the process of mental and physical phenomena. So nāma-rūpa doesn’t mean name and form. Name is a concept. Form and shape is also a concept. They’re not reality.

When we meditate and develop this nāma-rūpa-pariccheda-nāma, it does not mean that we know the name and the form; it means that we see mental and physical process. Wrong translation gives us a very wrong idea, it is very confusing sometimes. For example we are sitting and meditating and breathing in and

out, at first we are aware of the shape of our body, the shape of our nose, sometimes we even imagine the shape of the air long, like a rope, going in and out. This 'long' is something you imagine. Where is the long air going in and out? No long air. But sometimes it feels like that. Slowly and slowly we overcome all this imagination of shape and name and we come to the pure awareness of sensation, something rushing in, touching, pushing and this touching, pushing is a process, a very simple process. Even in this simple process, we have wrong view.

To purify this wrong view, we see this simple process without mixing it with anything else.

We see that this is just pure sensation.

And after a while we see that there is this consciousness, which is aware of this sensation. The sensation can be warm, can be cold. When we breathe in, it is a little bit cool, when we breathe out, it is a little bit warm. This warm or cool, pushing, touching,... you become aware of it, we are not thinking about it and we see that there are two very distinct processes going on, and neither of them is a being, an entity, and neither of them lasts a long time. They are arising now and disappearing now.

In the beginning we don't emphasize on arising and passing away, we emphasize on just pure process. This physical process, this materiality has no volition, it has no intention. For example the hair does not know that it is in the head and the hair does not want to go anywhere; so who wants to go? mind, consciousness.

This materiality has no volition, no intention. Seeing that consciousness goes to the object and it reaches the object. We want to hear, we pay attention, and this paying attention is a quality of *nāma*, taking the object knowing the object. There is something which does not know anything, which is physical process and there is another process which knows the object. The two are very different. *Nāma* arises because of the object. Without any object there cannot be any consciousness. The consciousness is not already there.

For example when I touch like this, the sound does not come out of this stick, it does not come out from the bell even. This means that the sound is not already there. Depending on how hard I hit, the quality of the sound will be different; it is not already there sitting and waiting to come out one after another. If it is already sitting there waiting to come out, no matter how hard I hit, the same sound will come out. If I change the condition the result will be different. So, the sound is not in the stick, it is not in the bell, and it is not waiting there. It happens when the stick hits the bell, which means everything is new. To understand it as something new is very important. It is the same thing with seeing, when there is no awareness, when you keep your eyes shut, you do not see what is in front. The moment you open your eyes, something strikes your eyes and this awareness, this seeing consciousness arises. It arises at this moment; you can see the two different things, the object and the consciousness. This is called, *nāmarūpa-pariccheda-ñāṇa*.

In another case, for example when you want to move, first consciousness arises, the intention to move and then the hand or the leg moves. In the case of the sound, the sound preconditions the consciousness, because of the sound, consciousness arises. In the case of moving it is your intention which preconditions the movement, physical process conditioning mental process, and mental process conditioning physical process. It works both ways. When we feel hungry and we want to eat, we take the food and put it in our mouth. But who is eating really? The function of eating it is done by the body, the physical process. The hand takes the food and puts it in the mouth. If you don't move the hand and just sit and look at the food and tell the food to go to the mouth, it won't go.

The mind intends and gives directions, instructions to the body; so the mind intends and the body eats.

*Mind and body eating, not 'I' eating,
mind and body eating, but we think that I am eating.*

*In truth it is just mind and body process eating.
If you can understand that as a process then
you have this purity of view.*

When you want to drink it is the same process. When you want to walk it is the same thing. Like you are standing for a long time and you feel very tired, your legs become very stiff, you want to move, and the intention is coming, 'move, move', it really pushes the body. You decide to move, lift your leg, move

it forward and place it, so... mind and body moving, not a being moving. That way of seeing is *nāma-rūpa-pariccheda-ñāṇa*.

In truth there is no being. There is a reality where we see the being as a truth, this is *sammuti-sacca* (mundane reality). Don't mix the two realities. In mundane reality there are beings, there are men, there are women. When we come to paramattha, when we meditate we go beyond that, and look into the qualities only. But when we meditate we don't think about it. The important point is to try and think before you meditate, but when you sit and meditate don't think about *nāma-rūpa* anymore. As you become more and more mindful, as your mind stays more and more on the process, it will appear naturally, spontaneously, and the understanding will be there very clearly: two processes going on.

Understanding or seeing *nāma-rūpa* process properly, rightly means seeing that "This is *nāma*, this is a mental process", this means that this is not a being. This is mental process. And *nāma* means just this (process). It does not mix with physical process, no mixing and no adding. Normally we mix all things together and we have a vague idea about things. But here we come to a very clear cut seeing: this is *nāma*, just *nāma* and it does not mix with *rūpa*. Although they are interrelated they are not the same, they are two distinct processes. There is nothing more than this. *Nāma* is just this *nāma*. It's not more than that, and seeing, "This is *rūpa*, physical": heat, cold, movement, pressure, heaviness, anything, these are just physical process. This much is physical, not more than this. It has a limit to it. This much is

physical. It doesn't mix with mental, although it is also related with mental process. 'No more than that'.

'Just seeing the inherent quality of nature', many different qualities; just seeing the different qualities of nature. Clean the impurity of seeing the process as something, ego or 'I' and to remove it. So remove the impurity of the wrong view of 'I', or the wrong view of soul, of being of entity. Removing this wrong view of belief in a soul should be understood as *diṭṭhi-visuddhi*. When a person reaches this insight, *nāma-rūpa-pariccheda-ñāṇa*, this state of insight is purity of view (*diṭṭhivisuddhi*). That comes with the first insight.

The second insight is *Paccaya-pariggaha-ñāṇa*. *Paccaya* means cause, and *pariggaha* means grasping, understanding. *Ñāṇa* means understanding. This English word grasping has many meanings. One of them is to grasp something in your hand, to take it very firmly, but it also means understanding. So, grasping the cause of the phenomena, seeing, understanding the cause of the phenomena, they are related. First we see the object as object and the consciousness as just consciousness and then slowly when this insight becomes mature, without thinking about it, the meditator starts seeing that because of this object, consciousness arises.

This object is the cause of this consciousness. The consciousness does not arise by itself; nobody is creating it. It is not arising just without any reason; it is arising because it has a cause to arise. Depending on the person's intellectual development or knowledge, different people see different aspects of

causes and some people see more, some people see less but it does not matter. The thing that does matter is that no matter what arises you see that it has a cause. For example, taking the sound again, the consciousness of the sound arises because of the sound which is quite obvious. But we may think that everybody knows that, why do we need to go and meditate? We don't need to meditate to find that out. We know it intellectually, but it is quite different.

*Intellectual understanding does not
remove this strong belief in self.*

We think that we hear the sound, "I hear the sound".

But in meditation this 'I' disappears.

You see that this consciousness arises just now because of this sound, no 'I' hearing. Sometimes you come to the understanding that because of the ear, there is hearing; hearing is a consciousness. Sound and ear, the ear drum which is the sensitive part of the ear, is the cause of hearing. If you go on meditating for a long time, you come to understand that, "only when I pay attention, I hear the sound"; I am using the word 'I' in a conventional sense. Sometimes there is a lot of noise going on around, people talking etc., but if we don't pay attention we don't hear.

*We come to understand the mind turning to the object,
paying attention (manasikāra);
without paying attention we don't hear.*

When we are sleeping although the ear drum is still working and there are many sounds happening we don't hear, because we are not paying attention. This is a very obvious example. Also when we are awake and we are very absorbed in reading, if somebody near us calls our name, we don't hear, because we are not paying attention. Sound, sensitive ear and attention conditions the hearing.

The same with seeing, we think that we see, but when we develop this insight and we are looking at something, we know the consciousness; we know that because of the object there is this consciousness. After a while, without thinking it may appear to you and because the eye is sensitive, we see. Sometimes people come and tell me "it is so amazing, we see". Suddenly the person finds out that it is really amazing that we see. Have you have experienced that? This is so marvelous, miraculous; suddenly we feel something in a new way.

Why not seeing? One philosopher, Wittgenstein, have you heard of him? He was a contemporary of Bertrand Russell. In fact he was a student of Russell and he replaced Russell in his professorship. Wittgenstein said something which is very deep and meaningful, he said "Why not nothing instead of something"? If you really understand this, sometimes you'll be really shocked; it is so amazing that there is something! So amazing that there are flowers, there are trees, there are insects and animals, there are human beings and there are planets. Why not nothing? Why is there something? Just that something is there is really amazing. In the same away a meditator begins to find out that seeing is

happening and it is really amazing. The person sees the seeing as a new process, a new experience. Most of the time we go about doing things unconsciously, like in a dream; suddenly we wake up and see that... there is seeing and this is really amazing. You experience seeing as something really new. It really strikes you, and it hits you. I really feel happy when somebody comes and tells me "Oh, it is amazing, we see, we hear, we think". Why is that happening?

*Etass' eva pana nāmarūpassa paccayapariggahañena
tīsu addhāsu kankham vitaritvā thitam nāñam
Kankhāvitaranya-visuddhi nāma.*

~Vsm 598

Etass' eva pana nāmarūpassa: of that nāma-rūpa that we talked about just a few moments ago.

paccayapariggahañena: Seeing the cause of it

tīsu addhāsu: past, present and future. When we meditate we pay attention to the present only. We don't pay attention to the past because it has gone. And we don't pay attention to the future because it is not there. But when we understand the present properly, we also understand the past and the future.

kankham vitaritvā: When we see that nāma-rūpa arises because of the conditions, because there is a cause to arise, seeing this very clearly eradicates all doubts; *kankham* means doubt. *Vitaritvā* means to overcome. We overcome doubt.

What are the doubts that we have? We think about this ‘I’, “was I born before? Am I going to be born in the future?” But when you see the nāma-rūpa, the process and the causes for the nāma-rūpa to arise, we understand that as it is happening now, it has happened before, and it will happen in the future if there are sufficient causes for it to happen. If there are conditions it will happen, if there are no conditions it will not happen.

When we ask the question “was I before”? It is a wrong question. “Will I be there again?” Some people ask what happens to the Arahant after death. If we are asking this question with the idea of a person, this question is a wrong one. In reality there is no such thing as ‘I’, but there is process. If you understand process happening now and the cause of the process happening now, you’ll understand that no matter what the story is, what we call a man, a woman, a mother, a father, this and that, if we leave out all those names and concepts but look at it as just process, you’ll find that in the past also there was nāma process, and rūpa process arising and passing away, just the way they are arising and passing away just now. Understanding the present completely, eradicates doubts about present and future. It also eradicates the doubt of “who created this”? It is happening just out of the blue, just for no reason, no cause, or is there somebody who is making it all happen?

*This is a question that is also cleared away,
because we know nobody is creating it,
it is just natural causes and natural effect only.*

Depending on the person's knowledge sometimes, say if a person has studied Dependent Origination (*paticcasamuppāda*), they start to see the reality of it. But if the person has not studied it, it does not matter. The basic idea of Dependent Origination is that because of this cause, this result arises, if there were no cause, there would not be any results. If the cause ceases, the result ceases. In brief this is Dependent Origination. If the person has a wide knowledge, he will understand that because of this sound, and because of this ear, and because of this coming together of the sound, ear and consciousness, there is a contact. Because of this coming in contact, there is *vedanā*; there is some sort of pleasant or unpleasant sensation or feeling. Because of this pleasant or unpleasant feeling, desire or aversion arises. We can see the reality of it very clearly, we may not be able to see it completely but we will see part of it very clearly. If you have never heard or seen something before and having no expectation see or hear about it, can there be any desire for that thing? You don't even know what it is, so no desire for it. How does desire arises? Because you have heard about it or you have seen it before. Because of coming into contact there is *vedanā*, because of *vedanā* there is *tañhā* (craving, desire).

Depending on a person's knowledge, during meditation without thinking much, suddenly a flash of understanding

comes up, very short and brief, sometimes even a very short Pāli word or even an English word if you read in English will come up in your mind. Don't think too much of these thoughts, although they are very deep and profound, if you go on thinking it interrupts your continuity of mindfulness and observation. In between your meditation practice these thoughts will come up again and again, watch them, thinking... reflecting.... These thoughts in those moments can be very powerful and have a lot of energy, very deep, very clear and very inspiring too, so that sometimes we want to talk about it; we cannot stop talking about it. When that sort of thing happens to you, it is very important to understand that if you start talking about it, you lose your mindfulness. During the meditation retreat or any other situation if you really want to develop deeper insights don't think or talk about it, although it is very hard to control. We develop such clear insights and feel so happy about it, so relieved and we want the same thing to happen to our friends, whoever is close to us. We know that if this person understands this, they will be really relieved, because you have experienced yourself that kind of relief.

*This burden of 'I', once you see nāma-rūpa,
 once you see the cause of nāma-rūpa
 arising and passing away, you feel tremendous relief.
 There is a lot of joy, rapture, a lot of saddhā (faith)
 and also you believe in the Buddha.*

Somebody told me that, when he first experienced this he felt a lot of joy and rapture in his body and immediately he thought of the Buddha: "Buddha was really right". Many people in that moment want to bow down and pay respect to the Buddha, real respect, real veneration, true *saddhā* appears. You don't force yourself, it happens so naturally. Another friend also who is a good meditator, he was sitting and meditating and when he developed deep insight said "I pay respect to the Buddha who taught this mindfulness". It is a very new way of paying respect; very personal; not because of any reason or other causes but just because he taught this mindfulness practice.

In the texts there are many different doubts mentioned, but it is not necessary to go through all of them. The first thing is that, before this life was there 'I'? This is one doubt. Before this life wasn't there 'I'? This is actually the same question from a different angle. If there was an 'I' how was that 'I'? In what shape, in what form, was that a man or a woman? All sorts of doubts people have. Last week I spoke about a friend of mine who was a woman and now is a man.

*Don't be too proud of being a man and
don't be unhappy about being a woman.
Nobody is better.*

*It is your practice, it is your understanding,
and it is your heart which really counts.*

So “was I a woman?”, “was I a man?”, “was I a European or an Asian?” There are all sorts of doubts, but when you understand this very deeply, you’ll see that these names are just conventions, something that happened before. As long as there are sufficient causes there will be results.

“Will I be reborn again?” “Will I not be reborn?” The same doubt. “Is there a soul inside, living somewhere?” That is also another kind of doubt. When you look very deeply into the physical and mental process, you’ll find that everything is always arising and passing away. There is no such thing as permanent entity, everything is changing, arising and passing away. Where does this ‘I’ come from?

When we use the word rebirth it is very different from reincarnation, although sometimes we use the two as if they are the same. The two words are not the same. Reincarnation means, some permanent entity taking a new body. It means that a soul is going into a new body; there is no such thing as the soul going into a new body, there is only consciousness, mental process and physical process. In the text it is explained in great detail repeating the same thing again and again. It is a two volume text on meditation. If I go through every detail it will take quite a long time. Just try to understand this in any other context, smelling, tasting, sensation on the body, in the sound and seeing as I have explained before. Take that as an example and try to understand any other process in the body and mind.

Just briefly, for some people who have a very deep understanding, they see the Dependent Origination from the beginning,

so, *avijjā* which means ignorance or not knowing, not knowing what? Not knowing the truth, not knowing the reality. Because we don't know, we think that if I do this I'll get something that will make me happy. This is called 'not knowing'; because there is nothing that can really make us happy.

If you think about it, it is very depressing; we have been deceiving ourselves for too long. Just wake up and grow up! Have you ever found anything that really makes you satisfied always? We look for that all the time, something that would make us really satisfied, really happy, have you found it? Is there anything like that?

Believing that something will make us happy and doing things in the hope that it will make us happy, it is a delusion, it is avijjā; also not understanding the Four Noble Truths which is the same thing.

I want to put things in a very simple way so that you can relate to it. For example, we do *dāna* here, every Sunday; people come and offer to me. Every day people come and offer that is a good thing to do; generosity is great! We need to help each other, to give to each other. We give money, we give food, we give clothing, we give time, we give attention, we give knowledge, teaching is also giving, and it is good to do. But what do you expect from it? That expectation is very important. "If I offer this food to this venerable *bhikkhu* (monk) then by the result of this *kamma*, I'll be reborn as a very rich person, I'll be

very happy, I will be very satisfied”; this is delusion. It will bring results but it will not really make you happy.

Even in doing dāna sometimes we are doing it with a lot of avijjā, thinking that it will bring us real happiness, real satisfaction. Why do we do that? What do we expect when we do that?

*The best to expect is that,
“by the power of this generosity may I get
the opportunity to practice and understand the reality”,
that is the reality that we can hope for.*

In many stories you'll hear that somebody offers a small amount of this and then he got so much. It is a good investment. It is based on greed and ‘I’; I'll get a lot again, it is a good investment. Look deep into that, because if you expect so much, it is greed. You are doing dāna but it is rooted in greed, in this wrong view of ‘I’. Because of that sort of view, we do something good and sometimes we foolishly do bad things, unwholesome actions, stealing, killing, all rooted in the belief that if we get it we will be happy; such as taking intoxicants, believing that it will make us happy. Either good or bad kamma, if we don't understand deeply, we'll be doing it with the belief of “I will get some result”.

*When a person meditates deeply, he or she will
begin to see that: avijjā-paccayā saṅkhārā;
Saṅkhārā-paccayā viññāṇam, and
the whole process of Dependent Origination goes on.*

To explain Dependent Origination there should be another class, in order to explain it very deeply. Because this paccaya-pariggaha-ñāṇa is talking about cause and effect, and Dependent Origination is also cause and effect; it is related.

Here is something very interesting and very deep:

*Kammam n' atthi viñpākamhi, pāko kamme na vijjati,
Aññamaññam ubho suññā, Na ca kammañ vinā phalam.*

Kammañ ca kho upādāya tato nibbatttate phalam.

*Na h' ettha devo brahmā vā samsārass' atthi kārako,
Suddhadhammā pavattanti hetusambhārapaccayā ti.*

~Vsm 603

Kammam n' atthi viñpākamhi, pāko kamme na vijjati: The cause is not in the effect, in the cause there is no effect. It is not one in another. The two are not the same. If you think the result is in the cause or the cause is in the result, you are taking the two as together. They are not together, they are separate.

Aññamaññam ubho suññā: One is devoid of the other, this is not in that; that is not in this; they are devoid of each other.

Na ca kammañ vinā phalam: but without the cause there is no effect. It is a very beautiful gāthā (verse); it is like a quiz, very deep and meaningful.

Kammañ ca kho upādāya tato nibbatttate phalam: Because of the kamma the result happens.

Na h' ettha devo brahmā vā samsārass' atthi kārako: There is no creator which creates samsāra (cyclic existence).

Suddhadhammā pavattanti hetusambhārapaccayā: just pure dhamma, and pure nature happening, because of suitable conditions.

Depending on the person's intelligence, knowledge, a lot of these things appear in the mind... it is arising because it has sufficient causes. In this stage of meditation a lot of thoughts arise, naturally, because you begin to see something that is so true, so profound. Again and again many links appear in the mind, very important to remember, not to think too much about it, because you have developed some samādhi and some mindfulness you can see things so clearly that it makes you think very deeply.

*You can get very attached to your own insights,
“Oh, now I see it so clearly, it is so true”,
you keep repeating things like that, and
you want to think about it.*

A person who has understood these two insights is called a minor *Sotāpanna*. *Sotāpanna* means stream winner. The real *sotāpanna* is the person who has attained the first *magga-phala* (knowledge of entering the stream of the Path and fruition). This is not really *magga-phala* but a person who has understood nāma-rūpa and the cause of nāma-rūpa, has eradicated a lot of gross wrong views of permanent entity, 'I', self. Because of that purity this person is very similar to a real *Sotāpanna*. So he is called a minor *Sotāpanna*.

This is something very inspiring:

*Iminā pana ñāñena samannāgato viññākalo
Buddhasāsane laddhassāso laddhapatiññho niyatagatiko*

~Vsm 605

The meditator (*viññākalo*) who has (*samannāgato*) this understanding, with this insight (*ñāñena*), has got relief (*laddhassāso*), meaning that before he was burdened, now he has been relieved from this burden. He has something to stand on (*laddhapatiññho*), some deep insight to rely on. A person who has attained and maintains this insight, he is *niyatagatiko* which means that he will not be reborn in a lower realm. Your rebirth depends on the quality of your mind, the quality of your consciousness. This deep insight has tremendous power and gives you a kind of purity of view, and because of this purity of view the quality of mind is so high that it cannot be reborn in a lower realm. Your life depends on your quality of mind. The two have to match. A lower quality of consciousness, gets rebirth so to speak, in a lower realm, lower quality of life. Once you have developed a deeper insight and pure understanding and also have purity of *Sīla*, purity of your clear mind, purity of this insight; the quality is so high that you can not be reborn in a lower realm. But if you lose your *Sīla*, if you lose your *Samādhi* and you lose this wisdom then it is unsure. If you can maintain this insight it gives tremendous relief because you won't be reborn in a lower realm.

One of my friends who was a meditator, I don't know if he is still a meditator now because he is very busy. I hope he still is. Once when he penetrated into these insights he came and told me that, "before I understood this, I thought that when I want something I have to have it, I wouldn't be happy without it, I have to go and get it". This 'have to', to have to is a big burden. Now he said "even though I am still very greedy", (he is a very greedy person actually), "whenever any greed comes in my mind I know this is greed, before that I thought I really want this". If you identify 'I' and this want together it becomes a big problem. But when you don't identify with it, you see it as a process, a desire, a strong wanting arising. He said "now I know that I don't have to do anything about it". At first he thought if he didn't get it he would not be happy, "I want this and I will be happy if I get it and if I don't get it I won't be happy". Now he says he can just watch it and it is a tremendous relief. If you can do that much you can eradicate ninety per cent of your unhappiness. You can see the greed and desire just for what it is.

*Without getting the back up of this wrong view of 'I',
any defilement becomes weak.*

*Defilements become very strong whenever
they get this back up of 'I', wrong view,
"I am angry, I am upset, I want to be better".*

Whenever that kind of thought appears in your mind, if you can just back away, detach, not identify, and watch it just as a

mental process it loses its power. You can maintain your dignity, your equanimity and if you really need it you can find a good way to get it.

Between what we need and what we want there is a very big gap. What we want is limitless, what we really need is very little; you won't believe how little we really need to be happy. I told you about my teacher once, maybe some of you remember. He lives in a very small place. He is a very learned monk, exceptional. I am very fortunate to have met quite a few teachers. They practice what they teach and they teach what they practice. They are not teaching from the head or from the books, they teach from their life. So, this teacher lives a very simple life. His place is empty, just a bare empty room. He sleeps on a piece of wooden block and puts a towel on it and uses it as a pillow. No carpet, nothing on the floor. He will spread a piece of cloth on the floor and sleep there. No furniture, nothing in his place. Some people, who came to visit him, found he had nothing. They said that they had heard about this monk not having anything but when they got there and looked in the place they really found that truly he had nothing. He eats one meal a day, vegetarian, most of the time a little rice, a bit of tomato salad, bean sprouts, very small amount of boiled beans and a very small amount of some other vegetables. People offer him cakes, biscuits but he does not eat them. He says that these things are not agreeable. Eating just one meal a day, he has been doing that for more than forty years and is very healthy. I have known him for twenty years now and he was sick only twice and that

was because of food poisoning. Somebody gave him something not agreeable once and the second time it was because somebody chopped some pork meat in small pieces, and the person offering him food that day didn't know that he didn't eat meat and as it was mixed with the vegetables he didn't know. So he just ate it and got diarrhea. Amazing, if you tell a doctor that a person can eat such a simple meal once a day and stay healthy, I think that ninety nine percent of them will say that this person will suffer from all kinds of malnutrition, but he didn't have any of those signs. I cannot be like him, but he lives like that. Everything he possesses can be carried in a small bundle.

Between what we want and what we need there is a tremendous gap, but these days people are increasing their wants more and more.

*If you understand your mind,
if you understand this greed, then let go,
you can make your life very simple and easy.
Life will not be such a big burden anymore!
Actually, the burden of life is not so big;
the burden of greed is bigger.*

I think I should stop here today and let you ask a few questions. On our next meeting I'll talk about the third and the fourth insight. The third and fourth are very important, the first and second are very important also. They are the base. Without understanding the first two we cannot move on.

QUESTION &

ANSWER: If you keep practicing you can maintain that.

It is the practice that maintains them. Also, once you have developed that sort of insight you can see the importance of it. That insight also can help make your life very simple. When we don't have that insight, we make our lives very complicated; you are doing too many unnecessary things, thinking too much unnecessarily, seeing, hearing, eating, and going here and there.

Once you develop this insight it will make you see that there are important things in your life and there are things that are not important.

You'll see the two very differently.

Mostly, we put everything together and think that everything is of equal importance and we get involved in so many things that we don't have enough time, not to meditate even. A lot of our worries, worrying about the children, the husband, the wife, about work, are not necessary. Once you develop these insights you worry very little. Your worries are only immediate problems. Only when you get sick you need to worry about it and see a doctor. But you don't sit and think of what will happen in the next ten years or thirty years. You do what you need to do, what you have to do and you can let go a lot, very simple.

*That's why I said that most meditators,
real meditators who keep the insights,
live a very lead a simple life;
they cannot live a complicated life.*

One of my friends' who is a good meditator said that she is really afraid of getting something new in the house, because that new thing will occupy her mind, will take her time. Most people when they go to the city, they see many stores, full of so many beautiful things, useful things... "I want this, I want that"... no end to it. This person said that whenever she goes down the road and looks at the stores she sees so much junk. Who needs these things? Who is creating these needs? People are creating need and making you believe that you really need it and if you don't have it you won't be happy; you are conned! People who understand this mental process deeply know that they don't need it.

*You can do away with so much and let your life become
very simple and you'll have more time to meditate.
It is important to maintain the insight and the only way
to do it is to keep practicing.*

If you can develop deeper and deeper and reach the first stage of enlightenment, there is no way of coming back again. Until we reach the first stage of enlightenment we have to keep practicing.

QUESTION &

ANSWER: I said that nāma has many meanings. We already know that nāma means name, rūpa means form; nāma, mental process, rūpa, physical process. Use the meaning according to the context. Nāma has many other meanings too, it is confusing. Once you understand that there are many meanings and you use the right one for that context, it won't confuse you anymore.

QUESTION &

ANSWER: In brief the first insight is to see that there is a physical process, which is not a being and there is another process, consciousness, mental process. The two are distinct; physical process is not mental process, mental process is not physical process but one conditions the other. For example when you hear something the sound conditions the hearing, the ear conditions the hearing, the sound and the ear which is the ear drum is rūpa, physical process. You pay attention to the sound and this hearing consciousness arises which is nāma. Another example is when you want to move, the intention to move arises which is consciousness and the body moves. Even when you close or open your eyes there is the intention to open and to close. Intention and consciousness arising with it is nāma. Second insight is very close to it. You see that this nāma arises because of this rūpa, and this rūpa, physical process arises because of this mental process, depending on the situation; the two condition each other.

Seeing the conditioning, seeing that it arises because of conditions is the second insight. I have not spoken about the third and the fourth insight yet, but since you want to know I'll explain them very briefly. The first insight is Anatta, seeing nāma and rūpa as a process, not a being, not an entity, not soul, it means Anatta. Seeing that it arises because of sufficient causes it is also Anatta. It is not created, so this is also *Anatta-ñāṇa*. The third insight sees all three, Anicca, Dukkha and Anatta, seeing this process arising and passing away. Only in the third insight the person begins to see real anicca, arising and passing away, but not really mature. The fourth insight emphasizes more on Anicca, not Dukkha and Anatta. Although it comes together, it emphasizes more on arising and passing away. Next week I'll talk about the third and fourth insight in detail. As I repeat things, I hope it will get clearer and clearer.

QUESTION & ANSWER:

A Even the first two you will not be able to get them by just reading. It is easy to understand when you talk about them, but it is not real insight, it is knowledge. When you experience them you'll know because at that moment you are not thinking about them. You are really seeing very clearly. It is really amazing how clear it is. It is really surprising also.

QUESTION &

ANSWER: A few people that I have known that don't read much have reached the first insight, but it is very difficult to reach deeper insights. They see that thoughts are just thoughts, there is no being there. I know one person like that. He didn't go to any meditation centre but when I spoke with him, the way he spoke about it makes me feel that this person has real deep insight about just process. He said there are just thoughts, they are not mine, they come and go.

QUESTION &

ANSWER: Minor insight, according to my understanding of what you mean... Buddha spoke about three different kinds of understanding. First you understand something when you listen to somebody talking, or when you read. That is a kind of minor insight. Second when you think deeply, you get a deeper insight and the third is real meditative insight. The first two levels you can just read listen and think, you can clear away a lot of wrong views just by reading and thinking. That's why it is important to read, to listen and to think, to ask questions and to make things clear. That's why we are here to get minor insights. Listening and reading can give you deep insight but there is one more stage to go: meditative *ñāṇa*. This is the beauty of the teaching of the Buddha. Buddha acknowledges the knowledge or understanding you get from reading and listening and the knowledge that you

get from thinking and mostly people stop there, especially western philosophers, they stop there. Buddha goes one step further: meditative *nāṇa*.

QUESTION: ... but you can't get really deep insight unless you are meditating.

ANSWER: That's right. That's why Buddhism is practical. If you really want to understand nāma, rūpa, anicca, dukkha, anatta there is no other way to get it.

*The only way is to really meditate,
to become really mindful.*

That's the profundity of the Buddhist teaching.

QUESTION &

ANSWER: Samatha meditation is a base, a very strong base, very good if you can develop that.

QUESTION &

ANSWER: Buddha talked about mindfulness every day, and mindfulness is *vipassanā*. Buddha has repeatedly spoken about looking deeply. Satipaṭṭhāna is *vipassanā*. These four foundations of mindfulness have four different types of objects. In practice we cannot really categorize them like this, because they get mixed. When you sit and meditate on breathing it is *kāyānupassanā*; and then thoughts come, and you watch a thought, it is *cittānupassanā*. You feel

something in your body, which is pleasant or unpleasant, that is vedanānupassanā. Sometimes your mind becomes very calm and you see, oh, it is calm, which becomes dhammānupassanā. When you are mindful and you know there is mindfulness it is dhammānupassanā.

Nu is a short form of *anu* which means repeatedly, *pas-*
sanā means to see: to see it again and again.

*When you see something just for a brief moment
you are not really sure of what you have seen,
but when you see it again and again,
it becomes more and more clear.*

If I have something in a cup and I cover it, show it to you for a brief second, cover it again and ask you what is in there, you may not be very sure. If you have some time to look at it, you know what it is. So, it is keeping your mind again and again on these processes — kāya, vedanā, citta, dhamma.

QUESTION &

A **ANSWER:** Without a cause, nothing can arise. When you have a pleasant sensation it is because... for example, the most obvious is unpleasant. If you pinch yourself there is an unpleasant sensation. Because of the pinching, something coming in contact, it is hard so you feel pain. When you sit on a very soft mattress it is very pleasant. With the eye you

have only neutral feeling, neutral vedanā, it has no pleasant or unpleasant but when you interpret it as pleasant or unpleasant it becomes another process, a mental process. When you like what you see it is not eye consciousness anymore. This liking is another consciousness. When you see something, purely seeing is eye consciousness and at that moment you don't even know what you see, there is only pure seeing. Another step is when you identify with what you see, and then you decide whether you like it or not.

Consciousness is Nāma, the object is rūpa which is colour. When we see, we only see colour, eye consciousness is only colour; it does not see man or woman or anything, only colour. The next step happens in the mind, which is interpretation. When the mind interprets, it is not seeing consciousness anymore, it is mind consciousness. Because of your past experience when you see something you know what you see. Because you liked it before you liked it now. If you see something totally new and you don't know what it is, you don't have either liking or disliking. You just think; what is this? So, it is past conditioning. For example in Burma a lot of people like this fish sauce, ground fish paste; ground like flour. It is sticky and very smelly. People like it very much and I hate it very much. So it is conditioning.

*When seeing is not mixed with anything,
not mixed with memory;
that is pure consciousness of seeing.*

*It has no liking or disliking.
Only the memory which comes with a thought
makes liking or not liking happen.*

When you see something and you like it, it is because of your past conditioning. When you see something and you don't know what it is then you have only this consciousness of, 'what is it?'

*You make no decision on whether you like it or not.
So, liking or not liking is conditioned.
We can de-condition that too.*

For example, you have lived here for many years and until you came here there were many things of which you didn't have experience. Now after a long time you are used to eating, seeing, hearing so many things, now you like them. Before you didn't know whether you liked them or not. Sometimes we eat something and we are not sure whether we like it or not. But if we eat that thing again and again, slowly we acquire the taste, and we begin to like it. For example, before I came here, I didn't have any taste for soy milk, and now I am beginning to drink a small quantity of it and I am beginning to acquire the taste. I am beginning to like it, I am developing greed now.

QUESTION &

ANSWER: That is a very good question. Without developing sufficient intensity in the first insight you cannot move into the following insight; one insight leads to another when it is ready, when it is sufficiently developed and strong enough it leads to another insight. But we cannot voluntarily go into another insight. We cannot do that, it will happen. Thank you very much for that question.

Don't be in a hurry.

*Stay where you are and develop deep enough,
you cannot push yourself too hard.*



six

Third Insight

*Knowing Anicca, Dukkha, Anatta
through Direct Experience*

Welcome everybody to our meditation class. It is good to come in a little bit earlier and to meditate for about ten minutes, to calm down the agitation of the body and the agitation of the mind.

When the mind is calm and peaceful it becomes more receptive. More receptive means that it can receive more, it can absorb more.

When I was younger, studying at university, before studying anything difficult I meditated for ten minutes, then I would read the books and study. It helped quite a lot. Without meditation if I read a book, I could be reading many pages without knowing what I was reading. So, every time I studied, specially when I studied something difficult, I would meditate for about five or ten minutes. When I had to take exams, I didn't carry any notes or books. I just carried a pen, pencil, identity card, ruler, that is all. Some people want to read and study until the last minute. I didn't do that; I just kept my mind very light and

calm and walked to the examination hall. When the bell rang I went into the room, sat in my place and after the examination papers were distributed, I used to keep the paper upside down. I would not read it immediately. I just sat in my place meditating for about five minutes without closing my eyes, not thinking about anything, not thinking about the exam, just breathing in and out, to calm down. Slowly I would turn the paper over, read it very slowly, not in a hurry and then answer everything very slowly. If you do it slowly and mindfully, you spend less time to finish it. That is the secret of doing things in a relaxed way, at ease, not in a hurry and being able to finish them quickly, using less time.

Learn to be more efficient, not just in one thing

*but in everything you do, and the best way
to be efficient is to be calm and peaceful.*

*If you are in a hurry, if you are agitated it
takes more time to do everything.*

*If you are creative, you can use meditation
in everything you do.*

Everything will be of better quality.

*Quality is very important in our life, without quality
we will not feel satisfied with our life.*

How can you find satisfaction if you don't see any quality? When you are after quantity only, you don't have respect for what you do or for what you use. When I do something, I want

to use good quality, and I will use it respectfully, lovingly and with care and it will last a long time. Quality in our relationships too, not casual relationships, really getting to know each other, really respecting and caring, valuing each other. In everything you do just pay more attention. Ask yourself "how can I do this with the best attitude, with the highest quality of mind?" In that way you'll find great satisfaction in whatever you do.

*If you have a high quality of mind whatever
you do will have high quality.*

Let's talk about *vipassanā* now. Last week we finished at the second insight which is seeing mental and physical phenomena conditioning each other. One becomes the cause of another. Mental phenomena become the cause for physical phenomena and physical phenomena cause mental phenomena. When the meditator develops deeper and deeper insight into these mental and physical phenomena causing each other and he has enough strength in this insight and enough clarity in this insight, automatically the mind moves forward. The meditator begins to see things arising. In the beginning he can see only the natural quality; he cannot see something arising right now. Whenever he pays attention he can see something that is happening there but he cannot see when it begins to happen. Only very vaguely sometimes, after something has happened, this person becomes aware of the fact that something is happening now but he cannot see the very beginning. When the insight develops stronger,

he begins to see something appearing and then another thing ... appearing... and then another thing appearing.... After a while a person starts seeing something appearing, staying for a while and disappearing.

Everything becomes slow movement; thoughts, sensations become slow movement, such as you have seen in slow motion in movies. The person can see arising, staying for a while and passing away; sometimes changing slightly and passing away. This change is also one aspect of impermanence.

*The person starts seeing as well that things arise,
last only for a short moment and then they pass away.*

*How can you find any satisfaction in this?
Seeing that things are not satisfactory!*

In this stage if a person listens to music he will hear one note arising and passing away, another note arising and passing away without continuity. He cannot really enjoy the music and he also thinks that “I thought that this was really good before, but now it does not make sense”. Without continuity we cannot enjoy anything.

At this stage the person begins to see “how can we enjoy anything, things don’t last”. Whether they are pleasant or unpleasant, this person begins to see that things arise, last for a very short moment and pass away. Because they arise and pass away they are unsatisfactory.

So here I will give you the Pāli from the Paṭisambhidāmagga:

*Atīnāgatapacuppannānam dhammānam saṅkhipitvā
vavatthāne paññā sammasane nāñam.* ~Pts i.54

Dhammānam means mental and physical phenomena; *Atīta* means past; *Anāgata* means future; *Pacuppannānam* means in the present.

You can see it is not in sequence: past, future and present. This shows that, you don't have to watch these things in this sequence. Whatever happened in the past or whatever will happen in the future or whatever is happening now, this person takes the whole (*saṅkhipitvā* means taking as a whole in a compact form) and *vavatthāne* means seeing it as anicca, dukkha, anatta. This wisdom or *paññā* is called *Sammasana-nāña*, contemplating mental and physical phenomena, seeing anicca dukkha and anatta.

Where do we begin? We begin in the present, seeing whatever is happening right now in our body in our mind and understanding it as pure natural phenomena, natural qualities. We can only see qualities, we cannot see concepts but we cannot directly experience concepts. We can only think about them. So, we experience the quality, like hardness, softness, coldness, heat, pressure, movement, heaviness and many others. We can experience these qualities directly, without thinking about them. Also mental qualities, greed has its own quality, reaching for something, desiring for something, without the word for them, you can feel... desire for something, frustration, aversion,

wanting to destroy, wanting to push away... any kind of quality in the mind or in the body, we can see it as a quality, not a being; as a process, not a being. We see them as conditioning each other, arising because of causes. After a while you see that, it arises, lasts only for a short duration and passes away.

After seeing it in the present we can understand that in the past also the same thing happened. No matter how long ago, the same thing happened. The story might be different, but if you just look at the quality, hardness, softness etc. or any other mental quality also, happiness, unhappiness, greed, aversion, pride, envy, jealousy, even wisdom, even mettā, any quality you see, you find that they arise and pass away; they do so because they have sufficient causes to arise. There is no being. The person begins to see also that in this stage of insight there is a lot of thinking that arises, because now the person is beginning to see as a whole, all the three characteristics, anicca, dukkha and anatta and all three times, past, future, present. He sees the whole picture and simplifies it also.

*No matter what happened before,
it is all mental and physical process, just phenomena.*

*No matter what happens, either good or bad,
everything arises and passes away.*

*They do that because they have sufficient causes to arise
and because they have the nature to pass away.*

In order for things to arise we need a cause, but to pass away no cause. For example, to make a sound you need a cause for that. Somebody must hit the bell. So somebody hit the bell and there is a sound and you can hear the bell ringing and the ringing sound getting softer and softer and it passes away. So, to pass away we don't need any cause, it is the nature. I think there is a similar law in physics. The second law of thermodynamics says, things disintegrate, that is their nature. We don't need any cause for that.

So, the person begins to see everything happening in the whole of *samsāra* (cyclic existence), in a compact form, at a glance. No matter what mental and physical phenomena arises because of sufficient causes then it passes away. The story might be different, the story is *paññatti*. Process is *paramattha*, what is real. When you interpret the process it becomes a story. In this meditation we do not interpret anything, we don't put things together, and we look at each moment, at each phenomenon separately. When you can see each moment and phenomenon separately, then you can really see the nature of it. If you put things together it becomes an idea.

When the person develops this *paccaya-pariggaha-ñāṇa*, seeing the causes for mental and physical phenomena to arise, the insight becomes really strong and automatically it moves forward. The person sees arising and passing away, unsatisfactoriness and also just sees that there is no control. These natural phenomena will not follow anybody's wish. You cannot say "may my body not move", it is always moving, there are always very

subtle vibrations and movements in the whole body. When there is a sound, you cannot say “may I not hear”. If there is a sound and you have ears and you pay attention you’ll hear it. If there is sufficient cause it will arise. The same thing with any other natural phenomena, they do not follow our wish. Sometimes we like to think that if we develop psychic powers we will have total control over natural phenomena. You might have heard of some people in the past especially, that because they spent a lot of time developing strong mental powers, it seems as if they could control phenomena. But they passed away, they could not control that.

Every one of them passed away, even the Buddha passed away; they cannot stop themselves from dying.

We only have seeming control. When you look at the subtle mental and physical phenomena happening, anywhere in the body or mind, do you really have any control? Just tell your mind to stop thinking for one minute. We have been thinking for so many years; just tell your mind to totally stop thinking now for sixty seconds. You will not be able to do it. But if you practice for a long time you’ll be able to do it. Not because you wish it, but because of the conditions. The practice is also a condition. Just because we have been practicing for a long time and we can keep our mind still for a while does not mean that we are in control. But by repeated conditioning (*āsevana-paccayo*) you can make something happen.

In this insight the person begins to see and accept that things are really impermanent, anicca, “I have heard about it so many times for so long, I thought I understood it and I believed in it, only now I see it is really impermanent, and it is really unsatisfactory”. How can we find any real, lasting satisfaction in such phenomena? We also see that there is no real control, there is only seemingly (apparent) control. We cannot control ourselves not to grow old. If I had any control I would like to be twenty five years old all the time. Now I have doubled that, but I am only half way through, which means I am going to live to one hundred if I can. If I look after myself I may live longer, but no control, no real control. That does not mean that we shouldn’t look after ourselves.

“When I die, I die; I don’t care”....

that is not the right attitude.

*Look after yourself, make yourself healthy,
live long, and learn more.*

*We have invested so much in this life;
get the most out of it.*

When very clearly we see things arising in the present moment, immediately the thought comes “this is really true, arising and passing away, unsatisfactoriness, it is really true”. And then noticing it again and again, we see that there is no real control. Things arise and pass away. We cannot say “arise now and don’t pass away”. And we cannot say “don’t arise”; they

arise. In between the right noticing, contemplation or thoughts of dhamma arise, many times. It is very important not to encourage thinking too much. It will happen, even in the following insights. Whenever you have some new insights you begin to think, because it is something new and you get excited. You feel that you have achieved something. Although, thoughts of dhamma arise, watch those thoughts also, thinking of dhamma, thinking of dukkha, thinking of anicca, thinking of anatta. In some cases a very short moment of contemplating encourages you to practice more, but do not encourage thinking.

Encourage real seeing, right in the moment.

Here is another thing that is very important:

*Ekasañkhārassāpi aniccatāya ditṭhaya ‘sabbe sañkhārā
aniccā’ ti avasesesu nayato manasikāro hoti.*

~KvuA 160

If you see one anicca, one phenomenon and see it as anicca (*aniccatāya ditṭhaya*), even just one conditioned phenomenon (*Ekasañkhārassa pi*) if you see it arising and passing away, really, clearly see it; it convinces you that everything is the same. It is like if you want to take down a big wall but it's too big you cannot reach the edges. So you take out one brick in the middle. If you are able to take one brick from the middle the next brick is easy. That's why don't try to understand everything at once. Try to understand one thing first, any kind of natural phenomena

in your body like breathing sensation or any movement. Try to keep your mind on one thing as long as possible.

*The longer you keep the mind on one phenomenon,
the more clearly you see, the clearer you see
the arising and passing away.*

Once we see it in one aspect of the natural phenomena, it will spread to other aspects (*avasesesu nayato manasikārō hoti*) as well. Don't be in a hurry; just let it happen, just keep your mind on one phenomenon as long as possible. When you see one *anicca* and you can be convinced that '*sabbe saṅkhārā anicca*', all conditioned phenomena are impermanent. That means that you don't have to go and see all the *saṅkhārās*. There are too many, only a Buddha can see all. Those who are very intellectual can see more variety, more widely, many things arising and passing away, many aspects of *anicca*, *dukkha*, *anatta*. It depends on the person's intelligence, intellectual ability, learning, knowledge.

*That means,
the more knowledge you have
and the more you think,
the slower you go.*

*Although you have a lot of knowledge
about the Buddha-Dhamma,
while you are meditating
don't think about it.*

Some people misunderstand; they think that they can just think about anicca, dukkha, anatta. They count with a rosary saying anicca, dukkha, anatta repeatedly, for thousands of times, believing that by doing that they will understand or see anicca, dukkha and anatta. There is no way you can do that. You cannot think about anicca, dukkha, anatta. You can only see it. But, when you see it then you start thinking about it; don't think about it. Some people think that to understand anicca, dukkha, and anatta completely one needs to understand all the things that happened in the past. There is a meditation centre in Burma which encourages that. They encourage the development of very high jhāna, fourth jhāna, and train the mind to go back, to recall past lives. They recall one life and see the end of it, the last moment, the last consciousness and then see the first consciousness of the new life; recall that life and see the last consciousness again, and then the first of another life. Very few people succeed in doing this and it is not necessary; you need many months and to spend about twenty hours a day meditating. You cannot develop such a strong samādhi just meditating for a few hours a day. Total concentration, no distraction and you can direct your mind to one thing and guide it to wherever you want to go. Especially for monks who have nothing else to do; who are also healthy and can sit for a long time and concentrate for months it is feasible. For lay people it is not easy to do that and not necessary.

In this stage of *ñāṇa*, very beautiful dhamma discourses can also come into the mind. Because of the concentration

and because of the insight developing, thoughts become very deep and profound. Dhamma thoughts become very deep and profound and also one can see one's whole life, and see all the meaning, and see what happened and how temporary everything is. You can see how you got so unhappy about such and such a thing and with this detachment you see it as just phenomena, not personal, not belonging to you, not me or mine. When you can see things from that detached point of view, you can see that there is no need to get excited. And that gives you a lot of relief, tremendous relief. Even some kinds of mental illness disappear. All of us are mentally sick in different ways; believe it. A totally healthy body does not exist; the doctors know that there is not even a totally healthy mind, but it doesn't mean you are crazy; you are just normal, normally unhealthy. When you get this type of detached insight, your mind becomes very healthy.

To be really healthy means to have really clear understanding, there is no other way to become mentally healthy.

Some people with some sorts of mental depression, when they meditate and come to this stage; depression just disappears.

Again I remind you not to think too much, especially about dukkha. When you see anicca, you think about it, it is ok in a way, you see more and more anicca; it becomes more and more clear, you feel very convinced. When you see dukkha, you can

see that there is no satisfaction, there is nothing satisfactory; in a glimpse you understand it very clearly. But if start to think about it, you lose that detachment you get involved and that “dukkha thinking” makes you depressed again; with the help of some samādhi you can become very involved in it. Samādhi can be used in a good or bad way. It is very important not to think about dukkha.

*When seeing this phenomenon, the meditator can see
very clearly that there is no such thing as
permanent ego, permanent soul entity.*

Everything is always changing.

You see everything as process.

If you put it into a very concise category, you find only two categories. One is physical and one is mental; physical process and mental process; both of them arise and immediately pass away. Before we meditate we have some idea of things not lasting. My happiness of last year where is it? We can understand that happiness does not last. What about unhappiness? Unhappiness also doesn't last. Seeing, hearing... doesn't last. So it is quite obvious, but in meditation when there is a sound, which is a physical process, you hear it immediately and immediately you see it passing away. We also see the hearing consciousness which is mental process arising right now and immediately passing away. Seeing both, together arising and passing away it really convinces us, it is really anicca, it is really unsatisfactory,

dukkha; no control and it is really anatta, just a process. We can see it arising now and passing away now.

There is no hard core inside (*asārakaṭṭhena*). Anatta has many meanings. *Sāra* means something lasting in the middle. If you take a big tree and cut it in the middle you get this hard essence of the tree, that is also called *sāra*, the hard core, the essence something that lasts; *asāraka* means no essence, nothing lasting.

*What is anicca is dukkha also and
what is anicca and dukkha it is also anatta.
Because there is no control, it is also dukkha;
you see, dukkha is in the middle.
Because it is anicca it is dukkha,
because it is anatta it is dukkha again.
If we can wish for something
we won't see it as dukkha.*

There is another important word: *Udayabbaya-pīlana*. *Pīlana* means oppressing, hurting. *Udaya* means arising, *vaya* means passing away. This arising and passing away, it really is like a torture. When you think about it, it is very difficult to really understand it, but in your meditation you can see that things are arising and passing away repeatedly, it is a torture (*pīlana*), not giving any peace at all. You'll see this *udayabbaya-pīlana* also in the higher meditation insights, especially when you get to the highest, you can see even this mindfulness — it become so sharp

and clear — and you can see phenomena arising and passing away very quickly but also very accurately, and you can feel that even knowing this anicca becomes dukkha again. “I don’t want to know this anymore, I don’t want to see this anymore, this arising and passing away it is oppressive, it is torture.” Before we know this, when we hear something pleasant we think “oh, it is so nice, I like it” but when you get to this deep insight, to have to hear is dukkha. At one point we don’t want to hear anything anymore. We don’t want to see, we don’t want to hear anything anymore, to feel anything anymore and we don’t want even want to know anything anymore, enough of this knowing! But you cannot stop that. You still know one thing after another; phenomena are arising and passing away. You cannot run way from these phenomena, and there is no escape. You see these phenomena of arising and passing away it is such torture. But don’t think about it. When you see it you’ll understand it. I am just giving you a hint.

Sometimes you will see this consciousness also; we want to be happy, we want to make ourselves happy and when you see that thought coming in you can watch it and immediately it disappears.

You can see that even this thought arises and passes away.

How can this thought make anybody happy?

There is nobody there.

This thought itself is impermanent.

There are lot of thoughts coming in. When we see consciousness arising and passing away, we can see that it arises and it passes away without changing its nature, without changing its natural, unique characteristic. The meaning of this is that if any kind of desire or greed arises, it cannot change into another nature. Before it can change into another nature — it cannot change actually — it passes away as desire. Desire arises as desire and it passes away as desire only. In some books I read about mental states and consciousness and wisdom and they say that you can change your anger into love; that is impossible! You cannot change your anger into love, into mettā, you can't change dosa (hatred, aversion) into mettā; dosa arises and passes away as dosa.

*Loving kindness (mettā) arises as loving kindness
and passes away as loving kindness;
it cannot change its nature.*

Its unique, natural characteristic does not change.

*It only arises and passes away;
that is why it is impermanent (anicca).*

There is a lot of confusion even among meditators about this point; some people think that they can change one thing into another. In a definition of anicca they say that paramattha does not change. There is a Pāli sentence that says that paramattha does not change. Some people are confused about the meaning of this. If reality, paramattha does not change it means that it

is permanent. No, it doesn't change its nature, but it arises and passes away. Arising and passing away, impermanence and not changing nature does not contradict. This is a very important point especially for those who are potential teachers.

QUESTION &

ANSWER: That is a very good question, thank you for asking. What do we mean by hydrogen? By hydrogen we mean; we have a theoretical structure, a model of an atom with one neutron, one proton and one electron, but when we look at this hydrogen atom only, we can see that even this one atom is always changing, nothing can stay stable; it is always changing. Because it is always changing so fast it appears to be the same. If you look deeper into the structure of the hydrogen atom you'll find that even this electron is always gaining photons and giving away photons, always taking and giving away, receiving photons and giving away photons, so that the energy level of the electron is always changing. We can not think of electrons as a thing. I have studied physics for many years, and I am very interested in it. I remember one physicist, in whom I am very interested, Richard Feynman, who also was a Noble Prize winner, passed away very recently and was a member of NASA organizations, (I know other physicists have said the same). He said "an electron is not a thing, it is a theoretical model, there is only energy and energy is always changing". Look deeper

into the nucleus also and you'll find that the nucleus itself, these neutrons and protons are giving and taking energy all the time. Nothing can stay the same, but if we take the whole picture it seems as if it stays the same. If you look into the energy pattern you'll find that it is always changing. We cannot think of anything as a 'thing', the whole Universe is a process, not a thing. When we look at something as a thing, it seems as though it is not changing, but if you look at electron, neutron, proton as a process you can see that they are always changing. When they combine also they change. They even change their nature, their natural unique characteristic. The natural unique characteristic of hydrogen and the natural characteristic of oxygen are not the same, and when you combine the two you get a new quality and even that does not stay always the same.

In *vipassanā* we are talking about the quality only, we don't talk about 'a thing' because there is no such thing as a 'thing'. We can never talk about a 'thing' behind a quality. We can only think about it. The purpose of *vipassanā*: meditation is to become detached. We get attached to things and that is why we suffer. What do we get attached to? We get attached to things that we experience. We cannot get attached to things that we don't really experience. We get attached to sight, smell, and taste. Anything that is related to the 'I', we get attached to that as well. When we look at the direct experience in our daily life, we can see that no experience lasts. This is a very important point. We don't need to

see that nothing lasts, what we need to see is that no experience lasts. Experience is impermanent; can you agree on this point? That is the most important thing to know and other than experience what can we be really and definitely sure of? There is nothing else we can be sure of. Even in physics theories are being modified and changed. Physicists are not even sure about electrons. I was trained as an electrical engineer and I was thinking; “what is electricity?” and they said it is the electrons moving and then I said “what is an electron?” I have been looking deeper and deeper into these electrons and up to now I have not been able to find a real answer. This is still very interesting for me. In *vipassanā*, we are looking at direct experience, because that is what we get attached to.

What do we mean by ‘I’?

*These experiences put together and we call it ‘I’.
With no experience there is no ‘I’.*

When a wholesome mental state arises, the meditator can see it as a wholesome mental state and it passes away as a wholesome mental state, without changing its nature. Without changing its nature is a very important point. It means that unwholesome mental states do not become wholesome and wholesome mental states do not become unwholesome. In this stage of insight the meditator can see this very clearly, and profoundly.

*When you can see arising and passing away,
you can see that if any unhappy thought arises
in the mind it passes away.*

You don't need to do anything about it.

*Even when any kind of desire arises,
you can just watch it and it passes away.*

You don't have to do anything about it.

*You are not compelled to act upon that mental state;
you don't need to obey that mental state.*

You have a choice.

If you think that this is the right thing to do; do it. But you don't have to; otherwise we are compelled to do a lot of things.

*We are compelled, we have no choice,
we see something and we get greedy, we have no choice.
We hear something and we get upset, we have no choice.*

But when we can watch our mind we have a choice.

*We don't get greedy, we don't get upset;
we are free.*

This is a tremendous freedom.

In this stage there are many things important to keep in mind. One is, not to think too much. Look more closely at the passing away of the phenomena, because we have seen the arising and staying and passing away. At this point pay more attention to

disappearing. When it disappears there is a blank there and another thing arises, it disappears and there is a blank there, a gap.

*If you pay more attention to the passing away
of phenomena, you develop sharper awareness,
your observation becomes sharper.*

To make it sharper is very important.

If you think too much it becomes dull.

Also, choose suitable situations, conditions for your insight to become stronger. Your dwelling place is very important and food is very important. Eat the right kind of food and the right amount; if you sleep too much you lose your sharpness. You need a certain amount of sleep, at least four hours, a day, which is quite enough. Meditators can stay healthy just sleeping four hours a day. Not to look, to listen to unsuitable sensations. That means, if you really want to meditate don't watch television, don't read magazines or any other thing that disturbs your mind. Don't listen too much to news. Avoid talking; we cannot live without talking but especially in a serious meditation situation talk as little as possible, and only about dhamma. This will help you to develop sharper insight. Associate with people who are mindful, who are really honestly trying to be mindful. If you associate with somebody that does not really want to practice, just wants to talk about it, you lose your sharpness, and lose your intensity of mindfulness. Suitable temperature is very important as well. If you are

living in a very hot temperature, it is very difficult to develop deep samādhi and mindfulness and also if it is very cold, it is not suitable. Temperature should be within a comfortable range. Don't go to places which will disturb your meditation. You have to consider; "is this a proper place for me to go, a proper time for me to go?" Even though some places are proper to go, you have to consider the time also. If you go there in the middle of the night may be it is not proper. What you talk about and the people you associate with are very important. You have to adjust your posture as well. If say, you lie down for too long you lose your sharpness. Try to adjust all those things. Keep alert, keep awake and be balanced.

The meditator naturally finds out that if he stays mindful, right in the moment it helps him see things more clearly.

This is very obvious. If you keep your mind right in the moment, it stays there more and more and the mindfulness and clarity becomes stronger and stronger.

Sometimes when the person becomes a little bit lazy, [it happens], one has to motivate oneself. Self motivation is very important. If you have a good friend and a good teacher they can help you to put more energy into the practice. Self motivation is the most important thing. Think of the good opportunity you have to be able to meditate. I have met many people. Some of them my friends actually, I encouraged them to meditate, many times and they said "I am too busy, I am

working very hard, I have too many responsibilities, I just had a promotion just a few days ago and I am learning to cope with my new responsibilities I have no time”.

A person told me he had no time; he was a year older than me; he died five or six years ago. I repeatedly told him to “meditate, meditate, while you have time”, he always said that he was too busy, no time. One day he realized that he had become very tired; no energy. He went to the hospital to get a medical check up and found out that he had kidney cancer. He had an operation, a kidney was removed and he took long sick leave and took robes and he tried to meditate for about a month and felt a bit better, maybe because of the operation and the medicine and probably meditation. He went back to work; he felt that his cancer had been cured. He got very busy again and no time to meditate. After a couple of years he became sick again, went for a medical check up and found out that the other kidney had cancer, and he was hospitalized. I went to visit him in the hospital twice a week, sometimes once and encourage him to meditate; do you know what he did even in the hospital? He would just lie down and watch television. Poor guy; he became more and more sick and I told him to meditate. Sometimes I sat next to him and said “let’s meditate now”. Gave him very simple instructions, he tried to meditate and said that he was feeling very happy and peaceful in that moment, I said “I am going now; try to meditate a few times a day”. After that I asked his wife whether he meditated she said that he didn’t, he just watched TV. He got more and

more sick. I went to visit him again and again and then he said "I want to meditate, I want to meditate" but he was taking so many different kinds of medicine and they made him very dull, drowsy, cannot keep himself alert. He said "I try to meditate but I fall asleep". Just before he died I went to see him again and he said "it is a little bit too late for me to meditate" ... too late! This is very important, you know....

A few weeks ago a man came here, late in the night, he rang my bell. I thought it was something important if somebody comes at this hour. I saw two men, I opened the door and I asked them why they came and one of them said "this person is a newcomer here and he wants to know something about meditation". I thought, all right, if he really wants to learn I am willing to teach him. We came and sat here in this hall. I talked to him and I gave him some meditation instructions. He said "my mind is so agitated I cannot sit". I told him walk up and down here, walking is easier, take each step mindfully. I asked him "what are you thinking?" He said "I am thinking of tomorrow"; what are you thinking about tomorrow. He said that he had a Court case and he had to go there. He was very agitated, and he came in the night to meditate, isn't that too late?

*Before anything like that happens, meditate;
train your mind to be peaceful,
to have a very clear understanding,
to have some sort of detachment.*

*Then even though things like that happen in your life,
you'll be able to cope with them;
you can improve things also in some cases.*

So it is very important to motivate yourself, “I am healthy now, and if I want to I can find time”. It depends on you; if you are willing you can find time. If you are not willing you can find hundreds of excuses. Sometimes even in meditation you become a little bit tired. You are meditating, you are willing to meditate but your body becomes a little bit tired. In that case try to take a rest but don't let go of your mindfulness, don't indulge in sleeping!

Another very important point especially for teachers in meditation, different teachers have different ideas and sometimes a lot of arguments, this is right... no that's wrong and so on.

One argument is that; in Pāli it is “*lakkhaṇam āropetvā*” ~Vsm 607; *lakkhaṇam* means anicca, dukkha, anatta. *Āropetvā* means to put it on top. So some people think that this means you have to think about it. You see phenomena, mental or physical and you think about it, this is anicca, this is dukkha, this is anatta, and some people think that this is the proper way to do it. What is meant by “*lakkhaṇam āropetvā*” first is that in order to put something on top, you must have something already there. So what have you already there? You have already developed nāma-rūpa-pariccheda-ñāṇa, seeing mental and physical phenomena, seeing that they arise

because they have conditions for them to arise, and *on top of that*, later you develop deeper insight and see this mental and physical process as anicca, dukkha and anatta, all three. That does not mean that you think about it. It means to look more deeply and find that out, not to think about it. When you get to that stage it is so good to think about it, thinking becomes so clear and precise. In walking meditation at this stage one can feel that every movement disappears. You see movement as segments of movements, not just one movement. The consciousness, this mindfulness is taking notice of this movement and each time it takes notice of one movement it disappears. When you move your hands, you can see many small segments of the movement disappearing. When walking, you try to move, watch it and it disappears. I want to remind you again and again that it is the movement that disappears, not the shape. Movement itself has no shape. Movement disappears, sensations disappear, when you move something there is some sensation happening there, looseness, tightness, sensations disappear. You move a bit more and sensation disappears. Movement itself is a kind of sensation.

When you eat also, you bring the food to your mind; every sensation in the movement disappears. When you hear something, hearing disappears. For example you ring the bell and can hear many sounds disappearing, not just one sound. Things become segmented, discrete, no continuity, nothing is continuous. Very surprisingly also, at this

stage, when you drink a glass of water, you take a glass of water, drink it, if it is a glass of juice you can feel it better, and watch what happens; it goes down to the stomach, you can feel it going down. You can feel the sensation there, and after a few minutes you can feel it all over the body the effect of that glass of water or juice. You can feel it going into every cell of your body, you can feel it changing, you can see that every moment energy changes. Every time you eat, you can see the effect of the food; when the weather changes you can feel the body changing. By body I don't mean the shape but the sensation. Even with thoughts, when you think one thought you can see that it affects the whole body, every cell in your body participates with the thought. Body and mind participate, they work together; we can never separate body and mind. Every thought affects every cell in your body and you can feel it, it is not just a thinking theory. It is very interesting, very deep and profound. When you get to that depth of seeing and understanding, you'll find it very difficult to find a good book to read. You'll find that many of the books written are just thoughts. If you can become so sensitive up to the level that every thought affects your body, you'll be very weary of thoughts. You'll not let them come in. You'll be more mindful and there will be less and less negative thoughts. If you become more and more mindful, you won't indulge too much in thinking.

Sometimes we indulge in thinking too much. I have a friend who is always angry and upset, not satisfied with

something or another, with somebody or another. I asked her many times, “why are you making yourself so angry all the time? Do you know that you are doing it?” She said “yes I know I am making it”. “Why are you doing that?” She said “when I get angry I have more energy, when I don’t get angry I feel depressed”. Blaming another person and feeling smarter, she is actually very intelligent and that is her problem, because she is so intelligent she thinks she is smarter and that she can see everything wrong. Her idea is if you don’t see that something is wrong, you are stupid. She is very smart but she is always unhappy. What is better to be smart or to be happy? You have a choice, so, don’t be so smart.

*Don’t look for something wrong all the time.
It is very important when you can see it, you know,
it is not worth getting upset about anything at all.
Maybe somebody is really wrong, really evil, but what is
the point of making yourself unhappy about it.*

This technique explains and emphasizes how the mind affects the body. How matter affects your body, how mindfulness affects your body, you can see when you are unmindful and when you are mindful. Suddenly you become mindful again, you can feel your body and mind becoming more relaxed, more subtle, less agitated, you can really feel it and you realize that it is better to be mindful than not.

There is no better way to live!

The best way to live is to be mindful always.

*As soon as you become unmindful your body and mind
become more agitated, more stressed.*

The person sees that when something passes away it does not go anywhere, it is not collected somewhere.

Things arise and pass away, where do they go?

Nowhere, it just disappears.

Where are things before they arise?

They are nowhere.

They come from nowhere and they go to nowhere.

This is also very profound. When you see it yourself then you can see the profundity of this. Any mind moment, any phenomena, not the shape but the sensation, the experience, comes from nowhere and goes nowhere. Before you experience something where is that experience? It is nowhere. After you have experienced something where does that experience go? Nowhere! Here we are talking about direct experience of the phenomena, not any abstract thing, but real direct experience. A sound is an experience, hearing is an experience, touching is an experience, movement is an experience, all these experiences arise now and they pass away now.

*Anidhānagatā bhaggā puñjo n' atthi anāgate,
Nibbattā ye pi tiṭṭhanti āragge sāsapūpamā.*

~Vsm 625

They don't come from anywhere, they don't go anywhere. So *Anidhānagatā bhaggā*: this means; when they pass away they don't go and stay anywhere, they are not collected anywhere.

puñjo n' atthi anāgate: Before they come they are not in a storehouse anywhere.

Nibbattā ye pi tiṭṭhanti: When it happens it does not stay.

āragge sāsapūpamā: Like you put a mustard seed on the top of a needle; how long will that stay? It will fall off immediately.

There are many *gāthā* like this, very beautiful and profound but they all mean the same. Even *kamma* arises and passes away. There is a kind of energy which is very difficult to talk about. Even this energy it is not a thing, it is always in a flux. It will take sometime to talk about this. Somebody asked me the same question a few days ago. For example, now we have this computer disk, you can put a lot in a computer disk, sound and images. When you put words, sounds or images in the computer, actually in that disk there is no sound. Even in cassettes there is not any sound there. The best way we can explain it is that there is some sort of magnetic coding there. We change sound into electricity and

electricity into magnetic coding. Put magnetic coding there and if you look into this computer disk there are only two signals there, two messages, yes and no, on and off, only two and by combining these two you can make anything in the computer. In the computer disk there are only different combinations of on-off, off-on and what is the material that the computer disk is made of? Maybe it is a kind of plastic base and on top of it very fine magnetized iron coating. I am not exactly sure about that but it must be something made from iron compound, and if you look into this iron compound again it is atoms and if you look deeper into atoms you'll find that electrons etcetera are always changing. But even though these computer disk atoms are always changing, it still maintains some sort of continuity, and you can retrieve the data.

It is very difficult to talk about kamma. That's why the Buddha said the most difficult thing to talk about is kamma. In Saṃsāra, also we talk about no being, so how come, people are going through the saṃsāra process? You say there are no people and yet you say that people are going through Saṃsāra? I want to discuss this as a separate issue; it is a very interesting topic. However in this stage the person sees mental and physical process, both of them arising and passing away, not just one. Noticing the sensations and the awareness, both passing away this is called 'dual method of observing'; this is observing this dual process. In the beginning the meditator feels that 'I am meditating'. It is a very

real feeling. "I am sitting here meditating and trying very hard", but as the insight develops deeper and deeper he starts to see that even this consciousness that I call meditation (what is meditation? It is a consciousness; an awareness), this awareness is momentary; sometimes it is there sometimes it is not there. Meditation is not something long and big. It is moment by moment consciousness. Seeing that even this awareness is anicca, dukkha and anatta, there is no 'I' meditating, and only then the person develops real insight of anatta. Previously he can see the object arising and passing away. Other thoughts arise and pass away but not this awareness, not this meditating consciousness.

Who is meditating?

*It is consciousness, a series of consciousnesses.
Then seeing that there is only a series of mindfulness,
a series of meditating consciousness,
not a being, not 'I';
that seeing completes the understanding of anatta,
otherwise it is not complete.
To get to this point it is very important.*

Only when a person gets to this point can he develop a peeling off of wrong view, really peeling off wrong view, I am not meditating, what I call meditating it is only a series of consciousnesses, awareness. Unless a person gets to this point, he cannot develop to the next point.

I expected to finish two insights today, but I could not finish even one. I want to give you a very clear basic understanding because if you don't understand the basics there is no point talking about higher states. Once you understand this completely the rest is quite easy. That is why I told you that I will talk about four insights very deeply and the rest I can make it very short. It is not difficult anymore, just a variation on the theme. The first four are the most important.

Another point is that meditators become very proud of their meditation development, insights, "I know, I understand, and those other people they don't know as much as I do", it is a kind of conceit.

Watch that mind "I know I can meditate, I am a good meditator, and I can keep my mind on the same object continuously for a long time", which is a kind of pride or satisfaction also. Pride and satisfaction come together. When that kind of thought comes, take the opportunity to watch it. If you can see it you can overcome it and become even freer. Even that 'I', 'I know', 'I can', it limits you, it confines you. If you really want to become more and more free watch that thought. It will definitely come.

In any kind of accomplishment that we take pride in, and we think that we are better, this is 'I'. In some cases this taking pride is very sticky. That is why *māna* (conceit), can only be totally eradicated by the fourth stage of enlightenment;

by only by an Arahant. Māna is comparison. You compare yourself with another person, 'I am a better meditator, I can, I know', see that thought arising; if you can see it coming and passing away the identification with that thought will go away slowly and gradually. We identify with everything happening. This identification it is called māna or *ditthi* (false view). When you are meditating continuously if you can overcome these things, it makes it easier to go through otherwise it becomes a kind of obstruction, a hindrance.

Another thing is attachment.

We get attached to good sittings good experiences.

We get attached to the very clear seeing.

It is so nice to see clearly and once you experience this clear seeing and you lose it you feel very frustrated because seeing clearly gives you tremendous satisfaction, not seeing clearly it is very frustrating. We get attached to this clarity; this is a kind of lobha, (greed, and desire). Any kind of attachment, watch that thought, getting attached to this clear seeing, good meditation experience.

I will stop here for today, next week I'll talk about only one insight. It is better to be patient and to go in detail slowly, in the first four stages of insights. If you have any questions, if you are not clear about any point please ask.

QUESTION &

ANSWER: Paramattha does not lose or change its inherent quality, characteristic. Example: heat changing into cold. It is not possible; heat arises and passes away as heat. Hardness can not change into softness, although they are in the same continuum, it cannot arise as one thing and change into another. When another thing arises it is something new. All the conditioned phenomena are always new. They arise and pass away without losing their inherent characteristic. Things arise and pass away in such short duration that there is no time to change into another.



seven

Fourth Insight

*Experiencing the Arising and
Passing Away of Phenomena &
Discerning What is the Path and
What is Not the Path*

Today I would like to start by talking about the fourth insight, Udayabbaya-ñāṇa the insight into the arising and passing away of phenomena. In the third insight, when you are meditating you see all the three characteristics of natural phenomena, *anicca* (impermanence), *dukkha* (unsatisfactoriness) and *anatta* (not being in control). They arise because there is a cause for them to arise, pass away because it is their nature to pass away. We cannot wish that something should not arise or pass away. No permanent entity, no hard lasting core, no entity, no soul; everything is a process; this is the unique aspect of the Buddha-Dhamma. In some ways, people want to believe that there might be something lasting, something that does not change and exists for ever. In the all teaching of the Buddha, there is no such thing as a ‘thing’; only process. When we talk about a ‘thing’ try to understand what we mean by it.

*The word thing has got many meanings.
There is ‘no thing’, there is only process.
This is something very deep and important.*

This is where the Buddha-Dhamma becomes very different from other spiritual ideas and other teachings.

In some other teachings you hear about impermanence in some ways and you hear about unsatisfactoriness also. When they talk about impermanence, they talk about impermanence of shape or form. For example: you break a glass into pieces, and people say, “oh, it is impermanent”, but was it permanent before it broke? No. Even before it broke it was impermanent.

Impermanence is happening all the time, imperceptible.

When we think of a shape, as long as the shape is the same, we think of it as permanent. In the teachings of the Buddha, impermanence is not impermanence of shape, but impermanence of the qualities, heat, cold, hardness, softness etc. these are always changing.

So in the third insight we see all three characteristics in a general way. And the same characteristics, anicca, dukkha, anatta will become deeper and deeper as we develop higher insights. The fourth insight is called *Udayabbaya-ñāṇa*. *Udaya* means to arise and *vaya* means to pass away, to disappear. Another way of defining anicca is “*hutvā abhāvaṭṭhena aniccā*” (Vsm. 628). *Hutvā* means ‘having come into being’; that means happening, arising. *Abhāva* means not existing anymore. So in this insight impermanence doesn’t mean existing in a different

form. Impermanence means totally disappearing. This where people get very confused, they misunderstand that.

*Changing is one aspect of impermanence
(in a general way).*

*But the real impermanence means
it does not exist anymore.*

As long as we have the idea of something changing, but still existing in some form, we are still clinging to the idea of something lasting. Although it is a little bit different from what it was before we still think that it is the same; therefore anicca really means ‘not existing anymore’.

In this insight the meditator has developed very strong concentration, very strong mindfulness and very little thinking is happening. Once in a while you think about the phenomena, not anything else. At this stage, the meditator has almost stopped thinking about other things. But occasionally he thinks about the meditation practice and experiences. Before reaching this stage the meditator has a lot of concern about whether he is doing right or not. Is this *nāma*? Is this *rūpa*? Is this anicca? Is this dukkha unsatisfactoriness or not? This kind of wavering is still going on. But when one gets to this stage all this has gone. Meditation becomes very natural and goes on without very much effort, which is why the mind has become so balanced. It has this *upekkhā*; very strong equanimity develops. This equanimity has many characteristics and aspects; one of these is no

terror or delight. Delight is a kind of *lobha*, liking. No excitement, neither happy nor unhappy. The mind has become very calm and balanced.

Meditation has become automatic, not much effort necessary. The mind stays there most of the time. Once in a while the mind wanders. When the meditator notices it, that is enough to bring it back, no need to struggle. Before this stage the mind just wants to wander and think about something else. You bring it back and in a few seconds it has gone again. It is a struggle; we are fighting with our own mind. But after a while the mind settles down and stays there; we are not fighting with our thoughts anymore. Energy also becomes balanced. Before this stage we don't have enough energy and not much interest. But at this stage, energy is balanced and we have enough of it. Before this, we tried too hard, we put in too much effort and the mind becomes irritated. Too much effort and energy causes agitation; too little effort and energy cause sluggishness and laziness. At this stage there is balance in energy, just enough to maintain awareness to keep the meditation going. One can do long sittings without difficulty, because at this stage there is no restlessness in the mind. In most cases when the person cannot sit still it is an indication of restlessness, not just pain in the body. Pain in the body comes and goes even at this stage, but because the mind is settled there is no restlessness, there is no desire to do anything else. The mind just stays with the meditation, watching everything arising and passing away right on the spot, on the moment. The object of meditation also becomes more and

more refined; it appears very fine and very subtle. Before this, very gross sensation and thoughts appear but now the sensation becomes very fine. Thoughts also become very slow, fine and subtle.

So there are six qualities of the mind here: no terror, no delight; no liking, no disliking; neither happy nor unhappy (which means not excited about anything); meditation becomes automatic, energy becomes balanced, sitting for a long time without difficulty; the object of meditation become very refined and subtle and no distraction. There are many kinds of upekkhā (equanimity). This is called the upekkhā with six qualities.

So the definition of this insight is:

*Paccuppannānam dhammānam viparināmānu-passane
paññā udayabbayānu-passane ñānam.* ~Pts i.57

This word *paccuppanna* is very important. It means present, at present. To see mental and physical process right now, not thinking of what happened before. Some people think that if you think about the past and see that all that has been happening in the past has gone, they feel that they understand anicca. But this is not real wisdom, real insight into impermanence.

*Real insight into anicca
has to happen in the present,
in what is happening now!*

So *paccuppannānam* means happening now. *Dhammānam* (dhamma has many meanings) here it means mental and physical process. So seeing the disappearance (*viparināmānu-passane*) of those dhamma that are happening right now (*paccuppannānam dhammānam*) and understanding it truly (*paññā*) is called *udayabbaya-ñāna* or *Udayabbaya-ñāna*, the insight of impermanence.

So at this stage whenever the meditator pays attention or notices something arising, the arising becomes very clear and it disappears immediately.

*The noticing is very sharp and clear,
clearly seeing arising and clearly seeing passing away,
immediately arising, immediately passing away.*

*The meditator can see that it arises here and
passes away here without becoming otherwise.*

*Jātam rūpam paccuppannam, tassa nibbattilakkhaṇam
udayo viparināmalakkhaṇam vayo ~Pts 54*

The characteristics of arising (*nibbattilakkhaṇam*) of that rūpa happening now (*Jātam rūpam paccuppannam tassa*) is called *udayo*; its characteristics of disappearing is called *vayo*. The two (*udayo and vayo*) together makes the word Udayabbaya.

There are many kinds of *paccuppanna* (present) actually (Vsm. 431). One is called *santati-paccuppannam*, taking things as a group. For example if we listen to this sound (bell ringing)... it takes a

few seconds to disappear. The first sound we hear “tooong!” then slowly it disappear. If we take it as a whole, it takes a few seconds, this is called *santati*; *santati* means a series, taking the whole series as one. So this is a very gross understanding of anicca. But if you pay more attention to the sound, you will hear the ringing, many small rings, one after another arising but each one is weaker and weaker; new sound arising each moment. Every second, many sounds arise, many sounds pass away. And if you can think theoretically, you can see that the vibrations happen about a thousand times a second, very short, very quick. *Khana-pac-cuppanna* is very short. But the material and mental phenomena, they arise and pass away so fast that we cannot really experience or see as quickly as that. Buddha said that physical process arises and passes away in a number of one thousand billion per second. Arising and passing away one thousand billion per second! To experience that much is impossible for an ordinary person. With mental process it is about twice faster. However if in one second we can experience about ten anicca, we can be satisfied that we have understood it. Normally we can see about two in a second, but when we become very concentrated and calm, time stretches out, one second can become a long time. Sometimes meditators feel like they have been sitting for an hour but when they see the clock they realize that it is only five minutes. Sometimes in another stage of meditation, you have been sitting three or four hours but you have the feeling that you have been sitting for an hour only.

*Time becomes very unreal;
it can stretch out as your mindfulness becomes
very quick and sharp. Sometimes when you get into deep
samādhi time disappears. Distortion of time starts
to happen at the beginning of this stage.*

At this stage, when you experience something and because you have the habit of sometimes thinking and noting using the name, you try to name it, but the moment you try to name it, it is not there anymore. So you feel that you cannot name things anymore, you can just see them; watch them without thinking, without doing anything. To the beginner, the teacher teaches to note everything: hearing, thinking, etc. When you get at this stage the moment you try to note, it is not there anymore. So you cannot note anymore, you give up the noting and you stay aware, looking deeply.

*At this stage, you are just looking, seeing;
no noting anything as you cannot note anymore,
because noting is very slow and seeing is very fast.*

At this stage, meditators sometimes experience very bright lights (*obhāsa*) which are the sign of a very concentrated mind. These bright lights could have different shapes and different colour. Sometimes a very bright star appears and quickly passes away, sometimes it appears from one side and it moves across and the meditator gets very interested. Sometimes he sees that bright

light moving, getting bigger like a moon. In samatha meditation this kind of light can be experienced also. It is a sign of concentration and of energy in the mind.

Sometimes time appears to go very fast which means that your mind is working very fast. In between the mental processes, always at the end of the process there is a gap which is called *bhavaṅga*. When a person has too many *bhavaṅga*, there is a big gap. In one second for example if a person has many gaps in between, then in one second he can only experience a few things. If there are fewer gaps then he experiences more. When you experience more things it feels like time becomes slow. If you have studied quantum and relativity you'll understand it more easily.

*When the mind works faster
you feel like time has slowed down, this is very real.*

*In another stage (of meditation) when
the mind goes beyond time and beyond phenomena,
at that moment you don't see arising and passing away,
for you time does not exist, timeless.
There is a kind of state where time becomes non existent.*

Another aspect of this stage is that wisdom (*ñāṇa*) becomes very clear, seeing mental process just as a pure mental process, not a being. You don't think about it, you just see it happening, it's just a process, not a being. Whenever you experience a physical process you see the same thing very clearly, without any doubt, without any thinking. You see it as just a natural process

and you see arising and passing away very clearly, without effort, it is so simple and natural. Very clear sharp knowledge, clear wisdom, it is amazing. One is surprised that it is possible to see it so clearly. Mostly, we are very dull and cloudy, very confused, we don't see anything clearly. But at this stage of meditation without thinking, when we pay attention to something we see it very clearly as it is. We feel very happy and satisfied sometimes.

Pīti, a lot of joy and interest, sometimes rapture arises all over the body. The mind becomes so still that thinking stops, observing becomes very clear and insight knowledge becomes very sharp and clear. In that moment a kind of joy arises. But too much joy makes the mind too agitated and this can become an impurity. That is why these states are called *vipassanupakkilesā*, the impurities of insight. By themselves they are not impurities. If we pay attention and don't become attached to them, we don't become proud of those states, and we don't have any wrong understanding of these experiences then they just arise and pass away, just phenomena.

But if we become attached to these states and become proud of them, sometimes these states can be misinterpreted for Nibbāna; then it becomes an impurity, wrong understanding.

Then *passaddhi*, tranquility; body and mind become very cool, real cool, so much so that you feel like you are sitting in an air conditioned room, and sometimes you can feel drops of cool

water on the body, even the body temperature can go down. In my monastery I have thermometer, blood pressure and blood pulse counter. So sometimes I just strap myself with these things and try to measure the blood pressure, pulse and temperature, and really the temperature, pulse and pressure go down, which shows that the body metabolism slows down. Only the mind is very active but not with thinking.

That shows that thinking uses more energy.

Worry also uses a lot of energy. If you don't think and don't worry, the mind becomes very sharp using the minimum amount of energy.

Sukkha, happiness, bliss are also experienced, as in that moment the mind is not attached or thinking about anything, it feels very free and happy. This is like a paradox. How can a person feel so happy seeing everything is arising and passing away immediately?

You feel happy because you are totally detached.

Detachment brings real happiness.

Attachment is a burden.

Most people mainly feel that when they get what they want then they feel happy.

Real happiness is, not wanting anything.

This is very hard to understand. If we don't practice meditation and just think about it, we would not believe it. At this stage you don't want anything at all. No desire for anything more than the bare necessities.

There is *adhimokkha*, a deep confidence, resolution. At this stage the meditator has really deep confidence in the Dhamma.

Really this is true.

*This practice really leads to
deep understanding and freedom.
You have no doubt about it anymore;
total overcoming of doubt.*

Then *paggaha*; you experience a lot of energy and you don't feel lazy anymore. The body does not feel heavy anymore. You want to keep meditating, no fatigue anymore, and no sleepiness. Some people don't sleep at all, and they can meditate all day and night. When you lie down to sleep, don't plan to sleep, but be mindful as much as possible and when you fall asleep it is ok. Your body needs to sleep. After a few hours when you wake up, you feel ready to meditate and you don't feel sleepy anymore.

Upatthānam, awareness, mindfulness is very sharp, very strong. Mindfulness and concentration although they are in a way similar they are different. When you are concentrated your mind stays on one thing, but you don't really see sharply the arising and passing away. When you are very mindful, you see arising and passing away very sharply, and stay on the process. Samatha meditation

gives you deep concentration but does not give you clear knowledge, clear insight. When the mind becomes very mindful, concentration also grows. When the mind becomes more and more concentrated the mind stays on one object only for a long time. When it becomes even more concentrated it becomes only barely aware of the object and stays there. Sometimes you lose awareness, but the mind does not become distracted. The mind is very still and calm and still very aware of the object. In that case, if you know that this is happening try to develop more awareness by noticing another phenomenon. If you take two phenomena you can keep more alert and become more mindful.

When mindfulness becomes very strong, you can be aware of a lot of things happening at the same time, you are not trying to notice one or two objects anymore, you are not trying to notice anything, you are not selecting the object, you are just aware. When you are aware and there, you see everything coming and hitting (touching) that awareness, objects are coming and hitting awareness. But when too many objects are coming and awareness cannot handle those things very well, the mind becomes agitated. When you experience the mind losing clarity, try to limit the objects, calm down and pay attention to one or two objects. You need to adjust a little bit.

In the beginning we tried to pay attention to one object and the mind wandered away. We noticed that wandering mind, brought it back and put it on another object again. We had to work very hard. Now at this stage the mind stays there, it is always present.

*Sometimes you feel that awareness is like a mirror,
and everything that passes in front of it is reflected,
automatically you aware of it.*

You have no worry about being mindful.

Sati (mindfulness) and *sampajañña* (comprehension) is very strong at this stage but even before this also. Here it means mindfulness is present and ready all the time. You are not selecting any object anymore. Mindfulness is there and it is automatically aware of whatever is arising and passing in the moment. Meditation becomes very easy.

Another thing, actually the most important is *nikanti*, attachment. All the above nine experiences happen more or less to every meditator. This is the sign that the mind is becoming more and more concentrated, more and more aware. That's why you experience light sometimes, sometimes very sharp insight, sometimes a lot of joy, tranquility, happiness, bliss, a lot of confidence, energy, etc. These are all very good. There is nothing wrong with it, but if you get attached to any one of these, it becomes impurity. Light itself is not impurity. Clear insight is not impurity. They are pure, very good. But only when you become attached to them, they become impure.

*Sometimes when you get attached to this clear,
sharp seeing, you become proud of it and
you want that experience again.*

That wanting is nikanti and it is an impurity.

Any of the following experiences can cause attachment, *taṇhā* (craving), *māna* (pride), *dīṭṭhi* (misinterpretation or wrong understanding). When we see bright clear lights, sometimes it is a diffused light with no shape, we feel very bright in the mind and because the mind is so alert we experience brightness. Some people misinterpret this for enlightenment. “Now I am enlightened, my mind is so clear, so peaceful, calm and free” the insight is so sharp, it couldn’t be any better. If we interpret it that way this is ‘wrong understanding’, *taṇhā*, *māna* or *dīṭṭhi* arising, these are impurities. There are ten impurities of *vipassanā*; the first nine are not impurities in themselves, only the tenth one is. Please understand this. Because even in *upekkhā* (equanimity) we become so balanced that we don’t have to try and meditate. Meditation just happens. Sometimes we think that we don’t need to do anything, but just relax. If you do that in the beginning, it feels very good; you don’t have to try, so relaxed, peaceful and calm, so free. But after a while the mind loses energy, it becomes dull and sleepy and it loses sharpness and awareness and after a while you lose concentration. Whenever you experience this, it is important to remind yourself that in itself this is not impurity. Only attachment, pride or wrong understanding is impurity.

The bright lights can happen in samatha meditation, through just pure concentration, and they can also happen because of *vipassanā* insight; the understanding becomes so clear and sharp that you feel very bright inside. In fact, we experience these things from the very beginning in *vipassanā*. Even in the first insight when the mind becomes quiet and clear, mindfulness

and samādhi become quite strong, sometimes we begin to experience light or pīti, joy, interest also, however at this stage it becomes so strong that, some people depending on their personality see different images like Buddha images, peaceful scenes.

As I myself like beautiful scenes in nature, I love nature, I tend to see mostly those, mountains, lakes, and sometimes the surface of the lake is as clear as a mirror. Depending on people's personalities, images like those appear in the mind, so sharp and vivid, as if you are there looking at it. In some cases you can interpret this, but interpretation is not important. You can interpret your personality also. A person, whose basic nature is aversion, will see terrible images like dead bodies, ugly faces. A person who has a lot of saddha, confidence might see a lot of beautiful Buddha images; sometimes live Buddhas, real, walking, moving and doing things. You are not really seeing the real Buddha, your mind creates it.

*When you see things, no matter what,
just note or notice them, don't interpret anything,
because when you interpret you think.*

*When you think you lose awareness, concentration,
mindfulness will go down.*

When you experience these lights you feel very light too. You think because I am experiencing enlightenment these lights are appearing, that is a misunderstanding because the person feels very happy and delighted a kind of greed arises.

Sometimes, thoughts arise as well, we see phenomena the way it is arising and passing away and we begin to think, oh... this is really impermanent. Even though we are thinking, awareness is still very sharp and we think 'my understanding is very sharp'. You identify with understanding. It becomes my understanding, my wisdom, my insight, and this "my" is impurity. The insight is not impurity, but the "my" becomes impurity.

Very strong rapture might arise; it can go through the whole body, or just part of the body, like waves. Sometimes you feel like your body is floating up, or that there is no weight anymore, or the whole body disappears, only the mind, the awareness is there. The person might become unconscious and not aware of anything anymore. In some cases people feel that because all the mental and physical phenomena stop and disappear this is enlightenment. One aspect of enlightenment is cessation of mental and physical phenomena, but at this stage it is not real enlightenment. For a brief moment the mind just stops, there is a kind of blank there, but immediately you become aware again and see that there was a gap.

*The difference between this and
enlightenment is that after you see this gap,
your sharpness and clarity stays the same,
you see the same phenomena
in the same way again.*

After the real enlightenment when it happens, the mind slows down a little bit, it is not as sharp as it was. Although mindfulness and concentration are still there, the mind is not sharp and fast anymore. So this blank is not real enlightenment.

Sometimes the tranquility also becomes very strong, mind and body become very tranquil and then it becomes unconscious, for a very brief moment only. Sometimes samādhi becomes very deep and the object of meditation becomes very dim and it disappears, and the mind becomes blank, unaware. The body stays the same, very calm, not moving or falling down. When you become sleepy the body falls down. But with this kind of samādhi, the body does not fall down, even though for a few moments you fall asleep. Sometimes because of upekkhā, equanimity, you don't worry about meditation anymore. In the beginning you worry a lot, "am I being mindful, is my mind here, is my mind wandering?" There are a lot of thoughts and worries about meditation, but at this stage, no thoughts or worries about meditation.

The mind becomes very tranquil and relaxed, and relaxed, and after a while it becomes unconscious. When you become too relaxed you become unconscious. Sometimes it is just real sleep! This sleep is very different from normal sleep. Normally when you sleep your body cannot maintain a sitting posture, it becomes very limp. When you meditate the mind can become very calm and peaceful and concentration becomes very strong, when you fall asleep your body does not become limp, it maintains posture. When you wake up your mind is still very clear,

you don't have any drowsiness. You are ready to meditate again. A lot of people that I know, and sometimes I have experienced it myself, after sitting for many hours a day just fall asleep, sometimes for a long time. When waking up the mind is very refreshed, alert and clear and automatically the moment you wake up, you begin to meditate again. Normally when people wake up they don't really know that they are awake. Vague dreams-thoughts happen for a long time and one slowly wakes up; but for a meditator as soon as he wakes up, with the first consciousness meditation is together; he's ready to meditate. It is a very good thing.

Surprisingly at this stage some people meditate in their dreams. Have you ever heard of it? Can you meditate in your dreams? As a way of testing me, my teacher often asked me "do you meditate in your dreams?" I said "not yet", he said "ok try to be more mindful, more mindful, meditate more". I try to meditate and meditate, and once I meditated in my dream and I was so happy because I had something to tell to my teacher. We want to please our teacher and we also want our teacher to think very well of us. So I went to his place and waited for a while and when he came out I said "I have something to tell you". I was very young, very childish in some ways, very immature too, but I was very happy, so I told him. He sat and listened very pleased, smiling, saying very good, your mindfulness is becoming stronger.

*So, we can meditate unconsciously even,
it becomes a habit. In dreams we dream of
what we have done during the day.*

A doctor would dream of events such as operating, giving treatment, injections, advice. People working in department stores in their dreams they might dream of selling things. A student studying for an exam, many times I dreamed of having exam, it was terrible, something missing, I can't answer my question! It is quite natural to dream about things that we are used to doing. So, meditating in your dreams is a sign that indicates that meditation is becoming a habit. The moment you wake up you are ready to meditate. After a while, you don't dream much anymore, very rarely you dream, you fall asleep and when you awake up you are ready to meditate; in between no dreams.

An Arahant does not dream anymore.

*Dreaming is a sign that there is some sort of moha,
something unconscious happening; moha has many
meanings; stupidity, confusion and delusion are some.*

For an Arahant there is nothing unconscious.

Conscious and unconscious become one.

*Most people are more unconsciousness than
consciousness; a lot of unconscious thoughts going on
even while we're awake; but for a meditator those
thoughts become conscious.*

In that way a meditator can change the unconscious mind, which is a very strange idea for most psychologists. That is how this meditation influences people's personality. There is no other way as effective as meditation to do this. A lot of mental sicknesses, neurosis, just disappear; you don't have to do anything about it. This is really a good way to develop good qualities, to overcome bad habits. A lot of people at this stage, they even quit smoking. Smoking is not really breaking any of the precepts, but a lot of people give it up. They even give up drinking too much coffee or tea. Any kind of attachment or addiction is given up. Actually you don't even try to give it up, but you don't feel like doing it anymore. A lot of people that I know, some of them are friends of mine and they used to be alcoholics, smoke a lot of cigarettes, they just gave up.

At this stage also, many kind of bodily sickness disappear, not only mental, but real bodily sickness disappear also. Tranquility, and pīti (joy, rapture) which are very close, have tremendous therapeutic powers. That is why you hear of people overcoming diseases after they meditate. A lot of phobias, insomnia, also are overcome. When there is a lot of tranquility, passaddhi, people don't want to go to places that are very noisy and crowded. They try to avoid unnecessary activities, disturbances. They want to just go away and live in a very quiet and peaceful place and just meditate.

At this stage, even when you walk you feel like your body has no weight. You think of taking a step and the leg is already moving. You are aware of it but you don't feel the weight. One

step after the other, you feel like you are walking in the air, your feet just barely touching the ground, you feel the touching sensation but you don't feel the weight, and you can walk very fast; you feel like running. No aches, pains, or feeling hot. The mind is not distracted. Here is a gāthā from the Dhammapada, a very good one:

*Suññāgāram paviṭṭhassa, santacittassa bhikkhuno,
Amānusī ratī hoti, sammā dhammām vipassato.*

~Dhp 373

A person meditates in a very quiet place (*suññāgāram paviṭṭhassa, santacittassa bhikkhuno*). He experiences happiness and joy beyond that of a normal man (*amānusī ratī hoti*); because he experiences the Dhamma (*sammā dhammām vipassato*).

*Yato yato sammasati, khandhānam udayabbayam,
Labhati pīti pāmojjam, amatam tam vijānatam.*

~Dhp 374

Whenever he watches the *khandhas*, the five aggregates, seeing arising and passing away (*Yato yato sammasati khandhānam udayabbayam*), he experiences joy and dhamma pleasures (*Labhati pīti pāmojjam*). This is a tonic for those who are wise (*amatam tam vijānatam*). They experience that this is the way to liberation and they are very convinced that this is the practice that leads to liberation.

You are sure about it. That is why I told you that when you reach this stage you are on the right path. You have really learnt how to meditate; the meditation practice is very strong. This stage is called *balava-vipassanā*; *balava* means very strong. Before this stage it is called *taruṇa-vipassanā*; *taruṇa* means weak, young, immature. At this stage it is mature, very strong *vipassanā* (insight).

Another thing that can distract the meditator at this stage is, because he has so much faith, confidence in the practice, because he has experienced so much lightness, freedom and joy, he wants to tell, to encourage other people to meditate.

“Meditate, meditate, let go of all those things you have been doing for so long, stop doing them and meditate!”

He wants to encourage and teach others also.

But if you go and do that you destroy your meditation.

Don’t stop to go and teach. Just continue your practice.

Don’t encourage other people. You can do that later.

But it is very hard not to do that; it is very hard to resist.

At this stage you experience the awareness (mindfulness) and the object, they go for each other and then they touch. The object comes and touches or hits the mind. The coming in contact of the consciousness and the object becomes very clear. Before this stage we don’t understand what *phassa*, contact means. We’ve heard and thought about it but haven’t really experienced it. However at this stage we can really experience

clearly the contact between object and mind. Sometimes the mind goes into the object. For example, before this stage it is like throwing a tennis ball to the wall. It hits the wall and bounces back but at this stage you throw a very sticky ball. When it hits the object it stays there. Mindfulness does not run away or get distracted. Before this stage, sometimes we had to try to find the object to meditate on, but at this stage we don't have to do that. The object comes to the consciousness, to awareness and sometimes awareness is just there ready. However because of so much interest, joy, energy and clarity we get attached to that state and we don't want to stop meditating, although in a way this is very good because we are not lazy or distracted anymore, in another way we can get attached to it. Mostly we don't interpret that as attachment.

*We just think “I am very happy to be meditating,
I like meditating”. How do you discriminate?*

*When you don't experience those things anymore,
you feel unhappy about it, “I want it again,
what can I do to get it again?” these are
indications that you are attached to it.*

*The more you try to get it again,
the harder it becomes. It is a very tricky thing.*

*At this stage it is very important to watch your intention.
Look in to your mind and see, “what am I trying to do now?
Am I trying to get to that state?”*

Sometimes for example you have to go out to get your food and eat and more or less you are distracted. When you finish and you go back and meditate and you expect to go back to the same state, that expectation is a hindrance.

Whenever we meditate we have to remind ourselves, “I am not trying to do anything. I am not trying to get anywhere. I am not trying to experience what I have experienced before; I am just trying to be aware of what is happening now!” This is very simple.

What we do is not trying to get something or to get somewhere. What we do is to be here and now, to pay attention to whatever is happening now.

However no matter how much we are warned by our teacher, when things happen like this we still get attached, we still misinterpret it. This is something that we have to go through. The most important thing is not to get stuck there. When this is happening, if you are with a teacher and discuss it with him, he will say “look you are getting attached, watch that attachment first” he will not tell you to give up that attachment, because if you don’t see the attachment how can you give it up? It is happening unconsciously. The first thing you have to do is to make that attachment become conscious.

This advice has a very wide meaning. Whatever we want to overcome, first we must become conscious of it. Without

becoming conscious of it, we cannot overcome it, no matter what. So the teacher will point out, "Look into your mind and see that attachment". If you can see it after a while it becomes weaker and goes away, but it will come back again, you see it, it goes away and then comes back again. After a few times it will go and it will not come back anymore.

*You'll understand that getting attached to these happy states,
to these good experiences is not the right path.*

*Getting attached is the wrong path, no matter what.
Even meditation experiences, if you get attached
to them you are on the wrong path.*

*If you can see and overcome your attachment
you understand that paying attention to whatever is
happening right now, body or mind is the right Path.*

This understanding is called *Maggāmagga-ñāṇadassana-visuddhi*. *Magga* means the path, *amagga* means not the path, seeing that this is the path, this is not the path. Understanding the two very clearly is a kind of purity of mind, purity of understanding, *ñāṇadassana-visuddhi*; *visuddhi* means purity.

All of us, now and then, go on the wrong path, it's ok, it will happen, but see it and then come back to the right path. Make mistakes, learn from them, correct yourself and do the right thing. This is the way we learn and grow.

*Without making any mistake, without
correcting our mistakes we cannot learn and grow.
So, it is o.k. to make mistakes! But don't keep on
making the same mistakes again and again.*

I'll just give you a brief idea. In the beginning stage of meditation first you see the natural quality of physical and mental phenomena. Later we generally see impermanence and unsatisfactoriness and no soul, no permanent entity, no control, emptiness in a way. Later we see arising and passing away very sharply, very clearly. After that you see passing away. When we begin to see phenomena arising and passing away, first we see arising but we don't see passing away. Before we see one phenomenon passing away, we see another phenomenon arising; it goes on like that; one thing arising, another thing arising. After this we see an arising a passing away, a gap, another arising and passing away, one gap, we see the gaps also. After a while you pay more attention to just passing away, passing away. You don't pay so much attention to the arising anymore. In that stage impermanence becomes more and more clear, everything is passing away very quickly.

*When you see very clearly impermanence, in that insight
you also see unsatisfactoriness, why? Because something
arising and passing away so quickly, how can you find any
satisfaction, how can you rely or depend on it?*

You can see that every moment is birth and death. There is nothing you can keep, and there is nothing you can hold on to, because things are arising and passing away so quickly and it is not under your control.

*Every experience, every sensation, every thought,
every mind-moment, even this awareness,
everything is always passing away.*

So, in this stage, meditation becomes very complete. You see the object arising and passing away. You see the consciousness arising and passing away. You see this meditation consciousness which is experiencing or seeing this *vipassanā* wisdom, even mindfulness you can see arising and passing away. At first we see that these physical phenomena are not me, not mine; this thought it is not me, not mine. But you still see that this awareness is there in the mind; it is me, I am meditating, I am seeing, I am aware. When you come to this stage you also see that even this meditating consciousness, even this awareness is passing away. There is a simile for this. When you burn a dead body, first you use a very long stick to turn over the body. When the body has burnt you throw away the stick, let it go, you don't keep anything, you cannot keep anything.

*Even this meditation consciousness, this awareness,
you put it into anicca; this is also anicca.
Then only 'anicca understanding' is complete.*

If there is any part of your experience which you feel is yours, you have not fully understood and experienced anicca very well. Even this awareness, *ñāṇa* is arising and passing away and one can do that repeatedly. In the texts it is said that you should do that ten times, but you don't have to do that many. Object, consciousness, wisdom, seeing them arising and passing away, watching that wisdom again and again up to ten times but we don't have to do it for ten times. Watching this *vipassanā-ñāṇa* and seeing it as impermanent is called *paṭivipassanā*. The first *vipassanā-ñāṇa* is called *vipassanā*; watching that *vipassanā-ñāṇa*, that wisdom and seeing it as impermanent is called *paṭivipassanā*. This *vipassanā* wisdom becomes the object of *vipassanā* again. I think I have made the meaning quite clear, right?

*Even wisdom is impermanent,
even awareness is impermanent;
at this stage you can see it.
You don't even get identified with
this meditative awareness,
just like after you burn the body
you then burn the stick.*

Next week I will try to give details about the fifth insight *Bhanga-ñāṇa*, seeing dissolution. After this fourth insight it's much easier. If you have any questions about this fourth insight, if anything that is not clear, please ask.

QUESTION &

ANSWER: The first *ñāṇa* it is called (1) *Nāma-rūpa-pariccheda-ñāṇa*, seeing nāma as a process, mind as a process and rūpa, physicality, as a process; seeing it as not a being, it is not a man or a woman; there is no shape, no colour. Hardness is just hardness; you cannot say that this hardness is a man's hardness or a woman's hardness. Hardness is just hardness; Softness is just softness; movement is just movement, it is not a man or a woman.

*These phenomena have no shape, no form,
they are just qualities. Please pay attention to this again.
When we meditate we are paying attention to the quality,
any quality is not a being.*

Nāma also you can see that it is just mental phenomena also; it is not a being; greed is not a woman or a man; greed is just wanting something. Whether it happens to you or me it has the same quality, 'wanting'.

*Wanting this or wanting that it does not matter,
it is just the nature of wanting.*

Any other kind of mental state also is just a mental state, not a being, not a thing, not a man or a woman. So seeing nāma and rūpa is called Nāma-rūpa-pariccheda-ñāṇa. There are two things happening. One is rūpa, one is nāma.

After that you see the cause of these mental and physical phenomena; that is called (2) *Paccaya-pariggaha-ñāṇa*, seeing the cause. After that you see anicca, dukkha, anatta, generally, which is called (3) *Sammasana-ñāṇa*. In this stage a lot of thoughts about dhamma arise, thoughts about nāma, about rūpa, about anicca, about dukkha and also about anatta. After this stage, those thoughts are no more. You see things arising and passing away very sharply; very clearly; this is called (4) *Udayabbaya-ñāṇa* and is the fourth insight and the fifth is called (5) *Bhanga-ñāṇa*, dissolution, passing away, disappearing.

QUESTION &

ANSWER: No, not yet, just half way now. But actually this is the real beginning of meditation. One requirement to become enlightened is seeing arising and passing away very clearly. This is strong vipassanā stage, *balava-vipassanā* stage.

QUESTION &

ANSWER: In order, yes it happens in order, but some people go through very slowly and stay in one insight for very long time and then go through very quickly another insight and then go through very slowly another insight. It happens like that, but it has to be in this series, in this order. Not everybody experience things in the same way. Some people spend a long time in the first insight and second and third very quickly, and then they may spend a long time for

the fourth to develop. Actually the first insight takes a long time to develop, second and third not so long. The fourth takes some time to develop because there are a lot of hindrances, a lot of attachments and distractions during the experience. After that it can become faster until another stage where people get stuck. I will come to that stage later. This is the order of the development of insight.

QUESTION &

ANSWER: *If you don't keep practicing you lose them. Mostly you go back to the first (insight), but you don't go back to zero.*

QUESTION &

ANSWER: That means that you have gone beyond the first stage of enlightenment. Before that you can lose it (the insights). But even if you lose it you maintain some deep wisdom and even if you die, this experience has great power. However you will be able to revive it again. Don't be discouraged. Even if you stop meditating, you don't get so confused anymore; you still maintain some awareness and when you meditate again you develop easily.

QUESTION &

ANSWER: Some awareness yes. With just pure samādhi you cannot see impermanence. You can see only the quality without seeing the arising and passing away. Or you can

keep your mind on some concepts; you can even keep your mind on emptiness. I tried it for a long time, and I liked it very much. Do you know why it is good to contemplate on emptiness? Emptiness does not make you unhappy. There is nothing there to make you unhappy. Yes, you can do that but when you get attached to it and you cannot get it, then you feel unhappy. But when you keep practicing you can go into that state very quickly.

QUESTION & ANSWER:

A You have to keep practicing.

When you get to this fourth stage of meditation you cannot make mistakes anymore. You know what to do.

That's why the last thing I told you was, you know 'what is the Path' and you know 'what is not the Path'.

You cannot make mistakes anymore; keep going you'll be there. That is a kind of relief, because before that you are not sure of what you are doing, "maybe I am making a mistake, is it right or wrong?"

QUESTION & ANSWER:

No, no set amount of time. It depends on your clarity and on your maturity also. Some people take a long time to develop one insight to its maturity. Even in one insight there is a kind of range, for example this fourth insight has a wide range. In the beginning stage of it you

see the rising and passing away and there is a lot of thinking. If you develop more and more, this arising and passing away becomes more and more clear and after a while it goes beyond that and you see dissolving, dissolving, passing away, passing away more and more.

Every insight has a range, it depends not only on the factor of time but as well the quality of your meditation is very important.

QUESTION &

ANSWER: If you can develop jhāna you can use that jhāna concentration to practice vipassanā and with the help of this strong concentration you can make progress very quickly, because the mind is not distracted as you have developed a very concentrated mind. But to develop jhāna is also quite difficult. There are two ways of meditating, one is to first develop jhanā then meditate on vipassanā. This is called *samatha-yānika*, using samatha as your vehicle. However in vipassanā only, when you get to this fourth insight you develop strong enough samādhi which is very similar to jhāna. Mindfulness becomes very strong.

When mindfulness becomes very strong, concentration also becomes very strong.

*The two are very similar in quality.
You don't have to develop jhāna.*

QUESTION &

ANSWER: I cannot tell you exactly why Buddha did that, but for *vipassanā* meditation if you can develop concentration it helps quite a lot. But if you cannot develop *jhāna* you can still practice *vipassanā* which is called *sukkha-vipassanā* which means *vipassanā* without *jhāna*. So there are two ways of practicing, first developing *jhāna* and then *vipassanā*. The other way is, without developing *jhāna* concentration, just straight away meditating *vipassanā*; you can do it either way.

QUESTION &

ANSWER: When you practice *samatha* what is the object of your meditation? It is a kind of concept, an idea or an image. For example when you practice *mettā* meditation you can develop *jhāna* but the object is a person, which is in its own way a kind of reality, *sammuti-sacca*. When you want to meditate *vipassanā* you have to let go of this concept or idea of person and switch to either natural physical or mental phenomena. For *samatha* meditators after they have developed *samatha* *jhāna* mostly they go straight to *cittānupassanā*, not to *kāyānupassanā*, because after that *jhāna* they watch that *jhāna* consciousness and see the qualities of the *jhāna* consciousness. They let go of the *jhāna* object and watch that consciousness which is *jhāna* consciousness.



eight

Fifth to Ninth Insight

from Dissolution to Danger

to Disenchantment,

then Wanting to be Free &

the Wisdom to Not Run Away

Before I talk about the Vipassanā insight I want to clear my mind of something that I have been thinking for the last two days. On the evening of 27th of March I heard some very terrible news and since then I have been feeling very sad for the people involved in what happened. In Southern California, 39 people committed suicide. Why? I do not know the details of the story but no matter why they killed themselves, it is not a good thing to do. This shows that people want something more than just money and sense pleasure. They want guidance and teaching. They want good leaders. But they did not have a good leader. They were misled. Death is not a solution. There is no good reason to die.

I will tell you a few things about the Buddha and some of his disciples who had attained Arahantship. When the great disciples of the Buddha attained Arahantship and then they lived as long as they can live, as long as it is natural for the body to live, they know when they are going to die, that means when they are going to *Parinibbāna*. For an Arahant death is not the same as for the majority of people. The majority of people when they

die some qualities are reborn again (the process continues). But Arahants just pass away and that is the end of the process. Not a being dying but a process coming to an end. So, these great disciples came to the Buddha and said “I am going to do my Parinibbāna on such a day, at such time”. The Buddha never said to do it or not to do it; because to tell them not to do it is to be attached to life, to living, which the Buddha never encouraged. But telling them “it is a good thing to do” it would be praising death. Do you know what the Buddha said in those situations? “You know your time for Parinibbāna!” It is very important to understand why the Buddha said this. He never said “Do your Parinibbāna” or “Don’t do it”. He never praised either.

*Death is not a solution.
We cannot solve anything by dying.*

If it was a good solution it would be very nice. When I was very young I thought that if there was no life anymore it would have been good, just to die. But you will be reborn. This is the truth. What you do now and how you die will affect your future life.

*Even if we have to die we should learn how to die well,
with awareness. Death should never be used as a solution.
Buddha never praised death.*

I feel very sad for those people who committed suicide. They really wanted something and they were prepared to pay with

their lives. They wanted to give up, give up sense pleasure and even their life for something better. That is not a good solution and that also shows that society is very unsatisfactory. A lot of people have money and enjoy sense pleasure but they are not happy.

I do encourage people to join a group, but you have to choose very carefully. You have to know what the goal is and what the teaching of the group is. Here we know what we are doing. We know our goal.

Never follow a teacher blindly, not even me.

*The Buddha did not encourage people to
follow Him blindly.*

Most of you know the Kālāma sutta. Buddha spoke about not believing. That is very important; that teaching is very revolutionary. It is very important to understand the Dhamma very well. Even a Buddhist sometimes misinterprets the teaching to suit their ideas. Nobody can stop it but if you know the real basic teaching of the Buddha you can find out whether it is true or not. There are many salient points by which it can be tested.

Now, continuing our discussion on Vipassanā. What I am trying to do is this, because when some people write or talk about vipassanā, I have noticed that what they wrote or said is incorrect. They were trying to talk about vipassanā but what they said is not really accurate. What they interpret as insight or enlightenment is not true. That's why I am trying to give, in

simple language a very clear explanation of what insight means and what enlightenment means, so that you can understand if anybody talks to you about it, whether it is true or not. That's why I am also giving the Pāli quotations, which are the Buddha's words; these are the criterion. You can test it.

Today I'll talk about the fifth insight. The first four are very important. We need to go slowly and in detail. But once you reach the fourth the rest becomes easier. The first insight is difficult, the second and third not very difficult, the fourth difficult. If you keep practicing, the fifth will follow naturally. Because in the fourth insight you see arising and passing away very clearly, both arising and passing away, and then arising and passing away, very clearly. In the fifth insight the arising and passing away becomes quicker, faster. So, after a while you see passing away and arising passing away.... You don't pay as much attention on the arising, although you can see it if you pay attention, but you pay more attention to the passing away, disappearing, not there anymore. You pay attention and it is not there anymore....

*The moment you try to note, to see something
you see it is gone. You cannot really see it anymore.
You only see a glimpse of it and it's not there anymore.
So that is one aspect or factor of the fifth insight.*

Another important factor is that, when you notice something like a sound, you hear the sound and it is gone. You notice any kind of sensation in the body, and the moment you notice it

is gone, it is not there anymore. But you also know that the noticing mind is also gone. In the same process without any interruption, without any thought coming in between, you can see both gone. So I'll give you the Pāli word. *Ñāta*: ñāta means known, something noticed. When you pay attention to an object that object is called ñāta, that which is known or noticed. So first the meditator sees that this object is gone, passed away. Then *Ñāna*; ñāna means the consciousness with wisdom, which notices that something is gone. Seeing that something is gone it is wisdom, it is *anicca-ñāna*. So this meditator watches the object and sees that this object arises and passes away, but he sees the passing away very clearly; it's gone, it's not there anymore. And also the *vipassanā* wisdom, the consciousness (accompanied by that wisdom) also is gone. So *ñāta* (object) is gone and *ñāna* also is gone. In the same process with every noticing, every time the person pays attention, he sees both of them together without any effort, without trying to see both of them passing away. Just in one noticing one follows the other automatically without any thought in between. That is a very important and distinct factor of the fifth insight which is called *Bhanga-ñāna*. *Bhanga* means dissolution, disappearing.

At this stage, every time the meditator is meditating, no matter what the object is, even the movement, (without paying attention to the shape anymore but to the sensation), the meditator is aware of the sensation and the very fast passing away one after another very clearly. All the shapes and solidity disappear, which means that you don't pay attention to shape

and solidity anymore. You pay attention only to sensations and their passing away very quickly. Seeing the object passing away very quickly is the first bhanga-ñāṇa, *pāṭhama-bhanga-ñāṇa*. Seeing the wisdom passing away is the second bhanga-ñāṇa, *dutiya-bhanga-ñāṇa*. The two together make the bhanga-ñāṇa complete. In any insight there is the beginning and the maturity of insight. In the beginning you see the object passing away very quickly. When this becomes more mature, stronger you see the passing away of consciousness, *vipassanā* consciousness, and the wisdom also passing away together.

*You notice one thing, that passes away and
that consciousness which is aware of
that passing away also passes away.*

*Passing away does not mean changing into
another form; this is a point I would like to clarify.*

*Anicca does not mean changing and
existing in another form. What anicca means is
disappearing, not being there anymore;
non existence (abhava) of the phenomena.
The phenomena arise and pass away, and
do not exist anymore in any other form.*

In quantum physics about sub-atomic particles you can understand this. No form, no shape, just energy. Robert Oppenheimer said that if you ask “does an electron stay in the same position?”

The answer is, no. Does it change? The answer is, no. Does it stay? The answer is, no. Does it move? The answer is, no. An electron is just a theoretical model; something disappears and something arises. There is a link (between them) but they are not the same anymore.

To explain Bhanga-ñāṇa there are many Pāli words used. *Khaya* means something that comes to an end, something used up. *Vaya* has the same meaning; *bheda* the same meaning, dissolution; *nirodha* coming to an end. All these words mean the same. So in Pāli “*khayato vayato disvā ~Vsm 641*” seeing that it doesn’t exist anymore. It exists for a very short moment, that’s all, and then it doesn’t exist anymore.

You can see this in all your six *dvāra* (sense-doors): eye, ear, nose, body, tongue and also the mind. In all those six sense bases whatever you notice, you notice it barely and it is not there anymore. You can see that in all sense bases, not just in one.

So the object passes away and this (vipassanā) consciousness is aware of that object passing away, and another consciousness is aware of that vipassanā consciousness passing away also.

So, seeing the first object passing away and seeing the consciousness which becomes an object of the next consciousness (*purimavatthuto aññavatthusaṅkamanā*), and that consciousness also passes away, one can see many layers, many times. But it is not necessary to see so many times. But at least you see the object passing away and the vipassanā meditating wisdom consciousness also passing away. That is quite enough actually, but it can go on many times.

The person is seeing passing away so clearly that he is not even paying attention to the arising anymore. In the fourth insight he pays attention to the rising and passing away very clearly and in the fifth he pays attention only to the passing away; he does not pay attention to the arising anymore. In the very beginning of the practice we see arising only, not passing away. Before we see something passing away we see something else arising again. After a while we see arising and passing away. After this, we see only passing away. That is how the maturity of insight develops.

Udayam pahāya vaye santiṭṭhanā. ~PtsA i.258

Ignoring (*pahāya*) arising (*udayam*) the mind stays (*santiṭṭhanā*) in passing away (*vaye*). The mind observes passing away only. That makes the understanding of impermanence very strong. That is the culmination of the understanding of anicca.

In the seeing of the passing away there is nothing between. The mind does not get distracted to anything else; very few thoughts come in at this stage. In the first insight meditators think a little bit. In the second they think a lot about the cause of the arising, noticing and thinking. In the third insight there is more thinking about the meditation, about anicca, dukka and anatta. The fourth insight has less thinking. In the fifth insight, there is almost no thinking at all. You cannot think about it. Passing away is becoming very fast and there is no time to think

about it. It goes on like that until it comes to the ninth insight. In the eight and ninth insight some thinking comes back again, but it is only about Dhamma, not worldly affairs.

Here are some similes given about Bhanga-ñāna:

- 1) Into a very hot iron pot you throw some sesame seeds and each seed burns and makes a quick sound.
- 2) Rain drops falling in a lake. You see many rain drops falling very quickly.

It does not mean that when you are meditating you see these images. This is just a simile. When the rain drops hit the water sometimes a bubble appears and disappears immediately.

There is not so much more to talk about in this fifth insight. That's all it is. You see things passing away very rapidly. You see the awareness also passing away very quickly. And this is happening continuously, not just one thing passing away and then you stop and think.

You can see the passing away for hours, repeatedly. Because of seeing this passing away, passing away, continuously you feel that this process is dangerous; it is passing away so quickly you cannot rely on it. You cannot identify with it. You see it as dangerous but you are not afraid of it. Not being afraid is very important. If you start being afraid, there will be too much fear you'll stop meditating. This does mean that it is an insight, because real fear comes due to identification. If there is no identification,

and you see things as just passing away, impersonal, then it has nothing to do with you. You see that nobody can identify with this and hold on to it and rely on it. There is no reliance. There is nothing reliable in these mental and physical phenomena.

Is seeing of danger fearful? No; because fear is a kind of dosa, defilement, that comes from identification. You see that there is danger but you are not fearful.

For example, if you see a tiger in the forest, you feel really afraid and you run for your life, but if you see a picture of a tiger in a zoo, you see that this beast is dangerous but you are not interested in it, you don't run away.

Some people when they become very fearful they mistake this fear for a kind of insight.

The real insight has no fear.

Like a wise person, seeing that a child is playing with something dangerous says “don't play with it because it is dangerous” but the wise man is not fearful.

It is in the sixth insight, Bhaya-ñāṇa, ‘seeing it as a danger’, that meditators don't become very joyful, not elated. In the fourth insight you have a lot of joy, you feel very elated and happy. In the sixth insight there is no strong happiness or joy anymore. Sometimes you feel very calm, not depressed, not excited. When this Bhaya-ñāṇa of ‘seeing the mental and

physical process as danger' becomes mature, it moves towards seeing the disadvantages. In fact it is just talking about the same thing, but looking at it from a different perspective.

Disadvantage in Pāli is *ādīnava*. You see that well that there is no advantage in this mental and physical process, it cannot make you happy. At this stage the meditator can see, that no matter what happened in the past, everything passes away, just like now. In the future also, no matter what will happen, good life, bad life, everything will pass away, just as it is happening now. So you don't even wish for a better life.

*Generally people think that if they could
be reborn in a better place it would be so nice.
But if you really see very closely and clearly this
mental and physical process passing away, you can see
“what for? everything is passing away so quickly,
what is the point of wanting anything at all!”*

You don't want any kind of life at that moment. But if you lose this insight you still want. At the moment when you have that insight you can see that nothing is worth having, you cannot have anything.

Whenever the person takes notice, it passes away; there is no attachment, no desire to keep it. The person sees that arising is danger (*uppādo bhayam* ~Pts i.59). Becoming is danger. Happening is danger (*pavattam bhayam* ~Pts i.59). Whatever happens is dangerous. Even thinking anything can bring

satisfaction, then trying to get it is danger (*āyuhānā bhayam* ~Pts i.59). Sometimes very brief thoughts come in, and in a glimpse the meditator understands the teaching of the Buddha if they have read anything. Very brief short words or sentences come into the mind also. Once, when I was meditating, the concluding part of *Paṭiccasamuppāda* (Dependent Origination) arose in my mind spontaneously. At that moment you are not thinking about the meaning but its meaning becomes very deep and profound. The thing that came into my mind was: “*Evametassa kevalassa dukkhakkhandhassa samudayo hoti*” and “*Evametassa kevalassa dukkhakkhandhassa nirodho hoti.*”

Evametassa means in this way. *Kevalassa*, this is a very important word, means not mixed with anything. *Dukkhakkhandhassa* means just a heap of dukkha.

So it means ‘just a heap of dukkha arises,
not mixed with any being,
not mixed with any satisfaction’.

Not mixed is very important.

It means what arises is just pure dukkha and
what passes away is pure dukkha.

Not a being, not anything enjoyable, purely dukkha.
In this way, this process, that is
very unsatisfactory, arises and passes away.

You don't see it as me or mine, not a being or a thing, just a process. You don't have any control over it; you can't say “don't

happen". One thing or another will happen depending on conditions. Sometimes people with a lot of knowledge will remember a lot of other things.

Not-arising is safe (*Anuppādo khemam* ~Pts i.59). If nothing happens it is quite safe. If anything happens it will pass away. There is no safety. *Khemam* also means Nibbāna. An idea that is very hard to understand is 'not-arising is happiness (*Anuppādo sukham* ~Pts i.59)'.

Mainly people think of happiness as something to enjoy.

Here happiness means no suffering.

*That's why in the Four Noble Truths you find
Dukkha-Sacca, but there is no Sukha-Sacca.*

In each of the Truths there is the word dukkha (*dukkha-samudaya-sacca, dukkha-nirodha-sacca*, etc.) There is no sukha-sacca. But *sukha* means the absence of dukkha. When there is no dukkha anymore, that is the happiest state.

Anuppādo nibbānam. ~Pts i.60

Not arising is Nibbāna.

After seeing the disadvantages of this arising and passing away the meditator moves into the following insight, named *Nibbidāñāna*, 'disenchantment', the wisdom that is disenchanted or not delighted in anything anymore. In some ways *nibbidā* also means a kind of boredom, not boredom about meditation, but in the sense

that seeing this arising and passing away... rising and passing away, there is ‘nothing to get excited about’, the same thing happening again and again, without an end. The person sees that there is nothing enjoyable there. In the beginning stages of the meditation people become very happy, they experience a lot of pīti, joy, rapture and a lot of peacefulness. At this stage the mind is calm, but it does not feel anything anymore. You see that everything is gone. It becomes very disenchanted and it doesn’t even want to think about anything anymore. In the beginning you want to think. Thinking even becomes very enjoyable. You can think so well. But at this stage when you think and you watch the thought, it has gone, so you are left with emptiness. No thoughts anymore. Even thinking becomes boring. It is neither interesting nor enjoyable. So some people express that: “I don’t want to think anymore. Why think? It is not necessary to think. We are thinking too much.”

Even thinking about Dhamma is a kind of dukkha.

In this stage one can understand it from these verses also:

*Sabbe saṅkhārā anicca ti,
 Yadā paññāya passati,
 Atha nibbindati dukkhe,
 Esa maggo visuddhiyā* ~Dhp 277

Sabbe saṅkhārā anicca ti: Saṅkhārā means anything conditioned, any kind of phenomena is saṅkhārā. *Sabbe saṅkhārā anicca* means all the saṅkhāras are anicca.

Yadā paññāya passati: When one sees this with wisdom.

Atha nibbindati dukkhe: Then you become very disenchanted with dukkha, with suffering.

Esa maggo visuddhiyā: This is the way to purity. Because you don't get attached to it, you don't get upset about it anymore, you are totally detached.

*Sabbe saṅkhārā dukkhā ti,
Yadā paññāya passati,
Atha nibbindati dukkhe,
Esa maggo visuddhiyā.* ~DhpD 278

The first verse (DhpD. 277) is about anicca the second (DhpD. 278) is about dukkha, the meaning is almost the same. But the third verse is a very important one:

*Sabbe dhammā anattā ti,
Yadā paññāya passati,
Atha nibbindati dukkhe,
Esa maggo visuddhiyā.* ~DhpD 279

In the first two verses you see *sabbe saṅkhārā anicca*, *sabbe saṅkhārā dukkha* but the third is *sabbe dhammā anatta*. Here it (*dhammā*) includes everything there is.

I have met a few people who have argued that the Buddha said that the five khandhas (conditioned aggregates) are anatta, but he didn't say that there is no *atta* (soul). They came and

asked me whether the Buddha said that the five khandhas are not self (*anatta*), but there is something else which is self, which the Buddha didn't deny. I answered 'no'.

*Buddha said sabbe dhammā anatta, everything,
every concept, even Nibbāna is anatta, nothing left out.*

*The word dhamma includes everything;
nothing is left out. So everything is anatta.
There is no such thing which we can call atta.
So this verse is very important.*

Bhayatupatṭhānam ekameva tīṇi nāmāni labhati.

~Vsm 651

Bhaya-ñāṇa, ādīnava-ñāṇa, nibbida-ñāṇa — these three insights are really the same insight (*ekameva*) which gets (*labhati*) three names (*tīṇi nāmāni*).

*Yā ca bhayatupatṭhāne paññā yañ ca ādīnave
ñāṇam yā ca nibbidā, ime dhammā ekaṭhā,
byañjanam eva nāṇam. ~Pts ii.63*

When you see something as danger (*Yā ca bhayatupatṭhāne paññā*), when you see the disadvantages (*yañ ca ādīnave ñāṇam*), when you see something as very disenchanting (*yā ca nibbidā*), all these are just one thing (*ime dhammā ekaṭhā*), only (being called by) different names (*byañjanam eva nāṇam*).

So there are three different names for one insight.

*You can see this one insight from
three different perspectives:
danger, disadvantages, nothing to be happy about.*

The meditator after seeing everything as danger, every arising and passing away as something disadvantageous, seeing everything as not worthy of getting enchanted, he wants to be free from all these things, he wants to get out from it, he gets very tired of it. This is called *mūñcitukamyatā-ñāṇa* ‘wanting to be free’. This is the next insight. Watching this body, all the five khandhas, the meditator can see that it is not worth getting attached to even one of them. He wants to become free from all saṅkhāras, he wants to escape. For example, if you are not happy in some places, you’ll think of going away, finding another place more happy and peaceful. You cannot find any happiness in these five khandhas, so you want to be free from them. Sometimes you find as well that, even this noticing is so tiring..., noticing..., watching..., meditating..., this is so tiring!

You see how far you have come. In the beginning you get excited about the sense pleasure. When you start meditating you want to let go of this sense pleasure. But in meditation you become calm, peaceful and happy and then you get attached to that.

*But when you get to this stage,
you are not even attached to meditation anymore.
Even that becomes very disenchanting.*

*You want to be free from meditation also.
This is rightly so, it is good.*

You want to be free from the object of meditation and from the meditating consciousness; you want to be free from both. You want to be free from the object and the awareness which is meditating. That means that you don't want to take notice of anything anymore.

In some cases people get so fed up with this watching of the phenomena of arising and passing away, that they think it would be nicer not to watch it anymore. They stop watching, they stop paying attention. Sometimes the mind just becomes blank. The mind does not get distracted towards any object, because this person's mind is so disenchanted that it cannot get interested in anything at all. If he stops meditating, the mind is still calm but cannot see the arising and passing away anymore, he finds this much better, more peaceful, and more enjoyable.

*The mind is still calm, just living in that blank space,
in the void. However if the person stays
in that state long, he will lose clarity and then
he will be back in hell again, no escape.
Stopping the meditation is not the way to escape.*

So, the person pays attention again, seeing that everything lasts for a brief moment only. It lasts only between the rising and passing away, so short; it is just the process that makes things

appear as something lasting.

If you watch a screen movie, in a second it will project about twenty frames. For twenty times in a second the screen becomes dark but you don't see the blank, because our eye cannot detect it so quickly. We see somebody there moving. Actually there is no movement, just one frame after the other all a bit different from each other. Because we don't see the gaps, it appears the same person moving. For a very short moment a frame comes, then it goes away, and then another one comes.

*In meditation you can see as much,
for in one second you can see twenty frames gone.
For a meditator with such a concentrated mind
one second is a very long time.
Time becomes much distorted.*

Normally we have *vīthi-citta* and *bhavaṅga-citta*. *Vīthi-citta* means the mind that observes whatever is happening here, now. *Bhavaṅga-citta* is a kind of ground state of the mind which has no clear perceptible strong object; it just maintains life and the continuity of the consciousness without any present object. Normally people have this gap very wide, of long duration, this maintenance of consciousness which is called *bhavaṅga-citta*. One consciousness arises and passes away, noticing whatever is happening now or thinking about something and then a gap, and then another consciousness process arises, passes away and in that process is also awareness of some object or any kind of

idea or thought and then a gap again. Normally people have a wide gap. The wider the gap the less we know, the more absent minded we are.

*When we meditate more and more,
the mind becomes sharper and sharper and
the gap in between becomes smaller and smaller.
So, in the same time process we have more
awareness in between; awareness becomes
compacted into this time span.*

For example in the beginning, we can pay attention to one moment of awareness in one second then after a while five, ten, fifteen, twenty etc. The more awareness you have the longer time appears to be. What is time? Time is actually just an idea. When you are totally unaware of anything happening, totally unconscious your mind is not aware of any time.

Once in a while, in this kind of insight state, very brief short thoughts come, such as, ‘nothing is stable (*cala*)’, ‘everything is moving and shaking and it does not last’, thoughts like these arise in the mind. Also ‘there is no lasting substance there’ (*asāraka*), ‘everything is insubstantial’. Sometimes also (*sankhata*) ‘things arise because there are causes for them to arise’. Very brief thoughts like these come in.... Sometimes the meditator feels that this continuous arising and passing away is oppressing, like a torture, giving no break. It’s like somebody is making a very sharp sound continuously; after a while it becomes very irritating, like

a torture. He observes arising and passing away so long that he feels like he is trapped in the arising and passing away... this is just a trap, a torture. Sometimes this is unbearable. This object is dukkha. This arising and passing away is painful. Having to watch it arising and passing away is also painful.

Sometimes you see that life is a chronic disease; it goes on and on, no matter how healthy you think you are, it is always arising and passing away. Don't think too much about it otherwise you become depressed.

So these glimpses of thoughts come naturally; take notice of them, let them go. Don't stop and think too much. If you stop and think you can think very well, because the mind is not distracted; you can write dhamma books. But don't stop and think. If you think too much you'll become very depressed.

When you think, you identify.

Thinking makes you feel that YOU are thinking.

*Thinking makes you feel like there is continuity,
thinking connects. If you don't think there is
no connection between one happening and
another happening.*

If you think you connect. So thinking is what makes us feel like there is a continuity and connection. If you don't think there is no connection, no continuity; something arising and passing away, that's all, no meaning.

Sometimes you feel this arising and passing away is like a thorn in the flesh. Sometimes also you feel that life is a sickness. When you talk about these insight states, it sounds so negative, very pessimistic. You see it as a danger without warning. It's like a time bomb. You can die any moment.

*Anything can happen at any moment;
so unpredictable is life. This process is not something
where you can go and hide and feel safe (atāṇa).*

No hiding, no refuge.

These are the kind of glimpses that come.

When people get attached to these objects, which are the objects of attachment, they defile the mind. You can see them as objects of defilements. Even in this stage you see dukkha, but it is different from the kind of dukkha that you experience in the beginning stages of the practice. In the beginning stages you don't see dukkha as each moment arising and passing away. However in this stage whatever arises and passes away you see it as dukkha, unsatisfactoriness, but you see it as one thing after the other very clearly.

*All the vipassanā-ñāṇas are actually only
anicca, dukkha and anatta.*

*If you talk of vipassanā-ñāṇas in brief there are only three.
You can even make them into one ñāṇa:
it is all arising and passing away.*

*Here we're explaining it in detail.
Actually any insight is anicca, dukkha or anatta.*

Even after the first stage of enlightenment you'll experience the same thing in more depth, more profoundly. Sometimes you see that this process does not belong to any body; there is nobody who owns it. These processes have no owner. You pay attention to hearing; it arises and passes away. You know that you don't own this hearing, it's already gone. We think that this body is mine (feeling of ownership), an 'I' here. In these insight stages you can see that nobody owns these natural processes. Also you see that you cannot overrule it. You cannot tell the process "happen like this, don't happen like this; stay and don't come."

There's no ruler.

*You can also see that they are empty, void of being,
of self-atta, no soul, not a man not a woman.*

So there are different aspects of anicca, dukkha, anatta.

Although once in a while the meditator feels like stopping meditating, "what is the point of looking at these things that are so unsatisfactory? You see the same again and again." But after a while the meditator comes to understand that stopping is not a solution. It is best to keep going, to keep noticing, to keep moving, there is no other way.

For some people each insight takes quite a long time. For some people it takes a brief moment, maybe a few minutes, a

few hours, a few days. To some it might take a few months. It depends on the person's motivation. If you think that you have a long time and you want investigate one insight slowly and thoroughly, it may take a long time. If you don't want to do that, you can pay more and more attention and speed up the process.

*Sometimes in this stage meditators begin to think that
“my meditation is not as good as it used to be”;
this is very dangerous.*

Sometimes they feel unhappy about their meditation.

Actually they are unhappy about the process, but this unhappiness is switched over to another object, thinking that “my meditation was very good but now it's not very good anymore; I don't see things very clearly”. Because when something goes slowly it stays and you can see things very clearly. But in this stage it goes so fast that you don't know what to do. You can't even see it because it is gone... gone; so fast. Everything is so uninteresting. In the fourth insight, things were very interesting. But now it's not so interesting anymore. It becomes a little bit boring.

*Be very careful;
when you feel bored just remind yourself
“it is getting better”.*

Some people stop and quit. And many teachers said “What a pity. How sad. They have to go on meditating. Then they will break through. But they just stop and quit. They become very discouraged.”

*So don't be discouraged, keep going!
This is paṭisankha-ñāṇa, the ninth insight.*

Bhanga-ñāṇa — *passing away.*

Bhaya-ñāṇa — *seeing danger.*

Ādīnava-ñāṇa — *seeing disadvantages.*

Nibbidā-ñāṇa — *being very disenchanted.*

Muñcitukamyata-ñāṇa — *wanting to be free.*

Paṭisankha-ñāṇa — *going back to meditation.*

If you want to be free you cannot run away, so go back to meditation.

The next insight will be *Saṅkhārupekkhā-ñāṇa*, which is very deep, very important and very interesting. After the tenth there are other insights but they happen in a split second, so you cannot do anything about it. Beyond the tenth insight there is no coming back, it goes on very quickly.

One very interesting and surprising thing is that when the potential Buddhas come to this tenth insight, they will stop here, they won't go on. And the ability to stop here is really amazing, that one will stop there and not cross over. Because an Arahant does not become a Buddha!

QUESTION &

ANSWER: I feel very strongly for people. Sometimes I become very sad. You overcome sadness when you become an *Anāgāmī*. I am not an *Anāgāmī*. So I feel, but I know it will be over and don't get caught in it. I don't get angry, I just feel very sad, which is a kind of *dosa* also. These people are looking for something beyond sense pleasure, beyond money. They have very good intention, very beautiful intention and I feel sad because they have wasted their life; such a waste. If people like these get good guidance they can learn and grow. They have missed a very valuable opportunity. Also I was thinking that there might be many other people like them, seeking something spiritual, seeking some kind of freedom, but they don't have a good teacher, good guidance. This incident is just the tip of the iceberg. This can happen again. Something needs to be done. I don't mean that one person is responsible for it; the whole community is responsible for it.

*We cannot do anything for the whole world,
but let's think of what we can do here and now.*

What can we teach our friends, our children? Saying that it is their kamma does not solve the problem. We need to find a solution; it might happen to your children or grandchildren. People are feeling lost. Those who died were not poor. I have heard a lot about them. They were very rich.

Why did they die? Why did they kill themselves? Why did their leader, their teacher tell them to kill themselves and help them to die?

QUESTION &

ANSWER: In Buddhist teaching blaming totally on past kamma is not the right view. If we say we cannot do anything about it, why try to do anything at all! If I say I have the kamma to be enlightened why bother at all with meditation? We are doing something that with the help of past kamma and what we do now which is present kamma, we can do something. Even if the past kamma has some sort of bad effect, if we do something now it can change the direction of the past kamma, block the past kamma. We need to have a lot of confidence in our present kamma. Totally submitting to past kamma is a kind of *micchā-ditṭhi*, wrong view. Buddha did not teach that we cannot do anything.

In some cases, when someone died Buddha said that he had enough past kamma to become an Arahant but he didn't try. If you don't try it won't happen.

Past kamma plus present kamma is very important. No matter what happened in the past, you need a good teacher now, you need to practice now. It is like guiding an aeroplane. There are many other forces like windstorms, and many things happening, and the plane also has its own

energy. Maybe one engine stops, with the other engine the pilot is trying to guide the plane, taking into account the wind and all the other things, trying always to adjust. This is what we do in our life. We are always adjusting. We can guide our life towards a goal. We have partial control and partial freedom. We need to understand this very well and make the best use of it. We can guide our lives towards a goal. We need to understand this very well and do the best we can.

*We are born here, we had no choice of parents in a way,
we have no choice of our colour, stature, body or
whatever, but we do have some choices.*

*We have the choice of developing our qualities.
This is very encouraging. Our kamma is in our hands.*

We are very much affected by past kamma, I know this very well, what I did in my past lives affects me very much, very strongly in either good and bad ways. After I understood kamma I thought that whatever happens in my life it is perfectly ok, it should happen that way, but it doesn't mean that I have no control. It happened, and the way I understand it and I respond to it is my present kamma. Understanding and proper way of responding is very important and that is in my hands. If I have good teachers, good guidance and if I can understand things properly I can guide my life. This is very encouraging, and also very empowering.

We are not powerless; if we develop mindfulness and wisdom we have a lot of power. We don't need to be depressed and give up. Never give up.

When I was young I was unhappy about many things. I had a very painful childhood, not just childhood but until my late twenties I have had many painful experiences and many times I thought of ending my life, be over with it. Something deep in me said not to do it, that this was just a stage I had to go through, a learning process, to do something good now and learn out of this experience.

We need these experiences. Without painful experiences, we don't learn we don't grow up.

Now, when I look back into my life I see that I have been exposed to many different things, many teachers, many different religions, interests, different painful experiences. Now I understand that all this helped me to become a better person. I have learnt many lessons and I am happy about it. It is very important to understand this.

QUESTION: When you talk about having sharp awareness, the length of bhavaṅga-citta is shortened; also relating to perception of time, could you explain it?

ANSWER: During sleeping, deep sleep we have continuous bhavaṅga-citta. For that stretch of time we have no awareness of time anymore. We don't know how long we have slept. Sometimes we think we have slept for a long time and look at the clock and it is only a few minutes. Other times we feel we haven't slept enough but actually by checking the time we realized we slept for many hours. We lose track of time. The longer the bhavaṅga-citta, the more we lose time. We don't get the time that we spend on bhavaṅga-citta. The longer we spend noticing the more time we get.

When we meditate we develop *vīthi-citta* or process citta, which is the citta that is aware of the present. The more we practice, although it will go to the ground state (bhavaṅga-citta) again, it will not stay there long; another consciousness will arise with full energy. So the bhavaṅga-citta span becomes shorter and shorter. Say if you are aware once every second, in ten seconds, you can have ten consciousnesses only and in between only bhavaṅga. If you pay more attention it can become a hundred. That means you get more time there. You get to do more things in that time span. You can take notice of more phenomena. In that way you feel like you have more time. In one second four insights can happen, (the 11th, 12th, 13th, 14th insight) how can that happen in such a short duration?

QUESTION: Can you cultivate these insights without being in a monastic situation?

ANSWER: Yes, it is possible. It depends on a lot of other factors too. Some people at the time of the Buddha and even now, and I know some of them who are lay people have developed very deep insights.

QUESTION &

ANSWER: Only thinking makes you identify. That is why I warn you so many times not to think too much. Brief thoughts naturally come; just notice them and let them go. Thinking makes you identified with them. When thinking arises just know it. In between insights, flashes of thoughts come which are very clear. You are not deliberately thinking. Conceptualizing is as well one of the functions of the mind. It happens naturally. In any insight brief flashes of thoughts come. In a way it is just clarifying the insight. It is useful but when it becomes too much it becomes a hindrance.

QUESTION &

ANSWER: Path and not Path happen in the fourth insight, becoming attached to the pleasurable meditative experiences and seeing that this is not the right Path, and then back to meditation. This is also a kind of reflection, thinking, but this is right thinking. *Sammā-diṭṭhi, sammā-sankappa*, are necessary factors. In English, right seeing, right thinking or right reflection.

QUESTION &

ANSWER: Some people leave meditation, they want to escape. Some people really get up and go away. They want be free, free from what? No matter where you go you'll always carry your five khandhas with you. Sometimes the desire for freedom, the desire to go away is misdirected into going away from the surroundings. This can happen unknowingly. In my experience, when I got to that stage in practice, I didn't want to live in that monastery anymore. I thought this is not a good place. I wanted to find a better place, quieter, more remote, more peaceful, too many distractions here. So, wanting to go away from this process is misdirected to wanting to go away from the meditation place. Sometimes very sad things happen; people quit jobs, leave marriages; even that happens, they want to be free, but free from what? It happens because they start thinking and see everything as unsatisfactory. They find that the job, the person they are living with, the place were they are living is not good. They want to go away, to be free. We cannot go away and live on the moon; we have to be in the world, live with people. That's why when in meditation when the person comes to that stage it is very important to warn them not to think, to just meditate, because if you think, you direct the desire or 'the wanting to be free' to another object which can cause a lot of confusion.

It's very difficult to explain actually even to yourself. Sometimes it can happen very quickly; you don't know

what happened, you feel very different but you don't know what happened. It is very important to discuss it with your teacher who has meditated and has had all those experiences and who has studied, to be able to understand how these things happen and why they happen. Also discuss with other meditators who have really, wholeheartedly meditated and experienced all those things. One person cannot experience everything in detail. So if you have other people and teachers with whom you can discuss and if you have had that experience for a long time then you understand it very deeply. So when a meditator becomes very disenchanted and looks very sad and not interested in anything anymore, sometimes one does not feel like eating, even food is not interesting, a good teacher can see that he is going through the disenchantment feeling, and can encourage and warn as well, "keep practicing, don't get upset, and don't go away, it is something you have to go through".

*Some people think that after the
fourth insight everything will be more enjoyable,
happier, more exciting, and more joyful.
No, that does not happen. It goes down.
We develop deeper insight and we don't feel happy,
but this is not depression.*

QUESTION &

ANSWER: Living in a secluded please with not much to do is very useful to develop quicker samādhi and insight.

But Buddha was very compassionate as well. Once I told my teacher that instead of becoming a monk I would rather become a hermit, because a monk is too dependent on people. Being a hermit I could grow my own vegetables and cook my own meals, and be independent because if you live a very simple life you need very little. My teacher said not to becoming a hermit, instead he suggested I should become a monk. At that time I wasn't yet a monk. He asked me whether I knew why Buddha didn't allow monks to grow and cook any food; I said I didn't really understand why considering that the Buddha himself had been a hermit for a long time. My teacher said yes, but that was before he became a Buddha. If you monks grow your own food and cook your own meals and stay away from people who will carry on the teaching? As you won't be in contact with people, who will teach them?

To be in touch with people is very important but it is also as important sometimes to be on your own.

My teacher explained this to me very kindly, very gently and very compassionately. He convinced me to become a monk. I said that I didn't want to teach and that the only thing I wanted to do was to live my life peacefully and quietly.

Actually, you know I am a very shy person, some of you might have noticed it. When I was young I didn't talk much. If I was asked to give a talk even for five minutes I would get so agitated that I said things I didn't mean to say and I was so ashamed of it that I thought I would never give a talk. Later when I became a monk some people asked me to give the five precepts, I couldn't even do that. I mixed everything up and made many mistakes with the precepts. I really thought "this is not for me, I don't want to give talks, and I can't talk". My teacher gently encouraged me to go and give talks. Actually I ran away. Many times my teacher said come and stay with me and help and teach. I said, no.

One evening I went to him, I said I am going away, I will pay respect to you, I ask for your forgiveness if I have done anything wrong. I ran away and hid for a few years. For six years because he wanted me to stay near him and teach. He wanted to take me to the west, to America; I told him I didn't want to go. Why did I need to go there? Very slowly, patiently and compassionately he encouraged me to teach.

QUESTION & ANSWER:

Actually I didn't come back on my own. I was sick with tonsillitis and malaria and I happened to be in the same city that my teacher was. I was very sick with high fever every day and a friend said to go to the city and get good treatment because if I stayed there I would die. I went to the city and got the tonsils removed at the hospital. Ten

days after the operation when I was starting to recover and I could speak a little bit I was told that my teacher was in that city. My teacher heard that I was in that city and had had an operation, so he inquired about my health. I thought: what shall I do now, I can't run away. I went and paid respect to him and he said to stay there. I thought, oh goodness, I can't say no again! He said that in two years he would be going to America again and to be prepared for that. I said. "Ok I'll go there with you and come back with you", because I knew he wouldn't stay there. He said that was ok and that he would not leave me there. So I prepared for two years because I had totally stopped reading. Reading is such a burden, you have to understand, remember and translate it into English, and I had to know the equivalent of Pāli words in the English language. Trying to find Pāli – English dictionaries and to memorize thousands of words... so much dukkha to memorize things. I gave up learning and thinking for so long and it was so nice. It took two years of preparation, studying every day.

When we went to America he said that we would be there only for four months and I thought that was ok. After four months that we had been there he said that he would be going back and that I was to stay. He said this very compassionately, and it is very difficult to say no to my teacher. He would say something in such a gentle way; he didn't expect you to say no, he never expected anybody to say no. He said people here are very happy that you are here, please stay if you can. I said all right, I will not ask permission from you anymore and I

want to know that you have already given me permission to go back when I want to go back, whenever. He replied ok, you can go back when you want to. I thought three more months, all together that made seven months, but I could not leave for fourteen months. I then thought this is enough for me, I am very glad to have come here, I have learnt a lot but I have to go back. Many of my friends said “we will make you feel guilty for abandoning us”; they are great Pāli scholars but cannot speak English. I told them that I had done as much as I could and I asked them to give me permission to go.

When I came back my teacher said that a monk needs some time to spend alone and do his own practice, and be in touch with people as well. Many times I told my teacher that I hadn't learnt enough yet, he replied that if I waited until I learnt enough I would die before I had learnt enough. How much is enough? He also warned me not to identify myself with being a teacher, to be very humble. This is very important. I know a lot of people made a lot of mistakes. A lot of teachers make the mistake of being proud of being a teacher. They are not humble enough. Humility is very important. I am helping you as much as I can, I don't know everything, I know something and I try my best to help you. I cannot give you complete knowledge, because I have only partial knowledge. I don't know everything but as much as I know I want to share with you. Other teachers will come and help you to learn some more. That's all I can hope for. I'll be here for four months and as much as it is possible, I'll help you.



nine

Tenth Insight

*Equanimity to All Formations becoming
the Door to the Insights Surrounding
Nibbāna and Beyond*

Last week I spoke about dissolving, bhanga-ñāṇa; seeing danger, bhaya-ñāṇa; seeing disadvantage in the mental and physical process, ādīnava-ñāṇa; being very disenchanted, nibbidā-ñāṇa; wanting to be free from the process, muñcituñkamyatā-ñāṇa; and pañisankha-ñāṇa is very important. To be free from something, first we need to understand it, and to understand something we need to look at it very carefully, otherwise there is no way to overcome anything, even on a mundane level, in our body, in our life, in any situation.

The first thing necessary to overcome anything is to look at it very carefully, to understand it very deeply, completely and then to overcome it.

*We cannot run away. Running away it is not overcoming.
There is no place to hide, nowhere to go.*

In Burmese we say ‘there is no land you can escape to’. Wherever you go you are in the process, you take it with you, physical and mental process. Only through understanding can we

overcome. When we feel that we are trapped in this process and we want to escape, sometimes we might have thought that, "if I just don't pay attention to these things, just turn away and forget about them, I will be free". No, this is not the right thing to do.

The meditator comes to a point when he feels that watching this mental and physical process it is so boring, so disenchanting, there is nothing good about it. Just by watching it we don't really get peaceful. Only in the beginning, you feel very calm and peaceful because the very gross defilements have subsided for a while. But after a while just watching the mental and physical process is very tiring, not just boring; it is a kind of being trapped in the process. We don't want to see it anymore; we are really tired of it. But there is no other way to escape from it, other than paying it even closer attention, looking at it even more closely. Looking at it with deeper and stronger attention the mind becomes more calm and quiet. Mindfulness and samādhi become stronger, and then the mind becomes very detached, which is called *sankhārupekkhā-ñāṇa*.

*You are still watching it very closely but
with a totally detached mind, a totally detached attitude,
a total dis-identification. You don't see it as a self,
but with total detachment, with total equanimity,
but very strong attention.*

Sankhāra means anything conditioned, actually it means mental and physical process.

This process is called saṅkhāra and *upekkhā* means equanimity. There are many aspects of equanimity: the energy of balance; you are not trying too hard; you are not relaxing too much, because both extremes are unbalanced. Trying too hard is unbalanced; relaxing too much and also taking it easy is unbalanced. Before that stage, you are too anxious to overcome, “I want to get out of it, I want to overcome it, I want to escape”, that is also a kind of agitation, imbalance in the mental attitude.

When you come to this saṅkhārupekkhā-ñāṇa you are not too anxious to overcome it. With total equanimity you just pay complete attention to it. Even before this stage, in the fourth insight which is Udayabbaya-ñāṇa, seeing arising and passing away very clearly, you have some sort of equanimity, *upekkhā*, sometimes but in that ñāṇa it happens sometimes, only. Sometimes you have a lot of joy, sometimes you feel very happy, sometimes you see very clearly and even get attached to that clear insight. In this stage you are not even attached to seeing things clearly, you are not even attached to this equanimity. In the Udayabbaya-ñāṇa stage you feel so calm and balanced and you like it very much. Meditation is so easy, it is just happening, but you lose it again and again. In this stage you don't lose it anymore. You keep practicing and maintaining it and it stays for a long time, equanimity stays for a long time. You feel so detached that this equanimity is compared to the equanimity of an Arahant. An Arahant stays in that mental state all the time. A person, who is not enlightened, can stay there by maintaining constant awareness, but for an Arahant the awareness is

natural. He never loses this equanimity, this awareness.

*Actually, in Vipassanā-ñāṇa there are only three ñāṇas
i.e. anicca, dukkha and anatta,
but different degrees of experiencing anicca, dukkha and
anatta make the insights different.*

In Burma, a teacher who taught meditation spoke about only these three ñāṇas: seeing impermanence, becoming disenchanted with impermanence and ending of impermanence. Even before this stage of insight the meditator has experienced to a certain degree some aspects of this equanimity. Only at this stage it is complete, total.

Saṅkhārāva saṅkhāre viñassanti. ~Vsm 628

Vipassanti means to look at it very deeply in a very extraordinary way. Ordinarily we see and understand things but in this stage we see things extraordinarily, very clearly. *Saṅkhārāva* means the saṅkhāra only. *Saṅkhāre* means ‘at the saṅkhāra’. The first saṅkhāra means the mind that is watching. The second saṅkhāre means ‘at the saṅkhāra’ or ‘towards the saṅkhāra’ which is the object. It could be rūpa or vedanā or citta, any of the five khandhas. *Vipassanti* means watching. One process is watching another process, no you anymore. In this stage it becomes so clear that you really feel it, ‘there is no I watching this’. To break through, this sort of total dis-identification is

necessary, and requires this kind of strong balance.

Upekkhā has many meanings, happiness, unhappiness; neither happy nor unhappy is also called upekkhā. Happiness is one extreme, unhappiness is another extreme; neither happy nor unhappy is a kind of upekkhā. In this stage the meditator is neither happy nor unhappy. Before this stage sometimes you get very happy about the way you see so clearly. Sometimes you feel unhappy about being trapped in the process, but now there is no happiness or unhappiness; total balance, total equanimity. Before this stage, sometimes the energy is too much, or too little; now not too much, not too little, just right. Before this insight we see saṅkhāras, any kind of process as disadvantage, as not good, this process is not good. We become sort of unhappy about it, but not the negative kind of unhappiness. We become disenchanted.

But in this stage there is no unhappiness about it anymore.

*Before this stage, there is the ‘wanting to escape
and thinking of what to do about it’.*

*Now wanting to escape or doing anything about
it is not there anymore. Now there is total complete
attention only, which becomes even simpler.*

Meditation becomes very simple now.

Sometimes, before this stage, because you see mental and physical process as disadvantage, you don't want to pay complete attention. So you turn away thinking that meditation is

not satisfying anymore or that it is not as good as it used to be, but now this is not present anymore. The mind is totally detached, totally dis-identified, no desire to be otherwise anymore, just watching it, very simply. This is the best state of mind, not wanting to do anything anymore, just paying total attention. Just try to imagine that state of mind and see how free you can feel; you don't want to be otherwise. No matter what happens it does not matter, just total attention. Even thinking or imagining makes you very peaceful.

All our life, we are grabbing or grasping or pushing things away. All the time we are doing these two things: reaching out and grabbing, trying to keep things or pushing them away. That is very tiring.

In this state of mind we are not grabbing or reaching for anything anymore, we are not pushing things away, and we are just paying total attention.

In a way it is a kind of total surrender to the process. Let anything happen, I'll just pay complete attention.

This is just the right attitude.

At this stage you are not worrying about anything anymore. Even if you die at that moment you feel completely ok about it.

We'll die one day, and the best way to die is to be in that mental state, to accept the process completely, to pay total attention and to understand it, no resistance, and no fear! This

is the best mental state to have when one dies.

I told you once, I was very sick a few times, with malaria, tonsillitis, chronic dysentery, it went on for many months. I became very weak and sick and about to die. At first I was really worried and afraid to die. I didn't want to die. I said "no, no, I want to live". But the harder I tried to hold on to life the more tiring it became, because I worried too much. "Somebody must do something for me, nobody is doing anything for me, why have they given up; nobody is around." As I couldn't move, I couldn't call anybody. I was thinking, "why are they just leaving me, going away and doing nothing for me?" that kind of thought made me even more unhappy and tired. At last I thought, "maybe they have given up because they cannot do anything anymore" and one of my friends said "he must be in coma" because I was not moving anymore. For a long time I just tried to hold on to life, but at one point I was very tired and I thought it would be really nice to just sleep; to go to sleep peacefully. I determined to let go. But I made a very important determination. I thought "if I have to die, I will die mindfully" and let go of all thoughts and keep the mind as relaxed and calm as possible and maintain mindfulness. Slowly and slowly the mind became more and more peaceful and I noticed that I was not so tired anymore; tiredness was gone as well, the mind became more calm and peaceful and I fell asleep. When I woke up again the mind was very calm and peaceful again. I could not move or say anything and I thought that if I died at that moment it would really be ok.

Why are we afraid to die? Because we are attached, if we have no attachment there will not be any fear. Meditation is a very good preparation for death, it is necessary, it is very important. People do not want to think about death. Whenever they hear about death they don't want to hear about it, they don't want to talk about it, they just want to talk about living.

*But those who are prepared to die, they are ready to live.
Most of us although we are alive, we are not really living;
we are resisting life so much.*

*We are not really paying attention and
learning enough from our lives.*

Whenever I think of this insight I find it to be the best insight. Because we cannot die with the mental state of *magga* or *phala*, even Buddha didn't do that, he couldn't do that. At this stage the mind has no fear; it is very pure and clear. The mind is very balanced and it feels very peaceful too, no excitement, no joy, no elation, no happiness just very peaceful. There is nothing in worldly states of consciousness that is comparable to it. No effort, no tension, no tightness. Before this state we try very hard to concentrate, to meditate, we become tight, we have to remind ourselves to relax, but in this stage everything is so soft, gentle and relaxed. Although the mind is very peaceful, there is no attachment to it. This is a very important point. Before this stage we feel peacefulness even in the fourth insight, but we get attached to it and it becomes a hindrance.

Peacefulness in itself it is not a hindrance but attachment to it is a hindrance. At this stage there is no attachment at all. That is why it is so pure.

Attachment is a kind of desire, a kind of *lobha*, craving. And the mind is not excited about anything at all. In the fourth insight sometimes the mind gets excited and so happy about it but now there is no excitement anymore.

Very subtle, very clear, very precise, just on the right moment, on the spot, every noticing is just right, not before, not after. In the beginning stage, sometimes the awareness or attention is lagging behind. Something happens, later we remember that something happened and we didn't pay attention. Sometimes we are expecting something to happen, and say "Something will happen and I'll pay attention to that". Like when we are moving, we are thinking that "I am going to move and I'll pay attention to it". Our attention is a little bit off, not right on the spot. At this stage it is naturally always ready and on the point. Something is happening and knowing and attention is already there. That is why we are not trying or becoming too anxious even to paying attention, it is just happening perfectly.

*Evamevāyam sabbasaṅkhārehi muñcitukāmo hutvā
paṭisankhānupassanāya saṅkhāre pariggāhanto:
aham, mama ti gahetabbam adisvā, bhayañ ca nandīñ
ca viññūpahāya, sabbasaṅkhāresu udāśino hoti majhutto.*

Thus (*Evameva*) wanting to be free (*muñcitukāmo hutvā*) from all the sañkhāras (*sabbasanikhārehi*), by watching the sañkhāra again (*pañisankhānupassanāya*), observing the sañkhāra (*sañkhāre pariggāñhanto*), not seeing ‘me’ or ‘mine’ (*aham, mama ti gaheṭabbaṁ adisvā*). *Gaheṭabbaṁ* means to take, to grasp, to keep; *adisvā* means not seeing; *aham* is ‘I’, *mama* is ‘mine.’

Whenever you watch sañkhāra you know that this is not me, not mine, nothing to get attached to, you cannot keep anything, not worth the trouble. In every noticing you see that this is not me, not mine, you are not concerned with it and you are totally indifferent. Before this stage you see it as a danger, at this stage no danger, no liking, not disliking also. *Vippahāya* means eradicating, overcoming, overcoming fear (*bhayañ ca*) and attachment (*nandiñ ca*). Being just in the middle (*udāśino hoti majjhatto*) in all the processes (*sabbasanikhāresu*); not to this side, not to that side.

*This is the middle path actually;
we are getting very close to the real middle path.
Before this stage, the mind is on either one side or
the other, not in the middle.*

Majjhatto means right in the middle.

Sometimes when you relax for a while or even when you are relaxing, your mind is still mindful. A thought might come in very briefly; it might not even last for a second. When I say a thought, don’t think that at that moment you are thinking in

a sentence or words. At this point there are no words or sentences; you are just clearly seeing that this is just empty process, no being, no 'I', devoid of being, devoid of soul.

Suññamidam attena vā attaniyena vā ti. ~MN iii.263

This process is devoid of 'I' or mine or mine belonging. Similar thoughts and insight come before but at this stage it is more and more clear. This process does not obey anybody's wish; you can also see that, it is something that is just happening.

Puna caparam, bhikkhave, ariyasāvako iti paṭisañcikkhati — ‘naham kvacani kassaci kiñcanatasmiṁ, na ca mama kvacani kismiñci kiñcanam natthī ti. ~MN iii.263-4

— *naham kvacani kassaci kiñcanatasmiṁ*: There is nothing that I need to worry about and, nobody needs to worry about me. Sometimes in our ordinary everyday thinking we worry about other people, and sometimes we worry that others worry about us and we like that also, "oh, somebody is concerned about me". But now you can see that "I don't need to be concerned about anything or anybody and nobody needs to be concerned about me". There is nothing there. There is just process.

There are many detailed explanations in the text, but it is useful only for scholars. But here at this stage:

*Evaṁ eva sace saṅkhārupekkhāñānam santipadam
Nibbānam santato passati, sabbam saṅkhāra-pavattam vis-
sajjetvā Nibbānam eva pakkhandati; no ce passati
punaappuna saṅkhārārammaṇam eva hutvā pavattati.*

~Vsm 657

At this stage the meditator sees that the end of this process is real peace (*santipadam Nibbānam santato passati*). We want to be in a certain form, in a certain life, in a certain state. We crave for that. We don't want to let go of all forms, all existence. But at this stage the mind can see very clearly that the end of the process is real peace. Before the mind has developed enough energy and clarity to give up the process, although the meditator can understand that every process is unsatisfactory, the mind still falls back into watching the process.

When the mind develops enough energy, it gives up all saṅkhāras and goes into Nibbāna (*sabbam saṅkhāra-pavattam vissajjetvā Nibbānam eva pakkhandati*). If the person cannot do that, the mind again and again comes back and watches the saṅkhāra, the arising and passing away of mental and physical process (*no ce passati punaappuna saṅkhārārammaṇam eva hutvā pavattati*). This happens again and again. The mind sometimes wants to reach into Nibbāna but there is not enough energy to do that. It falls back and watches physical and mental process

arising and passing away until it builds up more and more clarity. When this happens, one should understand that process. Some people become discouraged and say "I fall back again and again". However this is very natural. A few weeks ago I told you that you hold on to a rope, there is a very deep gorge, a deep gap between two mountains, like a deep opening in between; there is a tree and some kind of very thick vine hanging there. You take hold of the rope and swing; but when you feel that your swinging is not strong enough you are afraid that you will fall in between. So you cannot let go of the rope and come back to this side again. Then you build up more momentum and swing again. After a few times you feel that you have developed enough momentum, then you swing and let go and you are going very fast, very fast and then... you let go of the rope. At that moment you are not on this side and not on the other side either. You are in the middle but you have let go of this side. Can you come back? No, no way you can come back because you have let go of the rope. Although you are not on that side, you are going there with all the energy and momentum you have built up. No way to stop it anymore. Having let go of this side means, you are not watching the physical and mental phenomena anymore, and you are seeing that the mind is going towards total cessation, the end of physical and mental phenomena.

So from this saṅkhārupekkhā-ñāṇa the next ñāṇa which, if and when it happens, is this state where you have already let go. This swinging state is called *saṅkhārupekkhā* and *parikamma anuloma gotrabhū*. *Parikamma* means trying again and

again, preparing your mind, developing momentum and *anuloma* means the same mental state but with more momentum. *Gotrabhū* means you have let go, that means you are cut off from this side already but not yet on the other side.

Then you fall into the cessation of mental and physical process, *Nibbāna*, which is called *magga* consciousness. It happens very quickly, in a succession of very short moments, because each mental state lasts for a very short period, maybe a thousandth or a millionth of a second. Each mental state happens consecutively and at that moment you cannot return anymore. After that, there is total quietness, total stillness, nothing arising, nothing passing away, no watching anymore, because you cannot watch anymore.

Before you go into the *nibbānic* state you can see from the outside what it could be because you understand that if this mental and physical process stops there will be total peace, but you are not yet in it. When you are in it you are not observing it anymore. Because to be able observe it you must be out of it. That's why when the person is in this *nibbānic* state one is not watching *Nibbāna* anymore; one cannot watch it. One cannot even watch one's mental state.

Only after this state, there is another insight which is called *paccavekkhana*, where you reflect, "something has happened! a moment ago it was very peaceful, there was no arising no passing away, very calm, very clear, total peace". That zooming into and going into cessation is a very powerful state of mind. Once that has happened, you feel totally different. After a while, when

you come out of it, because magga happens one moment only, phala happens for two moments, maybe three depending on the energy. Then after that you reflect on what happened. When this reflection is happening the mind is very calm and peaceful, you look back and think about it. This paccavekkhana-ñāṇa is actually a kind of thinking. You think and understand that total peace is total cessation from mental and physical process.

The person reflects on many things, on magga, phala, Nibbāna and eradication of defilements and those defilements that are still left. The first stage of enlightenment eradicates wrong view of self and doubt, *diṭṭhi* and *vicikicchā*, total eradication. Even in the first insight you have overcome some of *diṭṭhi* and *vicikicchā*, wrong view of self and doubts about what happened before and later, and many other doubts. In this state there is total eradication of doubt and wrong view.

So here's a few very important words, a few sentences.

*Tikkhavisadasūrabhāvena saṅkhāresu ajjhupekkhane
sijhamāne tam panetam saṅkhārupekkhā-ñāṇam
anekavāram pavattamānam pariþākagamanena
anulomañāṇassa paccayabhāvam gacchantam.*

~VsmA II, 459

Tikkha means very sharp. *Visada* means very clear, and *sūra-bhāvena*, which is very important, *sūra* means very brave. We are so attached to things that even if they are very painful we cannot let go. Even to let go of them we need a lot of courage,

trust and courage in the process; that is why sometimes people can feel that something is going to happen and if it does, everything will be changed. “I will not be the same anymore”, and they stop there, they don’t want to change; they want to be the same.

We have very conflicting motivations.

*We want to change, we want to be free,
we want to be peaceful but we want to stay the same.*

Many psychologists point this out.

Some people are in a neurotic state, but they are attached to their neurotic state it. Some people are in depression but they are attached to their depression. It’s very difficult to understand but it is really true. Although we know that this process is tiring, so painful but when the moment comes, when we can see that something is going to happen and we will be totally changed, that we won’t be the same anymore, that we won’t feel the same anymore, we are afraid!

We need a lot of courage to change.

*Without changing how can we really grow!
If we want to stay the same we cannot grow.*

So this word *sūrabhāvena* is very important. With a lot of courage we keep watching the *saṅkhāras* (*saṅkhāresu ajjhupekkhane*), watching the phenomena, the process, arising and passing

away. That insight of the process (*tam panetam saṅkhārupekkhā-ñānam*) happens many times (*anekavāram pavattamānam*); again and again, it builds up more and more momentum and energy, becoming ripe (*paripākagamanena*).

For some insights to become really ripe and mature it needs to happen again and again, so that it becomes stronger and stronger. It is like anger. If you think of something that makes you angry, the more you think about it the angrier you become and you explode. It is a similar process, you look at the saṅkhāra and become more and more detached, until you are really ready to let go... then you let go now!

*The moment you let go, you are free.
We want to be free and we are holding on to
'I want to be free, I want to be free' but
why don't we let go?*

We think that in this mental and physical process there is something worth keeping, there is something that belongs to me, there is something that I like, although I don't like part of it but there is a part of it that I like.

*We are holding on to it, but when you really see
that there is nothing to keep, nothing to hold on to,
it does not belong to me, I don't want it anymore,
when you are totally in that state you just let go.*

A lot of people used to come to my teacher, they used to say “Venerable Sir, I really don’t like to be reborn anymore, I am totally disenchanted with life, it is so tiring, very small enjoyment and too much pain, too much burden”. At that time I was a very young monk, ordained only a few months. My teacher said “if you really don’t want it you won’t get it”, I was very surprised, I don’t want it but.... Is it that simple? Later I understood that although we say we don’t want it, we are still holding on to it “I don’t want it, I don’t want it”. Why don’t we let go? My teacher’s way of talking was very gentle. He never put in too much energy. He never tried to convince anybody. He never tried to convert anybody. When many of his supporters and students asked the same questions, monks and lay people, he would say “if you really don’t want it you won’t get it; you are getting it because you want it”. It is that simple.

We are getting it because we want it.

*We are unhappy because we want unhappiness,
but we are denying it. We say we only want happiness, but
what do you mean by happiness? Fulfilling desire?*

If we really don’t want it, then we are free!

*The courage to change is very important,
we need a lot of courage,
to change, to learn, to grow.*

I think there is a lot of psychological significance in this point: to be brave, and also to be pure.

*To want to be free means to want to be pure.
If we really want to be free, we must purify ourselves:
Purifying sīla, purifying samādhi and purifying wisdom.
Without purification we cannot be free.*

That is why this big text book on meditation is called the The Path of Purification (Visuddhi-Magga). By purification we become free, this is very clear.

If we really want to be free we have to really look deep inside, what am I doing and with what motivation? Are my sīla, precepts, behavior and motivation pure? Is my mind clear and pure? Am I brave enough? If we are worthy of it, we will get it. So we need to live our lives in such a way that we are worthy of it. We want something but if we are not worthy of it we will not get it. Any kind of thing, e.g. if I want your respect, if I am worthy of it, I will get it. If I want your mettā, your loving kindness, if I am worthy of it I will get it. So whatever happens in our life happens because we deserve it. We don't get anything undeservedly. A lot of us complain "Oh! Why should this happen to me?" Just tell yourself "because I deserve it".

*Whether it is good or not good,
things happen to us because we deserve it.*

Once you understand this very clearly you stop blaming.

You even stop blaming your kamma.

You stop blaming your parents or the government.

*We are blaming, we are putting responsibility
on another person or situation.*

We are not taking enough responsibility.

*Once you see that things happen to you because
you deserve it, then you learn and grow and change.*

Then things get better and better.

*This right mental attitude is very important
in everything we do.*

In the last few moments of this breakthrough, among these three characteristics of process, anicca, dukkha, anatta, one of them will become very clear. For example if a person can see anicca, arising and passing away, more clearly, they will see anicca, anicca, anicca very clearly, and will not switch to another characteristic. This is another important point to remember. In the beginning stage sometimes you switch from anicca to dukkha or anatta and back and forth. Then, by staying with one characteristic only, the characteristic becomes clear.

These things are very difficult to understand if you haven't experienced them, but once you do it is quite natural. You see that it is quite natural that things should happen that way. In that last moment you either observe physical process (*rūpa*) or mental process (*vedanā, sañña, saṅkhāra* or *viññāṇa*). From the five khandhas you observe only one because you cannot observe

all five in the same moment, as one consciousness can observe only one object at a time, because you have to observe it repeatedly. If for example you are observing vedanā, you'll observe vedanā and anicca, or vedanā-dukkha, or vedanā-anatta. If you are observing rūpa you see rūpa as anicca, dukkha or anatta; only one object and only one aspect of the three characteristics repeatedly. You don't switch to another object or another characteristic. These are very important points to know.

That's why when in your meditation you are paying attention to vedanā, and it becomes more and more clear, stay with it, it is very important to make it even clearer. With any kind of mental state, pay attention to it again and again; make it more and more clear. You understand all those things in general, but if you understand one thing completely that is enough.

From the moment of letting go, the mind cannot observe any of the five khandhas; it cannot see impermanence, unsatisfactoriness or non-self, non ego anymore. It can only see total quietness, cessation. Then the person understands that Nibbāna means total cessation of phenomena. This is very difficult to talk about; it is not something that does not exist; because if we say that Nibbāna means "nothing exists", then we can also say that Nibbāna does not exist.

Nibbāna is an experience.

*At that moment, the object and the watching stop,
the two things stop. A person feels that
everything has come to an end.*

How do you give an example of that? This state is beyond words. We cannot talk about it. It is like as if you are carrying a very big burden and you drop it! Or you are pulling something very heavy and the rope snaps!

A Pāli sentence which is short and clear:

*Yam kiñci samudayadhammam,
sabbam tam nirodhadhamman ti.* ~SN v.423

Samudayadhammam means the nature to arise. Whatever (*Yam kiñci*) has the nature to arise, all that (*sabbam tam*) has the nature to disappear (*nirodhadhammam*). You see this very clearly: anything that has the nature to arise has the nature to completely pass away.

After that insight the person reflects on the experience and sees that the ending of saṅkhāra is total Nibbāna, total peace. And after a while one comes back to meditation again. When the person comes back to meditation again, he begins from arising and passing away again, not from saṅkhārupekkhā, the tenth insight, but he begins from the fourth insight again. This is also another aspect of the breakthrough. After the breakthrough you can see arising and passing away again, very clearly.

There are a few important things about what changes. The person has overcome sakkāya-diṭṭhi, believing in self, vicikicchā, doubts. Also *sīlabbataparāmāsa* is very important. There are many methods of meditation and many people are meditating. We can say that they are meditating, meditation has

many aspects. But if the person believes that just practicing samatha can bring total freedom, this is a kind of sīlabbataparāmāsa. There were some ascetics in the time of the Buddha, who believed that just by behaving like a cow it would free you; you would just burn out all your defilements. Practicing like an animal, and torturing the body you'd burn out all your defilements, you'd become pure. That is a kind of wrong practice. Sīlabbataparāmāsa means wrong practice, practicing something wrong and believing that it will lead to freedom.

*Once a person has breakthrough,
at this point he can understand that
no other practice can really lead to liberation.
Only that practice which has this Eightfold Noble Path
can lead to liberation, freedom, to the experience of
Nibbāna; no other practice can lead to that.*

Any practice which does not have this eightfold Noble Path, although it can give you some sort of quietness and peacefulness of mind, can never lead you to liberation. It has its own value, just like practicing samatha it has its own value but it will not lead to liberation. It might be a stage of your practice but not the end stage; it cannot lead to the real end, the real goal. There are many other practices and many people say that, if you practice that path, that will also lead to Nibbāna.

No, the only way that leads to Nibbāna is watching your own mental and bodily processes.

For the foundation, you keep your sīla pure; you keep your livelihood pure, because without that sort of purity the mind will never build enough courage, momentum and clarity. If you live with guilt you'll never be free to observe things clearly and let them go. Guilt is a prison; it traps you where you are. Whenever you feel guilt or shame you cannot make any progress.

*Keeping sīla pure, your livelihood pure,
keeping your mind very pure is necessary.*

*Without that sort of purity there
cannot be real freedom.*

Some people meditate and think that it is not really important to keep the five precepts; they don't really try their best to keep them. If you don't keep the five precepts and you meditate and believe that will lead you to liberation; that is sīlabbataparāmāsa, wrong practice, clinging to wrong practice, believing in wrong practice.

Some people in their meditation sometimes experience a very pure and peaceful mental state once in while, and they mistake it for real Nibbāna. When the person experiences real Nibbāna, he can see that it was not real Nibbāna. Mistakes about Nibbāna are also overcome. Only in the third stage of enlightenment, can the person totally overcome greed, anger

and frustration. The first stage of enlightenment does not eradicate desire, greed, anger or frustration, only wrong view and doubts. A sotāpanna still enjoys sense pleasure, but he has his sīla very pure and he will never break his sīla, not even the desire to break his sīla. For example, he enjoys good food too, but he will never break his sīla to get his food or any other thing like that. His livelihood is very pure also. Even if he is still doing business he will never cheat. He may get upset, sad, and angry but whenever he takes time to watch that mental state, he can see that it is just a mental state and come out of it very quickly. He will not be trapped in that mental state.

The second stage of enlightenment, does not totally eradicate any defilements. It only weakens lobha and dosa. It weakens, greed anger, frustration. Even after the third stage of enlightenment this person still has some defilements, still clinging to a very special life, a pure existence, not enjoying his sense pleasure, no anger, but he still enjoys pure peaceful happiness. Also there is some sort of satisfaction which is very close to a kind of pride. You are very satisfied by your achievements; this is a very subtle form of pride and clinging, a kind of desire. You see some very subtle forms of pride, of attachment and that can be overcome only by the fourth enlightenment stage. If a person is a judge and he becomes a sotāpanna, he will never do anything wrong, never take bribe or be corrupted, he is very fair and honest.

The first enlightenment stage eradicates the hindrance (*nīvarana*) of vicikicchā (doubt), and the hindrances of very strong greed (*kāmacchanda*), very strong aversion (*vyāpāda*).

Regret (*kukkucca*) is overcome by the third stage of enlightenment. This is a very important thing to think about. In some other teachings we hear that if a person has done something wrong and he thinks about his misdeed and feels unhappy about it, laments, cries and beats himself up, they think that this is a good thing to do, that regret is a good thing. But in the teachings of the Buddha, this is not good. What do we mean by that? If a person has done something very wrong, then is it very good not to regret? Regret that comes with deep understanding is good, which means that you don't go on crying about it, but you learn from it, "yes I have done something wrong and I will not do it again. If I have to suffer for it, ok I am brave enough to suffer for my own deeds, but I am not going to cry for it anymore."

*No use in just dwelling on what you have done,
feeling unhappy about it without being able to
do anything else, don't waste your time.*

*If you have done something wrong learn from it and
correct yourself, go on and do something good,
go on, go ahead with your work.
You see, the Buddha teaching is to go ahead
and to learn and to grow.*

You know the root meaning of the word *kukkucca*? Although we translate it as regret, remorse, the root word for *kukkucca* is *kud* and *kata*, the two together make the word *kukkucca*. *Kud*

means bad, *kata* means done. But that doesn't explain the meaning very clearly. The real meaning of this word is that if you are in remorse and that is something very ugly, that in itself is something unwholesome. Look deep into your mind, when you are in remorse, what is your mental state? Is it peaceful? No! If you look at it very deeply, you see that the more you regret, the more it shows that you are clinging to it and that you are clinging to self also. It is very interesting to look at these things. Even a sotāpanna cannot really overcome, *kukkucca*, not even the second stage of enlightenment, *sakadāgāmī*, can overcome that, only the third stage, *anāgāmī*, can eradicate regret and remorse.

Moral shame, moral dread is associated with understanding and wisdom. Because of this, you are not going to do that. But what if you have done something wrong, and you feel regret? And when you feel ashamed why do you feel ashamed? Is it because somebody has found out? If that is the reason, then that is not real moral shame. This is just protecting your self image, even bigger ego; it is protecting your ego.

*Real moral dread and shame is
associated with wisdom... this is shameful,
I won't do that.*

*If you have done something you realize
is very shameful then you won't do it anymore.*

You don't go on living with that shame and regret and not being able to do anything better. You have to overcome that

shame and regret and go on and do something better, change yourself, correct yourself.

One must understand it with compassion and forgiveness because it is natural for us to make mistakes. Even Venerable Ānanda did something very terrible when he was fulfilling his *pāramīs*. Even the Buddha-to-be, did something terrible, he seduced a woman. Venerable Ānanda was once a goldsmith and a lot of rich and beautiful women came to him to make jewelry, and he seduced a lot of them. That does not mean that it is ok to do that, but because of greed, desire, lust people do such things. Even from those mistakes you can learn and grow and become liberated.

The person, who is enlightened, keeps his *sīla* pure and intact with no need for justification! I hear a lot of justifications, people say “although he is enlightened, because of too much temptation he did this and that”, justifications! Five precepts is the minimum, there is no justification. In the time of the Buddha there were many other religious groups and some of them believed that, although the person has attained the first stage of enlightenment, because he still has greed, anger, frustration, pride he can be reborn in the lower realm. Buddha said, no. Although there is still some greed, anger, aversion, pride, the mind is pure enough not to deserve such a lower life.

*Our life is the result of our mind.
When the mind becomes pure and noble,
it cannot manifest in a lower form of life.*

That person can feel that, “I cannot be reborn in the lower realms”. The first stage eradicates as well telling lies (*musāvāda*) but the rest of the verbal misdeeds can still happen, a sotāpanna can still talk about things in the newspaper, all rubbish! Misdeeds (*micchā-kammanto*) like killing, stealing, committing adultery, no! a sotāpanna can never do that, and also wrong livelihood (*micchā-ājīvo*), cheating in business or things like that.

The second stage of enlightenment does not eradicate any defilements, it only weakens them. And the third stage of enlightenment eradicates wrong thoughts (*micchā-sankappo*), slandering (*pisunāvācā*) and very harsh words (*pharusāvācā*). Only the fourth stage of enlightenment can eradicate *samphap-palāpa* ‘talking about newspapers’, and *micchā-vāyāma* (wrong effort), *micchā-samādhi* (wrong concentration), *micchā-vimutti* (wrong liberation), *micchā-ñāṇa* (wrong knowledge).

QUESTION & ANSWER:

A Even though the person has reached the first stage of enlightenment, he still has some defilements, please understand that. Many people say that, “this person is supposed to be enlightened and look, he enjoys reading the newspaper, and he enjoys good food” or whatever. As long as he keeps his five precepts it is good enough.

QUESTION &

ANSWER: Some people asked even the Buddha exactly the same question in a slightly different way. They asked “are there Arahants in other religious groups?” Buddha didn’t say that there are or there are not Arahants in other religious groups. His answer was “anybody who practices the Eightfold Noble Path completely can become enlightened and can become an Arahant”. The criterion is the Eightfold Noble Path. Just study the Eightfold Noble Path and see if you leave out even one aspect of the Path, see what will happen. This is just very natural.

Think of the eight factors and see if you can leave even one of them out, and still believe that without practicing that one factor one can become really enlightened or liberated.

QUESTION &

ANSWER: In the Eightfold Noble Path, *vipassanā* is included as *sammā-sati* and *sammā-samādhi*. As for right livelihood, right view, right thinking, how can a person with wrong view and wrong thinking become enlightened? Without right livelihood, without right speech, without right action, without right concentration and right mindfulness, without right effort, without *sīla*, *saṃādhi*, *paññā*, all three, nobody can really become liberated. A person before becoming enlightened must at least be practicing completely the

Eightfold, Noble Path; it does not matter for how long or how short a time.

QUESTION &

ANSWER: Enlightenment goes stage by stage, but it can happen in a few moments, in a few minutes, in a few hours from one stage to another. In the texts, I have also read that some people became Arahants even in one sitting. Their spiritual qualities are very highly developed. Once they know how to practice, they practice it and breakthrough all the four stages, in one sitting.

QUESTION &

ANSWER: There is no gap in between. You are not thinking about anything else. One consciousness after another is repeatedly observing very strongly, very clearly, only one aspect of the three characteristics, so that clarity becomes stronger and stronger, and at last... total let go! These are very strong and powerful insights. Even before that you can see anicca, dukkha or anatta in a series, without any gap in between, but the insight is weak. But in the last few insights watching becomes stronger, stronger and stronger. At last the mind is really ready to let go!

QUESTION &

ANSWER: We can see one aspect at a time, not all at the same time.

QUESTION: *How do you really know that you are not thinking?*

ANSWER: When you really see, you are not thinking.

There is no thinking at all. Just like a dark night, you are looking up at the sky and suddenly there is a flash of lightning, you see it and it disappears. At that moment you are not imaging, but you are really seeing it and experiencing it. When it happens it's very different from imagination.

In the beginning stage it happens once in a while because you cannot be mindful continuously all the time, and even if you meditate regularly sometimes you see, sometimes you don't see, with different degrees also. Sometimes you see it vaguely, sometimes it's clearer.

*Upekkhā is necessary, total equanimity,
total detachment, total balance, just very clear, detached,...
watching, watching, not thinking at all when
the mind becomes very close to breakthrough,
no thinking at all, things become very fast.*

QUESTION &

ANSWER: From the fourth insight the mind becomes more and more calm, more and more concentrated. Only briefly in between you might be thinking, but you notice it and it goes away. It is not persistent anymore. It comes very weakly and you can see it and it goes away. In later insights, especially ādīnava-ñāna, you begin to think a lot, "oh, so many disadvantages, what is there to enjoy, what is there

to be happy about?" If you think too much you become very unhappy. Not to think is very important. When you feel disenchanted and become unhappy about the process, if you stop meditating and think about the unhappiness in your daily life you feel like it is unbearable. You feel upset about many things and from seeing the disadvantages and being disenchanted or unhappy about the physical and mental process you become unhappy about your life situation and that becomes very depressing.

When you are experiencing that stage it is very important not to think at all.

*Thinking is very dangerous, thinking can create so much.
You become emotional also. Real insight is not emotional,
it is clarity of understanding, wisdom,
here is no satisfaction, there is no enjoyment in this
process anymore and that is very clear.*

But if you think about it, you become emotional, unhappy and depressed and all things irritate you more and more, people, noise, and other things irritate you. You get angry sometimes and that becomes an unwholesome mental state, not wholesome anymore. The insight is very wholesome, but when you become angry, upset and depressed it becomes unwholesome. That is why it is very important not to think. Thinking process, combined with some samādhi makes things become even more intense. Samādhi makes everything very

intense. If you want to enjoy anything make your mind calm and concentrated and you can enjoy it more.

When I read books and my mind is very agitated, I cannot enjoy them. If I really want to enjoy a book, a story, a poem or a saying, I need to make my mind very calm and peaceful. Every word becomes very rich in meaning; I can really enjoy what I am reading. Even scenery, if my mind is calm and I look at the sun rising or sun setting I can get absorbed and it becomes so wonderful, the world is so wonderful. When the mind is agitated, you cannot enjoy it. The same thing, when the mind is concentrated and you think of something frightening, it becomes even more frightening. When you are too agitated, you are not frightened, you are not angry, you are not anything at all, you are too disturbed. A disturbed mind, a very agitated mind cannot take in anything strongly. There is a lot of moha. *Uddhacca* is very close together with moha; *uddhacca* means scattered mind, agitated.

Whenever the mind becomes quiet and concentrated, do not imagine anything, because imagination becomes very real, good or bad. The most important thing is that, when a thought comes pay very close attention to that thought. If you pay very close attention to it, it will go away. Whenever it comes, just pay very close attention.

*Just paying attention to the thought will make it go away,
and then you bring the mind back to
the object of meditation.*

So don't encourage the thinking. Sometimes people enjoy thinking. If you find that you are enjoying thinking, watch that enjoyment, and watch the wanting to think. Thinking is what creates the 'I am'. When you stop thinking you become very unreal sometimes, you feel that something is missing, nothing to hold on to. In a way thinking is holding on, grasping, even when you are angry about somebody, you keep thinking about that person. It means that you are attached to that idea, you are attached to what happened and you cannot let go.



ten

More About Nibbāna & Beyond

When I do something I like preparing. Preparation is very important. In whatever we do; to be prepared is very important, bodily and mentally. Whatever you want to do, if psychologically you prepare yourself, the rest happens so naturally. If you are very well prepared, you don't struggle so much. I look forward to this retreat and I hope you'll enjoy it. I hope you'll experience calmness, peacefulness, clarity, joy. Clarity also means, seeing things very clearly. I would like to continue the discussion from last week, regarding insight knowledge.

Going back to some of the insights again, you see that in your meditation you come to a point where you see that arising and passing away is so tiring, and you don't want to be with it anymore, you want to be away from it, get out of it, escape from it. This stage it is called Muñcitukamyatā-ñāṇa, which means 'wanting to escape'. Sometimes you think, "if I just stop meditating, if I don't watch those things arising and passing away, I'll feel more peaceful". When you do that, you do feel more peaceful, because the concentration, the equanimity, the detach-

ment it is so great, that even though you stop meditating you feel more peaceful, and you can experience this peacefulness “Oh! This is peaceful” and you can enjoy this peace. But doing that it is not the right thing. Meditation is very enjoyable, but if you just enjoy it you lose it. It is something like a ‘catch twenty two,’ you realize that just stopping meditating is not real escape, because you are still in the arising and passing away, you are still in the process. After a while you even lose your clarity and you feel your mind becoming painful and agitated again. You understand, “I don’t want to feel that agitation anymore”, because agitation is so painful, distraction is so painful. Calmness, quietness, peacefulness, is so much better. So, you come back to meditation. You pay attention to any sensation in the body, any kind of feeling, any kind of thought and any kind of emotion. But here, mostly, there are only very subtle emotions; this wanting to escape is like an emotion. You feel trapped in the process, so you want to get out from it, “get me out of here”.

This is like an emotion. Sometimes it can cause slight agitation, but you understand that the way to get out from it is to watch it even closer.

People are looking for escapes in many of life’s situations also. When we have difficulties, frustration; we try to escape from them. Many people try to escape in such a horrible way. Wanting to escape is okay, but what is the right thing to do to escape?

*The right thing to do is to watch the process more closely,
to understand it more thoroughly.*

*No matter what, even in your life any situation which
is painful, if you want to escape or overcome it,
the best way to escape is to pay more attention,
to study it more thoroughly,
to understand it in every detail, completely.*

Complete understanding is the only way to overcome it.

*There is no other way better than that,
no matter what the situation is, either meditation or
other worldly situation. This is the right attitude.*

Once you get to this point in meditation, and understand that, the only way to overcome any painful situation is to pay more attention to it, to understand it even more deeply, thoroughly and completely. After that, even in your life, when you face a difficult situation you don't try to run away from it, you don't turn away; you don't shut your eyes. You try to look at it more closely "What is happening now? I want to understand it even more deeply".

*The insight you get in meditation is applicable in
your every day life, in your worldly problems.*

*You develop the right attitude to live
the whole of your life, not only in meditation.
For your whole life this is the right attitude.*

After paying even more attention ‘willingly,’ and this is very important, because you are willing to look at it again, because you pay so close an attention, there is no other desire anymore, no agitation anymore; you don’t even want to escape from it anymore, because you are paying such a close attention. So, see this point very clearly. You pay so complete attention that there is no other desire anymore. That complete attention makes the mind very balanced; there is no split or division. Before this when you meditate, you want to escape “I don’t want to do this anymore, I don’t want to see it anymore; what shall I do now? Shall I stop meditating?” Your mind is not really whole; you are not paying whole attention. But when you come to this equanimity state you pay complete attention, “No matter what happens, even if I die in this process it is ok”. You don’t want to do anything else, you just want to pay complete attention and then the meditation becomes really mature. The culmination of meditation, “nothing else I want to, do no matter what happens, even if I die in this process I am willing to look at this process, look at it... look at it...”.

That sort of whole hearted attention makes the mind really settle down. Even in your life situation when you decided “Well this situation is very difficult now, very painful, but I will really pay all my attention, I will really look at it”, the moment you decide that, you’ll find that you calm down, not so agitated anymore. That decision is very important. When you are paying complete attention, willingly, your mind calms down and becomes more balanced, no extremes, no attachments. Before that when your mind calms down, you feel so happy, you feel

so much joy that sometimes you get agitated and get attached to that happiness and joy. But now peacefulness becomes even greater but you are not even attached to that peacefulness. Your equanimity, your balance is so great.

*It is very peaceful but
without any attachment even to peacefulness,
and there is no desire to escape.*

It sounds very paradoxical, but when you are willing to look at it, everything comes into balance. When you pay more and more attention, things become more and more clear, the mind becomes stronger and stronger, mindfulness becomes stronger and stronger, and every noticing becomes so sharp that with every noticing, without any thoughts at all, you see very clearly the nature of it, either impermanent, unsatisfactory or no being, no ego, no self, no lasting essence, no control. You can see any of these aspects, very clearly with every noticing without thinking. It is so amazing that in a very short moment — one noticing is very, very short — when noticing is very sharp... in that moment... this wisdom and clarity can be so clear without thoughts.

All our life, when we understand something, we understand it with a thinking process. We think about it and we understand it, but in this moment although we don't have any thoughts at all, every noticing brings so much wisdom, so much clarity. This is because there is not thought, because whenever you think, your mind is divided.

Only when you stop thinking then your mind is whole.

*When you stop thinking and start paying more and
more attention every noticing becomes
very clear, very clear, very clear.*

*And for the last three moments, very sharp,
powerful clarity, and then the mind let's go!*

The mind is ready to let go.

At that moment you are not seeing or experiencing any bodily or mental process anymore. Your mind is plunging into.... Cessation.... In that moment everything comes to a stop, and there is a very deep peacefulness and calmness... of a very short duration, and when you come out of it... again.... A very few moments of peacefulness and calmness still go on, maybe three or four mental states, mind moments. After that some thoughts come again and we can think about it... something has happened, very powerful, but very calm and peaceful.

From that experience you understand the nature of it very clearly; this is real peacefulness, real calmness, and real freedom. Then you reflect about yourself again, something has changed! Even if you haven't read any books, or don't have any knowledge about it, still when you think about yourself you know something has changed. It changes your personality, your perspective. You know that there isn't anything that lasts, there is no ego, there is no self. Naturally, your morality, your keeping the precepts becomes more natural for you. You don't have to try to restrain yourself, from breaking the precepts, and you

know that you will not break them; it just becomes natural. You know that you don't have doubts about non-self, future lives or about the Buddha, Dhamma and Saṅgha. Often, for those who have no knowledge even, they spontaneously feel a very deep gratitude, very deep and powerful gratitude for the Buddha and his teachings, and for the Saṅgha also that keeps this teaching alive. A feeling of tremendous gratitude arises. One person told me that there was so much gratitude that he cried tears of joy ... "This teaching is so true! This is true freedom!" Many thoughts can come, these are the main ones.

If you have reached that stage you have eradicated micchā-ditṭhi, belief in self, in permanent ego. There is no such thing as permanent ego, self. Everything is in a flux in a change. And vicikicchā, or doubt whether I will be born or will not be born or this or that, all the vicikicchā is gone. Believing in other kinds of practices which don't have these Eightfold Noble Path characteristics or believing even in samatha meditation. Some people believe that, if you practice samatha and get absorbed in some states, that is freedom, liberation, Nibbāna.

*However when you have experienced
this through vipassanā, you can understand that
there is no other way to be liberated.*

*The only way to be liberated is to watch these
bodily and mental processes through and through.
There is no other way for liberation.*

To be able to watch this bodily and mental process, you need to purify your conduct, keep your *sīla* very pure. You need to concentrate your mind on some object, which is body or mind, or any other object as a foundation, like breath or whatever. Calm your mind down and make it very clear and pure: purification of mind, of thought. Just by watching this bodily and mental process you purify yourself more and more: purification of views, purification of whether this is Path or not Path. By purification only you become liberated, there is no other way. If we want to be free we need to purify ourselves and you understand that this is the only way to liberation.

Jealousy or envy (*issā*) and *macchariya* (stinginess) are overcome as well. This means that you are willing to share whatever you have with others and you are not envious about others. If you have something extra and somebody needs it, you are willing and happy to give it away. But that does not mean that you give away everything you have. If somebody really needs it badly, you are willing to share it with that person. When somebody is doing well and is happy, you are not jealous. I don't know the exact meaning of the words jealous and envy but what it means here is that, when somebody is doing well and you are not, how do you feel? You don't feel happy "Oh! If I were in that place, if I get that instead of him" you think in that way. But when you have become enlightened you never think like that.

You actually think how fortunate that person is, he is enjoying all that goodness, you are very happy for that person. This *muditā*, sympathetic joy also becomes very natural.

Most of us, more or less, before we become enlightened, feel that we're unhappy about others doing better than us. What an ugly state of mind. And what do we get out of it? We cannot love that person, we cannot appreciate that person. Why do people feel so lonely? Because of jealousy, envy, covetousness, we feel so lonely. There is so much enmity and danger in the world. Why? Because somebody has got something that I don't have and I want it, I will even get it unlawfully. Some people are so clever that they can twist the whole thing and make it look very beautiful. So this mind is very tricky and deceitful.

Once you see it so clearly, you cannot do it anymore, there is no deceit or trickery anymore. You become very honest; you can see things so clearly. You may still feel desire for something because the first stage of enlightenment does not eradicate all the desires, all the greed. Greed is still there but it is not strong enough to break your precepts. You'll not kill or steal in order to get something, you won't tell lies or commit adultery or take intoxicants. There is no desire at all for doing this.

You are not controlling yourself; you just don't want to do it.

*It becomes so easy and natural that
no struggle or effort is needed to control yourself.*

Before enlightenment we know that it's not good to break the five precepts and we try hard to keep the precepts. Sometimes the temptation is so strong, that we struggle. It is very tiring, sometimes we give in and regret it again and take the

precepts again. One of my friends said “why do you take the precepts every day? Do you break them every day?” After the first stage of enlightenment it just becomes natural, and there is no desire to break precepts. Can you see how free you can feel? Even though you have desire to enjoy your sensual pleasures, because you have no envy, jealousy or covetousness, you’re so free. And even when you enjoy those desires it is not the same anymore. Before, we would think this is real happiness, real pleasure, real joy, but after that, even though you can let yourself enjoy sensual pleasures, you know that this is not the real thing. You don’t get caught in it. Even if you enjoy it, you are somehow free, free to enjoy it. And when something unfortunate happens, you meditate and you can see that this is another mental state, you can become free very easily again.

Before meditating we think that things last, that they are pleasurable and can bring us happiness. We really believe in permanence: permanent person, permanent ego. But after that this *micchā-diṭṭhi* is gone. But *micchā-saṃñā* and *micchā-citta* still lingers. Sometimes the experience feels like it is permanent but when we look very closely, we realize that it is not. It is like you are living all the time on the border line, when you are willing, you can see....

So when you feel happiness, when you enjoy sensual pleasures, the experience seems the same but when you really look at it you know that “no, this will never really bring happiness; no real happiness there.”

Although sometimes you enjoy it you can also let go of it easily because you know that there is no real, lasting happiness there.

A friend of mine said that after one becomes enlightened, one can really enjoy sensual pleasure; it is great because you don't get so caught in it. It's very difficult to talk about it, but this is the way it feels.

That's why we can see some people enjoying sense-pleasures even though they are enlightened.

They are not caught in it.

It's the same with anicca, dukkha, anatta. There's no *attā-ditṭhi* anymore but the person behaves the same way like a person. They will say 'I', 'You'. They use the same language but always knowing that there is no such thing as real, lasting ego. So this is the difference; very deep. But this will be eradicated in the fourth stage of enlightenment.

So you become very free; sometimes you'll laugh, sometimes you'll cry but you are not caught in it.

You can overcome it very easily.

Sometimes even crying feels good.

Is that possible?

Anyway when you come across that you will understand it. It's very hard to talk about these things. So you have eradicated *ditṭhi, vicikicchā, sīlabbataparāmāsa, issā, macchariya*.

You don't want anything unlawfully from another person.

*If you have extra you want to share that
with another person. Being very generous,
but not wasting anything.*

You don't go and throw away everything you have on the street. If you know that somebody really needs it you will give it.

So this reflection goes on for a long time again and again; reflecting on your sīla “I cannot break any precepts anymore, I don't want to break them”. And reflecting on the impurities you have eradicated. You can see that there is no diṭṭhi, vicikicchā, sīlabbataparāmāsa, issā, macchariya, but you can also see what is left. You can see that there is still desire for sensual pleasure, and that you can still get upset, but even though you have craving you will not break any precepts. Even though you get angry you will not go and kill. Your anger or craving is not strong enough to harm another being, or even yourself. The more you reflect on Buddha, Dhamma, Saṅgha the more gratitude you feel. It is very hard to explain the feeling. Sometimes people reflect only on one aspect, not necessarily all of them. Some people reflect on one of the experiences only, like the moment when the mind becomes free, or the nature of that freedom... it is so free... there is no rising and passing away, total silence, quietness. This is thinking of Nibbāna again: that moment when the person has experienced Nibbāna. What is Nibbāna? How do you talk about it? There is no rising, no passing away, there is no mental process, there is no physical process, you are not experiencing any

mental process, you are not experiencing any physical process, you are not even thinking, “oh...this is so peaceful”.... because at that moment you cannot think about anything.... The mind becomes very quiet and peaceful and experiences that peacefulness without even thinking about it... only later you can think about it.

So, what is the nature of Nibbāna? Is it non existence? No it is not! It is not nothingness. Because if it was, anybody could experience it at any moment, just think of nothingness... and feel free. No, you cannot do that because when you think of nothingness there is thinking.

*When you are experiencing Nibbāna
there is no thinking at all... not even of Nibbāna.*

*What is the nature of Nibbāna?
In most texts the simile given is a flame
which has gone out!
A flame burning and... went out, what is left?
Not nothingness!!*

Or, if I make a sound... you pay close attention to the sound... now there is no sound anymore, what is there? Just quietness... is quietness real or not? How do you understand that? Can you experience quietness? Yes! So it's very similar to quietness or the flame which went out. There's no burning anymore. To understand silence or the nature of the flame that went out, first you have to pay attention to what was happening

before; to understand silence first you pay attention to the sound... that is the process. To understand what happened when the flame went out, first you pay attention to the flame. There is a process that leads to this state; it is not just an idea of nothingness. It is the nature of the process which has come to an end... the end of a process which is real peace, because whenever something is happening, arising and passing away there is no quietness, there is no peace.

Once you experience that, even though sometimes you are not experiencing it, you can get caught in other worldly things or excitements, whenever you pay attention you know that this is not the real thing, not the real happiness. You can always go back to that very quiet and peaceful state.

*After you have experienced this state,
when you meditate again, you make a determination,
“I’ll meditate and get back to that quietness,
to that peaceful state where the whole process stops.”*

You can determine the length of time — five minutes, ten minutes — to stay in that state. So, meditate again with the determination that “I am going to experience that state of quietness, peacefulness again for five minutes”, and then forget about it. While you are meditating, don’t think about anything anymore. Just pay attention to whatever is happening in the body and in the mind, do whatever you are used to doing. It does not matter what object, anything can be the object of med-

itation. Pay attention to whatever object you are used to which comes naturally and easily to you. Watch it... watch it... and it becomes clearer and clearer, very fast, very fast and it stops again and... you can get into that very peaceful state again and stay there for about the duration you have determined. This determination is very important, because if you have determined, then by practicing it you can stay there for completely five minutes or ten minutes as determined and you can keep practicing and extend the duration for half hour, an hour, two hours, the whole day!

*You need to practice in order to be able to
get to that state and stay in that state.*

*If you don't practice regularly, sometimes you might
find it very hard to get there again.*

But even though you practice and you go into that state, if you don't determine for how long you'll stay there, your mind will come out again and again, in and out,... in and out... it can happen like that all the time. If you want to stay there for a long time you have to make the determination. So, you meditate, make the determination "I'll get into that state again for five minutes, but if any danger should happen, I will come out of it". This is a kind of suggestion also, when you are deep inside there, if any danger happens, spontaneously you will come out of it and deal with the situation. If you don't determine like that, you might not be able to come out of it.

In the texts, there are many detailed instructions: this is what you should do; such as the right way to determine, the right way to meditate, and the requirements also such as when you want to come out of it; sometimes you have to determine "If my teacher calls me, I'll wake up." You do any kind of determination necessary that you need to do, you do that and keep practicing. Even an Arahant finds it difficult to get into that state sometimes, if there is anything worrying him.

There is a story about two monks: one a very old teacher and the other a very young one. Both had attained enlightenment, and when they reached a monastery, the teacher because of his seniority got a very nice place to stay. Because the best place goes to the senior monk and the worst place goes to the most junior monk. The younger monk, because he is younger, naturally, got a place which was not very good. But he was very content with the place he got, he was very happy, no choice, no preference. He lived in his place and meditated and enjoyed this calmness, peacefulness and quietness for the whole duration of three months, the rains retreat. But the teacher kept thinking "Oh! My little monk, his place is not very good; maybe he's not feeling very comfortable." Because of that worry the teacher could not get into that state.

*When you want to meditate,
first you must reflect on the fact that
nothing is important,
let go.*

That is why I emphasize this point again and again, in many different ways. When you meditate you must think that nothing is really important. So psychologically you distance yourself. Even when you are meditating, not only in that kind of absorbed state, but even when you sit for an hour, tell yourself "nothing is really important, I don't need to worry about anything at all." No worry about job, no worry about home for just one hour; it won't hurt anybody; just let go of everybody for one hour. When you go for the retreat, just let go of everything for those nine days.

Nothing can really happen seriously.

*Nothing is important; we have done it
for innumerable life times.*

Why is it so important?

Why can't we just let go for nine days!

If you can do that in every sitting, you'll find that your sitting becomes very easy and natural and you won't get so easily distracted. So, make the determination. We have been doing the same thing for how many years, how many life times? Why do we think that this is so important? And we will continue to be doing the same thing, we don't know for how many life times. So this kind of determination, preparing and distancing the mind is very important... but, "if anything serious should happens, I will deal with it". Sometimes people think of very insignificant things, and keep themselves worried all the time. When they talk about it, it is so laughable.

If you want to develop deeper states of enlightenment, when you sit and meditate, you should determine, “I am not going to get absorbed into that state that I already have for a certain amount of time, for a day, for two days, for ten days”, you have to determine that. This determination is very important. If a person is meditating with the intention to experience the next stage of enlightenment, he should say that “I am not going to get absorbed into that state, but I am going to meditate for the purpose of the next stage of enlightenment”. And when you say “I am not going to get into that absorption state”, you have to put a time limit, how many hours, how many days, because if you don’t do that, you sit and meditate and you get absorbed into that same state again. And if you get absorbed into the same state you cannot get to the next stage. That’s why a determination is very important.

*Buddha taught monks to make a determination
even before going to sleep.*

*When you go to sleep you tell yourself that
“Now I am going to meditate and relax and
let go of everything”.*

Sleeping is also a kind of letting go. Have you thought about it? Falling asleep is a kind of letting go. We don’t hear, we don’t see, we don’t feel anything anymore. We don’t know what’s going on around us anymore. If you really think about it, it is very scary; you have lost touch with the world. So this is a kind of letting go and we are actually doing it all the time. For some of

the people who cannot go to sleep, one of the reasons is because they can't let go, they want to keep control over their body, over their surroundings. They don't feel safe and secure. So whenever you don't feel safe and secure in a place you can't go to sleep. So Buddha said that when a monk wants to go to sleep, he should meditate, relax, let go, and determine, "I will wake up at four o'clock in the morning". If you do that regularly, you'll find that exactly at four o'clock in the morning you wake up. You set your alarm, and before your alarm goes off you're awake. You look at the clock and it's just the right time. But mostly you wake up before the alarm. I keep my alarm on all the time just in case, but always I wake up before the alarm. Get into the habit of it. You can also make the determination "the moment I wake up in the morning, I will be aware and mindful, I won't be dreaming or thinking anymore, just a very clear, awake, mindful mental state". It means that from the moment you wake up, your meditation is there. You can determine that. If it hasn't happened today keep determining and it will happen and you will feel very happy about it. The moment you wake up you're mindful, not thinking of anything. The mind is very clear and awake; no drowsiness anymore. Most people when they wake up they still feel sleepy. This is not a good way to wake up.

*Determination is very important;
because once you determine it
wholeheartedly your mind obeys.*

This is the way we need to train ourselves in order to get positive results. We can do it; in many ways we can train our mind to get positive results. This is just some additional knowledge for you.

So that person meditates again and determines: “For a certain amount of time I will not get into the absorption of the first enlightenment stage but I intend to go further to get to second stage of enlightenment.” If you cannot get to that stage in that time period it is ok; you can still get absorbed into that absorption state that you have already achieved. For a few hours, for a few days you can do that again and then after that go practice the determination to go further. Why do you need to enjoy the absorption? Because it is so peaceful. Paying attention to get to the next stage is useful, but it’s a kind of burden. So let go of everything and go into this quiet, peaceful space, it is very restful.

Kilesesu diṭṭhi vicikicchā paṭhamañāṇavajjhā; doso tatiyañāṇavajjhō; lobha-moha-māna-thīna-uddhacca-ahirika-anottappāni catutthañāṇavajjhāni.

~Vsm 684

Among the *kilesas* (*kilesesu*: unwholesome mental states), doubt (*vicikicchā*) and wrong view (*diṭṭhi*) are eradicated by the first enlightenment (*paṭhamañāṇavajjhā*), anger (*doso*) is eradicated by the third stage of enlightenment (*tatiyañāṇavajjhō*). The second stage does not eradicate anything; it only weakens whatever is left. And if you notice in the third stage of enlightenment,

only anger is eradicated, not even lust. There is no desire for sense pleasure but still there is desire for a very pure, peaceful, blissful higher existence. That's why we do not consider that the third stage of enlightenment eradicates all craving because this desire for higher existence is also a kind of craving; see how subtle it can be. This last craving, the desire (*lobha*) for this pure, peaceful, blissful state of life is eradicated by the fourth stage of enlightenment (*catutthañānavajjhāni*). Because there is still some sort of desire, it shows that there is still some sort of delusion there. With any kind of desire no matter how small there is delusion. That is why delusion (*moha*) is totally eradicated only by the fourth stage of enlightenment.

Even from the first stage, certain aspects of delusion are already eradicated; only very subtle delusion is left. The fourth stage of enlightenment totally eradicates lobha because even lobha for this peaceful, blissful, pure state of life is eradicated. Moha, which means delusion or *avijjā* which means ignorance are totally eradicated by the fourth stage. Māna. What does that mean? Not comparing with another person, not being proud, not being conceited. Because of our achievements sometimes we feel very pleased about that "Oh! I achieved that." That's a kind of māna also. Not comparing with another person but just being very pleased about what you have done, even that is eradicated in the fourth stage of enlightenment. Just imagine how free that mind state can be, totally free. *Thīna-middha*, drowsiness is totally eradicated by the fourth stage only; therefore before that stage the person can still feel drowsy. An Arahant,

does not feel drowsy. He can stay awake a long time, even for days if he wants, but if he wants to sleep he does so out of will. If we can do that how wonderful. Uddhacca means agitations of the mind. Even after the third stage, (Anāgāmī) the mind can still get agitated. It is only after the fourth stage that agitation is no more; there is only total calmness and total mindfulness. Even after the third stage the person is not a hundred per cent mindful. Complete mindfulness happens after the fourth stage.

Shamelessness (*ahirika*) and fearlessness (*anottappa*): Because after the third stage of enlightenment there is still some māna, some sort of pride, because there is still some sort of greed. According to the Abhidhamma it means that person is still not ashamed, still taking pride in his own achievements. This word shame is not the shame that people normally mean in their daily life. When you meditate, you can understand it.

*When something happens and
you can see in your mind that this is
unwholesome and you feel ashamed of it.*

*You feel ashamed, not because
someone else has found out,*

but because you know this is not beautiful.

*Mostly we don't experience this, as it is overcome
only after the fourth stage of enlightenment.*

So, we are still very shameless.

*Micchādiṭṭhi-musāvādo micchakammanto micchā-ājīvo ti
ime paṭhamañāṇavajjhā; micchāsankappa pisiṇavācā
pharusavācā ti ime tatiyañāṇavajjhā. Cetanā yeva c' ettha
vācā ti veditabbā. Samphappalāpa-micchāvāyāma-sati-
samādhi-vimuttiñāṇāni catutthañāṇavajjhāni.*

~Vsm 684-5

Wrong view (*micchā-diṭṭhi*), lying (*musāvāda*), doing something which is harmful (*micchā-kammanta*) like killing, stealing, wrong livelihood (*micchā-ājīva*) are all eradicated by the first stage of enlightenment (*ime paṭhamañāṇavajjhā*). It is wonderful! Wrong thinking (*micchāsankappa*), slandering, making people fight (*pisiṇavācā*) and harsh and strong words (*pharusavācā*) are eradicated by the third stage (*ime tatiyañāṇavajjhā*). Eradicate means the intention is eradicated (*Cetanā yeva c' ettha vācā ti veditabbā*) not just restraining. Mostly we restrain not to say anything like that, restrain not to make people fight. But in the third stage of enlightenment it means that there is no intention even to do that. The fourth stage of enlightenment eradicates (*catutthañāṇavajjhāni*), *samphappalāpa* (frivolous talk), *micchāvāyāma*, *micchā-sati*, *micchā-samādhi*, *micchā-vimutti* and *micchā-ñāṇa*. That means that sometimes we remember things in the past “Oh! I have done this and that, I have enjoyed this or that,” even that sort of recalling is gone. We don’t think about the past anymore, only what we find useful, like we have learnt dhamma, and we think, “Buddha said that”. This is a kind of *sammā-sati* (right mindfulness). Even after the third stage of

enlightenment, the person still wants to think of what happened before, not about Dhamma, but about something else. If you think about anything beyond Dhamma it is some kind of useless thinking, useless remembering (*micchā-sati*).

Micchā-samādhi also, the mind gets absorbed in any kind of thinking, in any kind of object, even reading a book, this also goes with the fourth stage. The mind does not get absorbed in anything useless.

Micchā-vimutti: Sometimes people experience blissful states in their meditation, which is not really a liberated state, but they believe it is. When a person has become fully liberated he knows that those are gone, they are not true liberation.

Micchā-ñāṇa: People are very clever in doing something terrible. They can plan for it so well, very cleverly, very intelligently in some ways, wrong wisdom or wrong intelligence, and this is eradicated by the fourth stage.

So it goes on and on like that (in the Text) what is in which stage. It is very interesting to know all these things, but my emphasis is just until the first stage, because that is what we can expect, beyond that it is very difficult. Most teachers emphasize not to stop there, to keep going, but I know very few people keep going. They feel so content that they just enjoy it.

Nibbāna is not a place, not even a mental state. When someone reaches the fourth stage of enlightenment and passes away completely (*parinibbāna*), he does not exist anywhere. In many books I read that some people are saying that even after that an Arahant enjoys it and stays in that blissful state forever.

Do you know why they say that? They are still attached to the blissful state; still want to go on living, which I can understand very well. It's not too difficult to understand that, but you can see that there is still attachment there, to go on living. They have even been saying that the Buddha still exists somehow, somewhere, maybe in the Himalayas. No; these things are very important to understand even as knowledge, because there are so many misconceptions and wrong ideas floating around.

*No matter how blissful, how pure the person is,
still the Buddha said that is not what total liberation is.
So it (Nibbāna) is not an abode, not a state.*

The nature of Nibbāna is totally opposite to the nature of mental and physical phenomena. This is also important. Some people say that Nibbāna and *Samsāra* are the same. No, very clear no.... But to understand Nibbāna you have to understand *samsāra*. *Samsāra* means, physical and mental process, this is called *samsāra*, not the story actually.... The real *samsāra*, the real going around and round, means this mental and physical process going on and on; this is called *samsāra*. The end of it is Nibbāna. You can still say that Nibbāna is related to *samsāra*. Nibbāna is somehow related to the mental and physical process, but Nibbāna is not in the process. It is just out of the process, just at the edge of the process. By that much you can say that Nibbāna is related to *samsāra*.

*That's why the Buddha said
 "I claim Nibbāna in this body (~SN i.62)",
 which does not mean that there is Nibbāna inside us.
 It means that by understanding this body completely,
 by understanding the five aggregates,
 this mental and physical process completely,
 we can reach Nibbāna;
 there is no other way to reach Nibbāna.*

When we say that this state of enlightenment eradicates those defilements, what do we mean? Can we eradicate those defilements that happened before? We cannot, because it has already happened, because it is in the past. Can we eradicate those defilements happening now? We can think that this could be possible. But do you think they will stay if we don't eradicate them? Whatever happens, let's say you get angry now, what can you do about it... and anger goes on from moment to moment. One mental state is a single anger actually, and because it goes on very fast we think of it as a big anger. There is no such thing as big anger, but small angers put together. When it happens in this brief moment, it will go away by itself, it will never stay. We cannot say anger please stay... stay. It will go away. We don't need to eradicate that anger which is happening now. So when we say that this stage of enlightenment eradicates this defilement, it does not mean that it eradicates the present defilement happening now. Does it mean it eradicates defilements happening in the future? You don't know what defilement will happen

in the future, because it has not happened. We cannot eradicate what has not happened. This means that the enlightenment stage does not eradicate past, present and future defilements. It eradicates the potential. The potential to arise is there but it has not arisen yet, and if you eradicate the potential, it is finished... it won't arise (anymore).

Because of past defilements, because of past kamma we're here now. And this kamma that we are somehow carrying, in what form are we carrying our kamma? In what form are we carrying our defilements? As a potential only, this is something very subtle to understand, only potential, it has not manifested. Think of a seed as a potential, it has the potential to become a big tree. Say you want to eradicate that tree. In the past it appears and dies so you don't have to eradicate it. And in the present, say if the tree is dying, just let it die. But in the future it has not yet become a tree. So if you want to destroy it just destroy the seed. You don't have to destroy the tree, you just destroy the seed. So the potential is like the seed. Can you definitely say that, say now it is four minutes past five, exactly an hour later what kind of defilements will arise in your mind? Nobody can tell, because it is not definitely sure. But there's the potential for anything to arise. If you can destroy that potential then it is finished.

This potential is not in the past, and you cannot say that it is in the present, because it has not manifested. This potential is something very hard to understand... it could manifest, there is only the possibility, the potential. That's why because

it is this defilement which the enlightenment stage eradicates and because we call this the nibbānic state, we cannot say that Nibbāna is the past or the present or the future.

*Nibbāna is timeless, beyond time,
not in the domain of time.*

*This is very confusing and hard to talk about.
Maybe some sub-atomic physicist can understand that.*

Kamma is also a potential. When we reach a certain stage of enlightenment, certain kamma cannot give result anymore. Our bad kamma which we have accumulated, after a certain stage of enlightenment will not give results anymore. Where is the kamma? How are we carrying that kamma? We are carrying it as a potential. It is very hard to understand. Let's say that we have a potential to get angry, but we are not angry now. But anybody can push our buttons and make us angry. We cannot tell when we are going to get angry. We are eradicating the potential for this defilement to manifest, the seed of the manifestation of the defilement. Even very learned monks sometimes could not understand it, it takes a long time.

*In order to understand, the best way is to practice.
That's why the Buddha said it's unthinkable.
You cannot understand it just by thinking.
Nibbāna is not something that arises or that happens.
We cannot say when Nibbāna happens.*

Nibbāna is a reality which a person who has developed enough wisdom can experience.

It depends on his clarity of wisdom.

*The more clear wisdom is,
the more clearly you'll experience it.*

That is why in the first stage of enlightenment, the experience of Nibbāna is not the same as the second, the third and the fourth stage. The nature of Nibbāna is the same, but because of the purity of wisdom, you experience it differently. Like seeing, the clearer your eyes become, the more clearly you can see. It is very hard even to find a simile.

That's why the Buddha said that there is no example for Nibbāna. No words, no concept, no language can really explain it. Nibbāna means 'quenching'. In the Ratana-Sutta: '*Nibbanti dhīrā yathāyam padīpo*', it is like a flame that has gone out and niravāna, no craving, no striving, no craving anymore.

QUESTION &

ANSWER: The Buddha gave a *sutta*, the Dhammādāsa Sutta, the Mirror Sutta. Buddha said that a sotāpanna has these qualities: He has confidence in Buddha, Dhamma, Saṅgha, he will never break his precepts. If you feel that you have these qualities, you can tell yourself "I am a sotāpanna". But if you don't have this knowledge, book knowledge, or if you have not heard about it, although you have

the experience you don't know how to call it. You have all those qualities and experience, but to have that experience and qualities doesn't necessarily mean you know what it is. Let's say if I give you something to eat. I ask you to close your eyes and give you something that you never tasted before and I tell you to open your mouth and put it in your mouth and you chew it. You can tell the taste. I can ask you how it tastes. You can say "Oh! It tastes a little bit sweet and it has a little bit sour taste also, it tastes good." And if I ask you what is it, you'll say "I don't know, but I know the taste; I don't know the name." So you know the taste but you don't know the name for it which is quite natural. A sotāpanna is a word for an experience. To be sure I'll quote Ledi Sayādaw again: "Just wait long enough; for a few years even; because you'll be tested in the world and in your daily life", even though you cannot exactly say right now. "Oh! Maybe I've attained the first stage of enlightenment", don't be in a hurry to make the decision. Just wait long enough and you'll be tested and you may find out "Oh! No, I still have to meditate." This is also called micchā-vimutti: you're not liberated but you think you are. But anybody can make that mistake. We don't blame that person. But if that person is honest he'll know later, because in the world so many people and so many situations are pushing your buttons all the time and you react. If you're honest you know. But if you're dishonest nobody can tell you. It's like cheating, very subtle, telling very subtle lies.

QUESTION &

ANSWER: Different people experience the different khandhas in different ways. Some people experience vedanā more arising and passing away. Some people experience citta more arising and passing away. It depends on personality too. For beginners it is better to start with sensations. Anything you experience in the body is a sensation. And in the mind you have emotion. I emphasize more on sensation because for a beginner that's where they begin. For a beginner it is very difficult to begin from thoughts and mental states. Later, it depends on your personality. Even though you begin from kāyānupassanā, bodily movements and sensations; or vedanānupassanā, if you do that long enough it goes towards where you are more inclined to go, it happens naturally. In the body we feel sukha-vedanā, dukkha-vedanā and upekkhā-vedanā, pleasant, unpleasant and neutral. In our mind we feel emotions: pleasant emotions and unpleasant emotions. And sometimes the two are related. When you feel pain in your body you feel unpleasant emotion in your mind; you feel so much anguish "Oh! No this is so painful." So they are related. But they are not always related, not necessarily, because if you are a good meditator, not to say an Arahant, although the body is in pain, the mind is peaceful. Arahants are not affected by bodily pain. It depends on how you have trained your mind.

QUESTION &

ANSWER: Uprooting of greed and hatred happens in the third stage of enlightenment, uprooting of greed for worldly pleasure. But greed for a blissful life is still there. Greed for sensual pleasure is eradicated by the third stage of enlightenment. All anger and frustration are eradicated by the third stage of enlightenment. In the beginning of our practice we cannot eradicate this. When it happens we pay attention, look at it very closely and by paying close attention, it becomes weaker and weaker. Then sometimes it doesn't arise and the mind becomes very clear and peaceful, then pay attention to more neutral sensations and feelings. But when there is strong desire or anger, it's important to watch them but when they are very strong we are not very clear anymore, though we can still pay attention.

Real good insight happens when they are not there anymore or when they are at least temporarily not there. That's why in the tenth stage of insight there's total equanimity; no greed, no desire, no frustration, no agitation. The mind becomes very pure, then breakthrough. So before this breakthrough to enlightenment this is necessary. But in the beginning of our practice it can come again and again, we have to go through it. Even frustration about meditation, even attachment to our peaceful state of meditation, we have to overcome, give up, let go. That's why it's very important to watch these things and let go. Whenever we have anger we can see that because we have some kind of

expectation, attachment, or desire, we are upset. We can see both. Whenever one is there the other is there. When we want something there is the anxiety about whether we will get it or not; this is very painful. Actually desire itself is pain, incompleteness. Whenever we desire something we feel incomplete and this incompleteness is pain. In the tenth stage of insight, nothing like that happens, no desire, no anger, no frustration, totally clear and balanced.

QUESTION & ANSWER:

In the retreat I won't have time to explain 'whys', I can only tell you what to do. If you have done preparation, you have done half of your work already. Well prepared is half done. So, come prepared, sit now, and prepare your body also. If you are not sitting now, in the retreat you won't find very easy to sit even for an hour, your mind will get agitated. You need to start preparing now, preparing your mind, your muscles and your nervous system. You cannot expect it just to happen like that, even a runner has got to prepare. So, meditate now everyday. This is a very exciting experience; it is not something you do very often. It is only nine days; nine precious days. I don't want to waste a minute, but I need all of you to participate. How can we all cooperate together and make the retreat the best it could be. I would like to make it a friendly and relaxed atmosphere. Somebody said a retreat is a 'treat'. It is something very special. I do hope you'll experience something;

something very precious. The time does not really matter. In a few days some people can experience something very deep and meaningful.



eleven

Final Thoughts & Preparation for *the Retreat*

As you know I have talked so much about preparation. Preparation is very important. If you really think about it, we go through life without being prepared for anything at all, everything happens to us just by chance. I don't think this is a good way to live our life. Of course there are many things that happen in our lives which are unexpected so we have to do something about it immediately; there are things happening like that once in a while. But mostly if you think about it, we know that something is going to happen or at least we have a high percentage of probability that something is going to happen. What is something that is really sure to happen in our life? It is death. Death is definitely sure; there is no doubt about it. Are we preparing for it?

Mostly I like to say positive, encouraging things that can motivate people to do something good.

*But death is a big motivation,
a big lesson.*

I know quite a few people who got very close to death. I took them to hospital so I know how they felt. They were very sick, almost dying. I took them to the hospital and looked after them and I found out that those that experienced death very deeply came back a different person. This is very important. So even though we are sure we are going to die, we don't know whether it's going to be today or fifty years later, we don't know. It could happen today, who knows! It is better to be prepared.

*This retreat also we know is going to happen
because we are going to make it happen.*

It is better to be prepared and understand that your meditation does not begin on the first day of the retreat.

It has begun a long time ago.

*The retreat is part of the whole process and
even after the retreat your meditation practice will go on
until you die, until the last moment.*

*This is something I am really preparing for.
I want to know how the last moment feels,
how it's going to be, and what my mental state
will be at the last moment one second before I die.
I want to know it and also be aware of it and then die.
That is the best way to die.*

So I am really preparing for that. If you have prepared well enough your work is half done. If you take a very simple example

from my life, because most of us have studied for many years and got university degrees also: you know some people who don't study well, they don't attend lectures well, they don't go to the practical as well and they don't try to solve their problems very well. Then when the exam is very near, what do they do? They panic, they worry, and they have so much anxiety they can't sleep or eat. Then the moment before they go into the exam hall, they're shaking. In the exam hall they look at the question paper and say "I don't know this, I don't know that"; too agitated to do anything anymore, no time to think anymore. Even when I was a student I tried to prepare quite a lot, maybe this is just part of my personality. Some people want to prepare and some people just want to take a chance. To take a chance is not really very good. If you take a chance there is only a very small probability that it will happen. So even when I was young I studied very well for my exam, and when I got to the exam hall, I took pencil, pen, ruler and my identity card; that's all. No notes, book and paper, no need to study anymore, too late. If you still have to study, it's too late for you. You're just making your mind more agitated and tired. This is the time when you need to be very relaxed.

When I went into the exam hall I did not look at the question paper immediately. Leave it there and just sit there and meditate for five minutes. Then when the mind is very calm, look at the questions and see "Ah! This is something I can answer" and then write down slowly, not in a hurry, when it's finished, "Ok, well done already." If you have done one thing

well, it gives you so much courage, makes you more confident, makes you calm also. Then I look at another problem “Ah! This is something I can do” and I do that and when I find it too hard “ok I will come back to it later”, then another one. So this is the way we should live our life.

*Even though we prepare very well in life
we cannot really be sure that everything will happen in
the way we expect. We have to prepare for this also.*

But if we have prepared very well we can at least feel sure that it won't be too bad; it won't come out too bad. At least it will be satisfying. So preparation it is very important and in some ways we go through life preparing and preparing; there is no end to preparation. Actually this preparation is also our life. I am even preparing for my next life, because I know it is going to happen. If you know how to prepare for it you can feel very confident that it is most likely to happen the way you prepared for it.

*That is how a Buddha became a Buddha,
because he prepared for it.
And pārami, what is pārami?
Pārami is preparation, it is perfection.*

You practice something so well that it becomes perfect and actually it is a preparation. Without fulfilling the pāramis, which

means without preparing yourself, without making yourself worthy of it, it will not happen. If we want something to happen, we have to prepare for it and feel that we are ready and worthy of it. Then we can feel very relaxed and happy, even happy to be tested. You have to go through a very difficult condition now. So if you are prepared you feel very happy and excited about it. If you are not prepared then you feel terrified. You have more anxiety, more worry. So we've prepared for a long time and we still have to go on preparing for it. This is a very beautiful *gāthā*. This is something very encouraging for meditators, Buddha said:

Atītam nānāgameyya,
nappatikāñkhe anāgataṁ.

Yad atītam pahīnan tam,
appattāñ ca anāgataṁ.

Paccuppannañ ca yo dhammam,
tattha tattha viñassati,
asam̄hīram asam̄kuṇḍam,
tam vidvā manubrūhaye.

Ajj' eva kiccam ātappañ;
Ko jaññā marañam suve?

Na hi no sañgaran tena
Mahasenena maccunā.

Evam̄vihārim ātāpiñ
Ahorattam atanditam
Tam ve bhaddekaratto ti
Santo ācikkhate munīti.

'Do not pursue the past' (*Atītam nānvāgameyya*) which means don't (*na*) go (*gama*) to the past (*Atītam*) repeatedly (*anu*). That doesn't mean that we have to forget the past totally. The meaning is very clear actually, if you really look or listen to it carefully. Don't think about the past repeatedly, going nowhere, just going round and round thinking and thinking. If there is anything useful that you can remember from the past, remember it, make use of it. We have to remember so much: telephone numbers, addresses, so many things. So many things we have done or happened in the past, we have to remember. But remembering those useful experiences and making use of it is a part of our life. That is ok. But thinking about the past repeatedly and making yourself unhappy, that is what we should not do.

Thinking, recollecting something that has happened in the past and using it wisely is what we should do.

Even Buddha talked about his past lives.

It's useful to talk about it, but don't think too much about the past, make it a habit.

When you find yourself thinking about something that is useless look at it very carefully, look at the thought very carefully; look at your attitude, why do you keep thinking about it? Is there fear, or attachment? When you are afraid of something you think about it quite a lot, you cannot forget it. When you have great attachment to something then you keep thinking about it. So there are many reasons for people to think about

something repeatedly. Look into your mind and see why you are thinking about it so much. First look at the thought and then your attachment to it: Why are you so attached to that happening or experience?

'Do not lose your self in the future' (*nappatikarikhe anāgatam*)
This is not exactly the Pāli translation but it is close enough.

*Thinking about whether something is going to happen or not,
worrying about the future is also quite useless.
But that doesn't mean that you should not plan for the future.*

Many people repeatedly asked me “The Buddha talked about not thinking about the past, not thinking about the future; how can we live our life?” They don’t understand the correct meaning. Buddha didn’t say don’t think at all about the past. Buddha didn’t say don’t plan for the future. Think about the past and get some useful lessons and use them. But don’t think repeatedly of the past and make yourself unhappy; you become so unhappy that you cannot do anything useful. You are just wasting your time and energy. For a meditator this is not a proper thing to do. But when you naturally think about it, look very deeply. Your attachment; it’s your attachment that makes you keep thinking and thinking about it. So we plan for the future, e.g. we are planning for the retreat, I plan for my trip back to Singapore; we have to do that. But worrying too much is not useful. Don’t need to worry. Plan carefully, find the facts and do what is needed to be done as best you can but don’t worry too much.

'The past no longer is' (*Yad atītam pahīnan tam*) and of course we know that the past no longer is, but still we cling to our past and we think about it and make it as if it is present here. We want to think of something we like that happened and we imagine the thing and make it like it's happening now. Only thinking makes the past come into the present. We imagine the past and make it as if it is in the present, make it real. If we don't think about it, it's not real anymore, it's not there, and it is only a memory.

'The future has not yet come' (*Appattāñ ca anāgatam*). We know about this too.

*So we prepare for it and then maybe something unexpected
is going to happen and we also expect that.*

We expect something unexpected.

This is also part of our life:

Looking deeply at life as it is.

In this sentence 'Looking deeply at life as it is' what do we mean by life? It's not seventy or eighty years because that's just a concept. Real life is here and now, and if you really look at it more closely, real life is what we see now, we hear now, we smell now, what we feel on our body now, what we taste now, what we think now.

Real life is in the present.

*Life is not just an idea or a concept,
but it is our sensations, our perceptions here and now.*

When we meditate what do we do? We pay complete attention to our sensations.

Today I want to make the word sensation very clear. Have you understood the word as I mean it? What I mean is: when you feel cold that is a sensation, when you feel hot that is also sensation, when you feel pain anywhere on your body, that is also sensation, when you feel pleasant, that is also sensation, when you see something, that is sensation also, when you hear that is also a sensation, when you smell, that is sensation, when you taste something that is also sensation. That is what I mean by sensation.

*So when we meditate
we pay complete attention to sensations.*

So you're now getting a gist of what meditation is.

When we pay close attention to say feeling cold, is there any shape? There is no shape; a sensation of cold has no shape. So when we pay attention to feeling cold we don't think of the shape. We pay attention to the sensation only. So direct experience is something unthinkable; this is another point; do you agree with that? Do you have any doubt about that? Is there any confusion? Direct, immediate experience is unthinkable. You can only think about a concept, an idea. Whenever you think about the past it's not your direct experience anymore. It's a concept, an idea you have formed in your mind, your interpretation of the experience you are thinking about. You cannot really think about the real experience actually. It's only your interpretation of the experience that you can think about.

The same thing with the future; you are projecting your past into the future. So you can only think about ideas and interpretations not direct experience.

When we meditate we pay complete attention to our direct experience in our body and in our mind. Whenever thoughts arise we pay direct attention, complete attention to the thought. Sometimes there may be no thoughts, the mind is just calm and quiet and peaceful, and you pay attention to that mind also, that mental state; not a thought, it's a mental state, no thought, very clear, very calm, very peaceful, you pay attention to that too "This is happening now". We don't do anything about it; we don't try to change it.

*When we meditate
we are not trying to do something, to make something happen,
we are trying to pay attention to what is happening as it is.
So this is a very important point: looking deeply at life as it is;
looking deeply only, not doing anything about it.
Many people ask what to do when meditating.
Just pay attention!*

But most people are surprised by the answer. They think they have to do something, they have to create something. Doing is something we do in our daily life. But when we meditate we don't do anything at all. We just pay attention. It is so simple that it is so hard for people to do, just because it is so simple. We have the habit of making things so complicated. When we try to

do something the ego is in the way. You cannot do that in meditation. Get yourself out of the way and let meditation happen; no ego, not doing anything, just paying complete attention; this is very important.

Looking deeply at life as it is in the very here and now.

In the very here and now there is no story.

*Can you make a story about something
happening right here now?*

*There is no story here and now,
there are only sensations arising and passing away,
only immediate sensation.*

So this verse is very clear. If you understand every word, this is the instruction.

'**Looking deeply at life as it is in the very here and now, the practitioner dwells in stability and freedom'** (*Paccuppannañ ca yo dhammam, tattha tattha vipassati, asamhīram asamkuppam*). If you can keep your mind in the here and now with all attention, there's stability there. That means your mind is not going to the past, it's not going to the future, so there is stability. If you are thinking about the past or the future that means there is no stability. When your mind settles in the very here and now, paying attention to whatever is happening in your body or in your mind you have stability and freedom also. Because when you are paying total attention there is no thought.

Actually thought is a prison we are in.

*When we pay full attention there is no greed in the mind,
greed is actually a thought.*

*Without thinking can you actually make yourself
become greedy? Try it.*

Without thinking about a story or a person, a situation, we cannot become greedy. So greed accompanies a thought. The same thing with anger; without thinking anything about it you can't get angry. So right here and now there is nothing to be greedy about, there is nothing to be angry about. That is freedom actually: no greed, no anger, full attention. That's why no delusion, no absent-mindedness.

‘We must be diligent today, to wait until tomorrow is too late. Death comes unexpectedly, How can we bargain with it?’ (Ajj’ eva kiccam ātappam; Ko jaññā marañam suve? Na hi no samgaran tena, Mahasenena maccunā). This reminds me of a line. ‘To wait until tomorrow is too late’ is a line in a song somewhere: ‘It’s now or never’; this song. Who sang that? I don’t remember. So we must be diligent now, to wait until tomorrow is too late. So it’s now or never. Death comes unexpectedly; we don’t know when we will die, we just believe that we will live for a long time “Oh! I am quite healthy and I am going to live for at least another twenty, thirty, forty years.” I even hope to live for fifty years; fifty more years, I want to work until the last day, the last moment. Anyway, no matter when it happens it can come unexpectedly. Most people die unexpectedly, but some

people know that they are going to die because they have been sick for a long time. Actually these people are very fortunate. Those who know that they are going to die, many months or perhaps years in advance, they are very fortunate. Some people have told me "I want to die instantly so that I don't have to suffer." But I have noticed that those people who know they are dying slowly; in the beginning they are very sad and depressed, but especially if they are meditators, they come out of depression very quickly and they meditate. They make use of each moment, each day very well. The moment they wake up they feel so happy, "I am still alive." They make use of their time very well; whenever they meet somebody, they relate to that person with real care, love and compassion, because they know that they are only going to be together for a few days, maybe for a few months, then they'll be gone and won't see them anymore.

Why think about things that frustrate us; rather think about the nice things that we can do for each other, which we have done for each other and treat each other with respect, kindness, honesty and openness, being very real. This is something I am trying to do also. I don't know how you feel but for a long time, for many years in my life I felt I was not real. I was just acting a role very well, so well that everybody believed it. But you know that as long as you go on acting, pretending, you feel not real. You don't feel satisfied with your life. But I want to be real, I really want to find out what I want to do, how I feel, who I am, where I am going. So death comes unexpectedly, how can we bargain with it? No bargaining!

'The Sage calls a person who knows how to dwell in mindfulness night and day: One who knows the better way to live alone' (*Evañvihārim ātāpiñ, Ahorattam atanditam, Tam ve bhaddekaratto ti. Santo ācikkhate munīti*). The sage is a wise person like the Buddha or an Arahant, anybody who is wise.

*If we live in mindfulness night and day it means
that mindfulness becomes our home.*

'One who knows the better way to live alone.' The better way shows that there is another way. There are many other ways to live alone e.g. just go into a forest, build a small cabin and live there alone with nobody around. That's not the better way to live alone; although that might be useful for some people for a certain amount of time, but you cannot do that all your life. You have to be related with others. Even monks have to be related with other monks, teachers, villagers, supporters.

So what does this mean 'One who knows the better way to live alone'? Most people feel lonely but they don't live alone. They are just feeling very lonely but they are not living alone. You can live alone but not feel lonely.

*That's what a meditator learns to do and
that's a very useful thing to learn to do:
live alone and not feel lonely.*

That's what we do. We live in a forest in a small place mostly alone, but never feel lonely. Even here I live in my room most of the time. Very rarely I come out of my room. I live alone but I don't feel lonely. I feel connected, I feel related. So how do you do that? That's what we learn to do. A meditator learns to do that. That means when you are not thinking too much about the past or future, when you are not feeling greedy or angry, when your mind is quiet and mindful that is the better way to live alone. There might be a lot of people around. In the retreat we will be sitting together; I'll be sitting with you too, but each of us is alone because we are meditating we are very mindful and we are not reacting.

*When we don't react with
greed, anger, pride, envy, jealousy we are alone.*

The moment you start reacting we are not alone anymore.

When we are greedy or angry we're not alone anymore.

When you are mindful and not greedy, not thinking too much about the past or the future; sometimes you think about the past or future. If it is useful, that's ok. Then we are psychologically independent. This word 'psychologically independent' is very important. I am dependent on you in many ways but psychologically I am not dependent on you. I don't expect you to come and make me happy. I am happy just the way I am. But I expect you to help me when I need something or when I want to go somewhere. I expect that; I am dependent on you for those things. So you give me all this help and I appreciate it very much

but I am not dependent on you psychologically, I am independent, and that means to be alone. When you are dependent on another person, even though that person is not near you, you are not alone.

So when you meditate and develop these qualities, you become alone but you are not lonely. Try to understand the difference; there's a big difference. Buddha encouraged monks to go and live in seclusion, but he did not encourage monks to be totally alienated. That's not the kind of thing Buddha encouraged. So you meditate and make your mind very calm and peaceful, no greed, no anger, no pride, envy, jealousy; that is alone but you are related to other people. You go to the village everyday to get your food. When people come to you, do things for you and ask for advice, you give them advice. But you are not dependent, so you're alone. As long as you are independent, you are alone.

To be alone is very good, to be lonely is not.

These are two lines from a verse I read a long time ago; it's a very long verse, three pages long I think. I can only remember the first two lines, a very beautiful two lines and I am living those two lines. This is what I do; I live poems and my life becomes a poem. Those two lines are:

*“The great way is not difficult
for those who have no preferences”*

~Hsin-hsin Ming by Seng-t'san the 3rd Zen Patriach

I am trying to live that. Preferences are not that bad. Needs are very bad actually. We say “I need this, I need that” or “I want this, I want that.”

Want is not that bad.

*Need is more bad because when you say “I need”
that means you cannot live without it.*

In most cases we don't need much. What we really need is so little that it's funny we talk about it; we don't even want to talk about it. We don't need much. Just a small amount of rice, some green vegetables, a little bit of beans: that's enough. Just fill your stomach. Your stomach is quite happy, only your tongue is not happy. What we need is so little. And for clothing, you see I wear the same clothes. If I need to wash, I wash one in the morning and it dries in the evening and then I wear it again. Everyday I wear the same clothes, no need to change. Just wash it and wear it again and again, no problem. My body is quite happy but maybe my eyes are sometimes very unhappy about it. That's only my eyes but my body, as long as it feels warm; it's perfectly ok; only my eyes causing so much dukkha. So, now I am becoming a bit wiser. I don't listen to my eyes and my tongue but I listen to the eyes when I walk so that I don't fall into a pit.

When you say “I need it”, look very deeply and ask yourself “Do I really need it? Can't I let go of it?” Are you really sure you need it? If you ask that question maybe your answer will be, ninety nine out of a hundred, “No I don't need it. I want it.”

So be very honest about it. “I want it” that’s very honest. And even better if you say “I prefer it.” By saying that it means that it is not so demanding, you can change your preference. “It’s ok I can change it. I prefer this but as I can’t get this I will be quite satisfied with what I get.” And even then you say “If you have no preference at all, you are so peaceful and free.” So why are you making yourself so unhappy, so unfree? You are letting this happen. When we go to the retreat and meditate, you may not get so many things that you are used to getting; food, drinks and many other things too, you may not get. So prepare your mind, “I’ll practice these two lines” — The great way is not difficult for those who have no preferences. You will not die in the retreat. Buddha said even if you die, keep working, work hard, even if your body is reduced to skin and bones, work hard. But I am only afraid that you will put on weight for not having enough exercise. So don’t worry about that. You’ll have enough to eat. Fill your stomach; don’t listen to your tongue. Just listen to your stomach. It will be quite happy no matter what you put in as long as it is a healthy, fresh vegetarian meal; it’s quite happy.

So these are just a few things just to get your mind in the right frame.

It's very important: framing your mind is very important.

Creating the mood is very important.

*If you are in the right mood,
in the right frame of mind, things are very easy.*

Also during the retreat we may not talk to each other unnecessarily. When it is really necessary you can talk. You can talk with me, you can ask me questions. If you do not wish to ask verbally you can ask on a piece of paper. Write it on a piece of paper and keep it near my seat. I'll read it and answer the question. You don't need to put your name there, if you don't want to, and if you need to talk with me personally, you'll get a chance to talk about that too, depending on the situation, I'll make time. Right now I don't know where the place will be. It's good to do that in the meditation hall, the place we will be meditating because according to the plan we have one and a half hours to walk in the morning and evening. That's long walking. In between too, one hour walking and one hour sitting. When others are walking and you have a question I think if it's suitable we can do the question and answer in that time also. Otherwise we can make another time just for question and answer.

We will not be talking to each other during the retreat so I think it's good now for you to get to know each other, if you don't know anybody's name. I want to have your names also so that I know who you are. I know all your faces because I've seen you many times before but some of you I don't remember the names. So each one of you here now, feel that we are friends, feel that we are brothers and sisters. This feeling is also very important. Just practicing mindfulness *vipassanā* practice alone is not enough. We need to practice more than that; practice loving kindness, *mettā* meditation, and with that comes compassion also; the two are so close. Also we reflect on the

qualities of the Buddha which makes the mind so calm, peaceful and pure. When we think of somebody pure, our mind, our heart tends to become like that. We can let go of more and more. When you think of the Buddha, his freedom, his purity, his wisdom, his compassion instantly you want to become like that. Just wanting to become like him makes you want to let go of other things that are hindering you. So along the way in the process we will practice that too for only a few moments, a few minutes. When we practice mettā meditation it's not just words. We think of each other, each person and radiate our kindness, any kind of kind thought we radiate on each other so that we feel very friendly and secure and relaxed. So get to know each other; I think most of you know each other already. So we're already friends or you may even feel like we are brothers and sisters, we're a family. This feeling also makes you feel very secure and relaxed, it is very important.

*One meditation helps another meditation.
Mindfulness helps you become more mindful,
more peaceful, and more sensitive.
It helps you to become more loving, more kind,
and more considerate.
We need to be very considerate.*

There are so many people living together in the same place for so long, for nine days, if you have not prepared your mind properly it can cause a lot of friction and frustration. Even with

two people living in the same place you have to be so patient, considerate, forgiving, understanding. Small things may happen every now and then that irritate you and you keep thinking "Oh! That person, I wish that person hadn't come to the retreat, he said he's going to come and sit and meditate but look he's moving every minute." So many thoughts will happen in your mind. If somebody eats, I know a lot of people don't eat correctly, they eat together and they come and tell me "That person's so greedy you know, he took so much of the nice things, and he ate the whole plate of desert." Things like that happen, it is quite human. Many things will happen, even closing the door, banging the door. Sometimes people forget, even myself, sometimes I forget and bang the door, such loud noise and I feel very ashamed, "so unmindful", although nobody was around actually. So it's very important to feel that we are helping each other, supporting each other. So every day for a few moments in our sitting we radiate our kindness, loving thoughts, understanding, forgiving, making each other feel very safe and secure so that you don't feel judged. If you do something wrong you know "Oh! Nobody will be upset about it." We know but sometimes we forget. So get to know each other now and feel that we are part of a big family. This is mettā. Mettā doesn't only mean just thinking "May all beings be happy; oh, except him!" In Burma they have a verse for that, I forget the whole verse. "Except those of bad birth, mosquitoes, body lice and crows, may all other beings be happy." Very funny, but it so happens.

I hope that you have understood the basic instructions about meditation; you still have a chance to ask questions now. If you still have doubts about the basic meditation technique, method or instruction, please ask now.

QUESTION &

ANSWER: Yes we have time for interview. You can ask a question or express your experience and get some guidance... you may ask a question privately. I am willing to help you in any way I can. This preparation is to help you make the most out of your nine days in the retreat, because it's such a precious nine days, each day is so precious. This is not something you do all the time. This is something very special actually, very rare. I want you to make the most of it, to really enjoy it, to really feel that "Oh! It was so worthwhile" and you'll remember it later "Oh! I am so happy I did that." It's so rare to get a chance to do that. As a memory later you'll feel happy about it and it will help you to keep on meditating. You'll really learn to meditate. You'll experience some deep insight that will help you for the rest of your life and, I think, even for the next life because every deep insight has tremendous power, it can affect you for many lives. If you just understand that this is just pure physical phenomenon not a being, not a thing and this is just pure mental phenomenon not a being, not a thing, just that understanding, very deeply, clearly can affect you for many life times. Every time you hear Dhamma

you will know instantly that "Yes, this is right." So it has tremendous power; wisdom has very strong power. So wisdom, mindfulness, clarity is something most of us don't do all the time. We have lived many life-times before. I don't know exactly but just to make a learned guess, we can tell that we have not meditated much even in our past life-times. Maybe we have done a lot of merits, giving things, supporting other people, helping other people, keeping the precepts and all those good things we might have done that, quite probable, but very rarely we really meditate. Very rarely when we really meditate we penetrate and see the way things are. So if you really think about it, what you are going to do is something you have never done before maybe. And even in the future I would like to do that, longer retreats, fifteen, twenty days. If we can plan for it I am really happy to help you when I come back. If possible we will do it, but we cannot really be sure that we will be able to do it. But if we really put our mind and heart in doing it, it will happen.

QUESTION &

ANSWER: People take a lot of pride in their seats and in most cases their seat shows who they are. To give you an example, some people told me in some offices if you go into the office, the size of this office tells you who this person is. And if you see a pot plant in the room, the rarity and the expensiveness of the pot plant tells you who this person is: the boss. And if there are more and bigger pot plants then

he's the bigger boss; not enough room left, the whole room filled with pot plants. We take so much pride in what we wear, in the seat we use to sit or the bed to sleep. We discriminate against each other by using different seats. "You shouldn't sit in that chair, that's for somebody special." When we take the eight precepts we deliberately make ourselves humble, we don't show off with our clothes or seat; so no high and luxurious seats. It affects our mind also. I am glad that you mentioned that.

*Eight precepts are not meant
to deprive you of your necessities.*

They help you to meditate, to make your life simpler.

If you are not used to keeping eight precepts you may think that "Oh! It's so hard". But if you are willing, even though you are not used to it, you'll find that after the second day it's ok. Only on the first day you feel like you are missing something. Instead of the meal you can drink a lot of juice. If you become used to doing that you may not even feel the need to do that anymore. Just water is enough. But it's ok you can drink juice, have a big meal for your breakfast and another big meal for lunch and after that in the evening, drink juice. Drinking juice is good for meditation also. Liquid does not make you feel heavy and tired; it gives you a lot of energy; feels very light. So to make your life very simple, to save time also, is very important. Think about it,

how much time we spend to eat. When I eat it takes about fifteen minutes. I give myself twenty minutes but in fifteen minutes I finish eating my meal. When I think about how much time people spend for cooking I thought “Why spend so much time just to cook? Just boil it, put a little bit of salt and oil and eat it.” Just spend ten minutes to cook and ten minutes to eat.

*It's ok to have enough energy,
to keep yourself healthy,
but don't spend too much time doing
too much thinking about food.*

I did that too when I was young whenever we met each other we talked about this and that and I don't know how the conversation slipped into food, again and again about food e.g. what we ate this morning. After a while we'd notice that “Hey! Look we talked about something else and ended up talking about food.” So it's a big part of our life, our body needs. We're not depriving ourselves or destroying and ruining our health by not eating. We are eating enough.

... Actually dairy products are considered a kind of food. Only fruit and vegetable juice is actually allowed (after mid-day). Plain or black tea I think is ok. Honey, cane sugar juice, coconut water, orange juice, banana juice is allowed.

QUESTION &**A
NSWER:** To make your life very simple, that is the main point. We don't spend time to cook.

*The main purpose is to make your life very simple,
just to let go of your craving for food.*

Do you know anything about King Milinda? Sometimes he kept eight precepts. He was the one who asked so many questions to Venerable Nāgasena. The King's name was Milinda or Menander. In Pāli it is Milinda. This King, you know how careful and wise he was? Before he asked the Venerable Nāgasena the questions he kept eight precepts for about a week and lived in a very simple room, not in the decorated palace room and he wore simple clothes and he even covered his hair with something like this; just covered it not to make it beautiful. He kept eight precepts, meditated for a while and then he asked the questions. When you prepare yourself like that, your mood and perspective change. You don't feel you are a king anymore. You feel like you are a person who wants to know the Truth and you prepare your body and mind for it. So these things are very important to take notice of; if he felt that he is a King, then from that feeling if he asks questions, he'll ask stupid questions. So he deliberately distanced himself from being a king. Without giving up power he stopped attending court and he just meditated for about a week, kept eight precepts and

then asked the questions. Then he has a very important and meaningful question to ask. So these are the things which I think we should remember and learn and do. If I didn't meditate it would be very difficult for me to talk about meditation. And if you don't meditate it would be very difficult for you to ask about meditation. If you are doing it with all these preparations then you know what needs to be asked, and if I have to say something I'll know what to say. Also don't bring anything valuable. It just worries you too much.

QUESTION: *When we watch sensations are we still aware of the breathing?*

ANSWER: If you can stay with your breath alone stay with it as long as possible. When some other sensations on the body become very strong and attract your attention naturally your mind will go there again and again. In this case pay attention to that sensation for quite a long time, stay with it for a long time, for as long as you can stay. It does not matter with what sensation you stay with, the only thing that really matters is to stay with it for a long time and see the nature of it. See that it is just a natural phenomenon. It has no shape, no name and it doesn't belong to anybody.

QUESTION &

ANSWER: Yes it might disappear; sometimes it might not disappear, most of the time it disappears. When it disappears then go back to breathing again. Sometimes you know even breathing disappears; only very clear peaceful state of mind is there. Then you pay attention to that. Nothing is there anymore, no bodily sensation, no breath even. Although you are still breathing, it becomes so subtle that it cannot come into your awareness anymore. Also because you are paying more attention to your mental states, the more you pay attention to your mental states the more you get absorbed into that mental state, the mind stays in the mind. Your body disappears from your focus so you are not aware of it anymore, you don't feel anything in the body. You can only feel the mind, very clear and calm. Sometimes something like a ripple comes. You can see that, feel that and it goes away, stay with that. But it happens only in the later stages.

QUESTION &

ANSWER: Stay with it as long as you can. If you can stay with a sensation stay with it as long as you can. Breath is also one sensation. We choose breathe because it is always with us. Other sensations they are there sometimes and sometimes they are not there. When thoughts come pay attention to the thoughts, but if you can pay attention to the sensation completely that is good enough. When you pay attention to your breathing, it's also a sensation. When you breathe in and out,

the sensation you are paying attention to is not the in and out direction, that has no shape. You are not thinking about the breath; you are paying attention to the sensation happening while this process of breathing is going on. Breathing in and out you feel something, a sensation; even when you are breathing in and out you are paying attention to the sensation, this one of the sensations. Because it is so natural and it happens all the time we take it as our focal point, but when another sensation happens in the body we pay attention to that. If you can stay with that sensation as long as it lasts, keep doing that. We don't say that this is better than that, because only in samatha meditation you have to stick to one object. With *vipassanā* meditation you can switch from one object to another as long as you don't think about it or anything else. You can pay attention to any sensation and stay with it as long as possible, and when it disappears come back to your focal point.

Sometimes it doesn't disappear. Let's say for example pain, it becomes more and more painful, after a while you think that "I can't bear this anymore, it is too painful and it is making my mind agitated." Sometimes people even tremble because of the pain. They endure and endure and after a while they think "I can't take it anymore." So some people shake with pain. Some people sweat with pain. Some people are very brave. Then at last when you think that this is the limit, it's not really useful anymore, change your posture very slowly and mindfully. As you move even a centimeter you can feel the sensation and difference, "It's getting better."

So you can change position slowly, feel it changing, changing, changing, disappearing, disappearing. Then you find another position in which you feel comfortable and you can see also your mind becoming more relaxed. When you are feeling pain naturally your mind becomes very tense. Now your mind becomes very relaxed and then back to breathing. It's quite natural; the whole process is quite natural.

QUESTION &

ANSWER: Just see the thinking, thinking about food, about home, about work, about friend. You just notice the thinking, and enough, back to sensation. Later in your meditation you can just stick with a thought, but that happens later. For a beginner, if he stays with the thought it just goes on and on with no ending, but after you've developed some samādhi, if look at the thought, you can see it very clearly, each word going on in your mind; it's like talking inside, you can even hear it, one word after another. If we become really exact on the point it stops and disappears; no thought anymore. When there is no thought anymore, if you can, you can see the mind with no thought. For example it's like you are watching a television and the programme ends or you switch to another channel where there is no programme. When there is no programme what is there? No picture yes, but something is there. It's a blank and bright screen. The mind becomes like that: blank but bright. Bright means you are there, awareness is there, the mind is alert but very quiet, no thought, no picture,

no sound, no words. It's very quiet, very clear. You can feel that and stay with that. This is the clearest state of mind. That becomes your object of meditation again. If you can stay with that longer and longer, it helps very much. The longer you can maintain that clear, quiet state of mind when something else happens it becomes clearer.

So you begin with breathing for a few minutes and then you pay attention to your body also, after a while when you develop some mindfulness and samādhi, your mind becomes very calm and peaceful, you watch your mind, one thought comes slowly and goes away, another thought comes slowly and goes away. You watch it and watch it and as you watch it really directly, right on the present moment, it stops and your mind becomes suddenly clear; no thought anymore. You can see that mind, no thought. A very clear state of mind, if you can touch with your mindfulness, awareness, that state of mind stays. This means no thoughts coming in anymore. You can stay with that thought and after a while you can maintain it. You can tune and adjust your mind and maintain that clear state of mind and stay for a long time.

Your mindfulness becomes stronger and stronger, and from that space you can experience anything else happening without this space disappearing. When a sound comes, without losing this clear state of mind you can experience the sound and it disappears immediately. Even without losing this clarity of mind if any sensation happens in your body you can still experience it. From that clear state of mind you

experience that sensation and it disappears. But this happens in the later stages, not in the beginning. So it's very natural. You stay with what happens, even unpleasant sensation or some kind of disturbing questions.

Disturbing questions also come, a question coming again and again, "What is this? What is that? What shall I do now?" And if you pay attention to that question, after a while it disappears and you feel that "No need to ask any question". Whatever comes next just pay attention, it disappears and another thing comes, pay attention. If you are willing to do that then just go on doing that. Don't need to do anything else, just pay attention to whatever comes. Whatever happens in your body or in your mind has to be observed. All you need to do is to observe it, to look at it, to pay attention, to see what it is. No need to change it or to push it away. Don't create anything. It is very simple. If you can do that your mind becomes very calm, very still. You are not doing anything at all. That's a kind of samādhi, very calm. Sometimes nothing is happening. The mind is very calm and clear. You can see that mind more and more clearly, you can see that it's very calm. You experience calmness. You experience samādhi again. This is samādhi; the mind is bright, it's like a flame, it's like a candle in a cave, very deep cave with no wind. It's very still, you light a candle, it's burning bright but the flame is so still it is like it is painted. You can sometimes see your mind like that: very calm, it does not move at all. Sometimes you feel your mind very tranquil. It's cool, very cool. Sometimes you

feel that it's so balanced that you don't have to do anything at all; it's just balanced, so much equanimity. Sometimes you feel a lot of motivation, saddhā, to keep meditating. You don't want to get up. You don't want to go out and do anything else. You just want to go on meditating. Sometimes you even tell yourself "I can sit like that forever now." If the mind stays like that, you really can sit forever. Only sometimes it becomes weaker again. Actually things change.

QUESTION: *When we feel drowsy and we know we are not getting anywhere is it better to get up and do walking meditation?*

ANSWER: Before you become sleepy pay attention to what happens to your mental state. This also is an object of meditation. In Pāli it is called *sankhittam*. Saṅkhittam means the mind going away; not going out, it's going in. It is not samādhi but the mind is becoming more and more sleepy. Maybe sometimes it feels like being sleepy and lazy. When you're sleepy you're lazy actually, because there is no energy, no motivation. So firstly, when it is happening, see that mental state also. Seeing whatever is happening now is more important than overcoming it. So when it happens pay more attention. Sometimes just by paying attention and making yourself alert "I'll pay more attention now", that makes you wake up again. Sometimes as you pay more and more attention for a brief few seconds you fall asleep; you are not aware of anything at all. Then you wake up again and notice that "Oh! For a brief

moment I fell asleep." And when something happens and you notice, you wake up again. So try first to do that.

Because sitting meditation is only for one hour, if you try, you can sit for one hour. Try to stay with the sitting. After that you walk for one hour. But you'll find that after a few days you can sit longer and longer. That's why although it is not included in the programme, later in the retreat, after maybe five, six or seven days, if you want to and if you can, you may sit without going for a walk. Because we have many times for walking, four or five times, if you want to skip some you can just go on sitting. But be very careful. Don't do that just to prove it. Do it if it is really useful for you to do. You are not proving anything to yourself or even to others. You are not proving that "I can sit for two hours." You don't need to prove that. Whether you are sitting or walking the most important thing is to be really mindful, to pay real attention to what is happening in the body and mind now. I don't mean to say that sitting is better than walking; not necessarily. Sometimes during the walking meditation session, you're more mindful. Sometimes during the sitting meditation session, you're more mindful.

*To be mindful is more important than
just to be sitting or walking for a long time.
So time doesn't matter actually.*

This alternating between sitting and walking is a very good schedule. It's good for your health too. If you sit for too long

sometimes your body and also your mind becomes very dull. But as I said, after a few days, if you like to sit longer, sit longer, it's alright. Walking one and a half hours in the morning and the evening, that's a long walk. You can go out and walk. But in between there are many walking sessions too. 7:00 to 8:30, that's one long walking; then 10:00 to 11:00, one hour walking; 1:00 to 2:00, one hour walking; 3:00 to 4:00, one hour walking; and there tea and walking together, one and a half hours, so you just drink a cup of tea which takes five minutes and then go for one hour and twenty five minutes of walking. After a while, naturally, you tend to sit more and more. You get very calm and peaceful you just sit for the whole one hour, one and a half hours. Sometimes, some people, later in the retreat, especially when they are doing a long retreat, sit for three sessions together, one hour of sitting, one hour of walking and another hour of sitting, if they don't get up for the one hour walking between, they can go on sitting for three hours. Some people do that. You're not required to do that. But some people like to do that and they do it. That's ok. From 7:30 onwards, sitting or standing. Standing meditation is also good and necessary, in some cases. Here also, 9:00 to 10:00 am sitting or standing; you may stand also, its ok, no problem; it's equally good if you can do that. Just stand somewhere with your whole body as relaxed as possible, your arms very relaxed, just there, and maintain the standing posture and meditate just like sitting. In the beginning you may find it hard to stand for half an hour, so just stand for fifteen minutes and then

when you feel ready, sit down slowly, quietly. Try that.

Actually after walking for an hour, if you do walking meditation really mindfully, if you go and sit, that sitting is very good. Because the samādhi and mindfulness that you have developed during walking helps you even more when you sit. So no matter what happens try to do both regularly without preferring one or another. See what happens? So first try to sit and walk regularly. Try to be on the schedule.

QUESTION: *What do we do after the retreat, because some of us will have to go to work the next day?*

ANSWER: Yes, this is also very important. I thought of talking about that on the last day. But it's ok; we can talk about it now. It's very good that you ask this question now. If you don't ask this question now, you know what will happen? You will be thinking about it during the retreat. That's not a good thing to do. That's why I want to be here now to talk about it. So naturally if you really pay more and more attention, after the first day you become more calm and peaceful. Or maybe you think about this or that for a while, and then after a few days, three four days, your mind becomes settled and very quiet and peaceful. After eight or nine days, you'll think "Oh! It would be wonderful if I don't have to leave, that I don't have to go back to that busy life." Naturally it happens. And your body and mind also becomes very sensitive. So when you go out suddenly it's very painful; rushing, driving, seeing this, hearing that, it's

very painful. So expect that. After the retreat is over, stay there for a while and talk about something so that you get use to talking and adjust yourself back to normal.

On Monday also, the momentum and strength of your meditation will still go on for a few more days. So even on Monday if you have to go to work, you'll feel like you don't want to talk much. Even the way you do things becomes slow; this is quite natural. If you can, tell your friends about this, that this is something that happens naturally. So when you come back for work, your friends know that today and for a few more days you'll be a little bit quiet and slow, not so talkative. Sometimes you don't want to pay attention to what others are talking about, because to pay attention to so many people talking about so many different things is so tiring. You feel that "Oh! It's so tiring." So tell them that "If I don't pay so much attention please understand it and forgive me. I'll be ok in few days." Talk about this also with your family members. Say that "I am going for a retreat and when I come back this is something that happens naturally. So don't think that I have become a zombie. Don't think that something has happened. It's just normal." After a few days you will get used to going on the way you have lived before and maybe a little bit more detached. Sometimes this detachment goes on for many days, sometimes months. If you keep on meditating it can go on. But you can still go on doing your work, and even better. Your relationships also will get even better because you don't react so much anymore. If you can maintain you awareness, when

somebody talks, you can pay full attention and understand it very well and then respond appropriately not automatically.

There is one thing that a lot of people complain about. This is also something important to discuss. People say that when you become very mindful you lose your spontaneity, you are not spontaneous anymore. You are more deliberate. Before you say something you think for a few more seconds. Before this you just talk on and on without thinking, without even knowing what you are talking about. But after, as you become more and more mindful, before you say something you think about it. Sometimes you won't say anything anymore, it's not necessary. So people around you sometimes think that "It looked like he was going to say something but I don't know what happened." You know what you want to talk about and you see this and you thought "Not necessary, just stop." So these are a few things that we need to know. Maybe these become a kind of difficulty in your life. But as you go on with full confidence and keep on meditating, later it will not be a problem anymore and your life becomes even more meaningful, more structured, more disciplined, less agitation, less waste of time, less waste of energy.

You don't get interested in doing too many things also. Even going here and there too much, you lose interest, because these things are really not necessary and not useful. I don't know why people think that they have to be doing something; they have to keep themselves busy all the time. This is becoming an addiction, a disease actually. Why do

you need to do so much? Many people these days, especially in the West, when you are not busy, they say that something is wrong with you. They'll think "what, you are not doing anything?" "What do you do in your weekends?" "Oh! Nothing, I just stay at home." "Oh! You did nothing? Just stayed at home? Something is wrong with you." Nothing is wrong. They are just crazy about rushing here and there and you are not. You are sane and they are crazy and they think you are crazy. But be very patient and kind. Just understand them. So that's what I mean; when you developed mindfulness and concentration and deeper understanding, your world becomes different, you become different also. But because you are the one who is developing and growing you need to be more patient and understanding and kind and forgiving. So understand other people and forgive them even though they don't understand you. Many people told me that "You try to understand us and we feel that you understand us. Don't you feel that you want us to understand you?" I said "Yes if you understand me I'll be so happy. But if you don't, I can understand that too." We want understanding from each other. Misunderstanding is also very painful. Since we are the ones who are trying to meditate with mindfulness, kindness, and from that deeper understanding, insight, we try to understand others too. With that understanding your life will not be a problem actually. In the beginning they may not know how to adjust to your change of behavior, so in some ways you can help them.

QUESTION &

ANSWER: Yes, when it comes up during the last day just after the meditation we can talk about a few things just to conclude the session. That's why it is very important that the last day after the last sitting meditation, it'll be for discussion again. Some kind of clearing things to make it feel like this is the conclusion: a beginning and a conclusion. So this is another thing; when you do something, make it complete, like drawing a circle, make it a complete circle. If you draw a circle and leave a small part disconnected, when you look at it, it doesn't look beautiful. When you complete it you feel the completion. It's very important to make it complete. Also make a determination, and this determination is a very useful tool also. One of the ten pāramis is the pārami of determination, *adhiṭṭhāna-pārami*. So *adhiṭṭhāna*, what does that mean? The Pāli language and Pāli words are very interesting, very profound. Every word when I look into the deeper meaning is very profound. The word *ṭhā* means to stand. *Adhi* means strong. That means to stand firm. So you are very strong, you stand firm, "This is what I am going to do." You take a stand. And even in the Western language they use this idiom 'to take a stand' i.e. to take a firm position. So it's important not to be wishy-washy or luke-warm. So when you want to do something, first you learn about it very carefully "Yes this is what I am interested in doing." When you have learnt enough then you decide "I

am going to do this." And after you have decided to do it, don't change your mind anymore; because if you change your mind again and again it becomes a habit. Especially when things become difficult, people tend to give up "Oh! No, it's not working anymore, it's not useful anymore." Sometimes the mind becomes very tricky. It gives you very good excuses, more excuses and more excuses. Sometimes it will say "It will harm your health. Take it easy" or "Stop for a while. You can do it later. Just take a break." The mind is so tricky. So make a firm determination "I am going to do this" and go for it. You will not die in nine days. Nothing will happen. Actually you feel even healthier, fit, happy, and peaceful. Only the first few days, because you are not used to sitting so much, you might feel some pain in your back or your knees, minor pains. I have a slipped disk and I can still sit for hours, it is ok. Even with the slipped disk, when it first happened it was so painful, but even with that I can meditate, but it went away slowly, it took three months. Anyway, we can do more than we think we can.

Let's pay homage to the Buddha
*I pay homage to the Buddha
by this very practice which leads to liberation.*
*I pay homage to the Dhamma
by this very practice which leads to liberation.*
*I pay homage to the Sangha
by this very practice which leads to liberation.*