



Inner
Strength

Inner Strength

&

Parting Gifts

Talks by

Ajaan Lee Dhammadharo

(Phra Suddhidhammaraṅsī Gambhīramedhācariya)

Translated from the Thai

by Ṭhānissaro Bhikkhu

(Geoffrey DeGraff)

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Inner Strength

Introduction

The sixteen talks translated here are actually reconstructions of Ajaan Lee's talks made by one of his followers—a nun, Arun Abhivaṇṇā—based on notes she made while listening to him teach. With a few exceptions—the talks dated 1958 and 1959, which were printed after Ajaan Lee's death—all were checked and approved by Ajaan Lee and printed in a volume entitled, *The Way to Practice Insight Meditation, Collected from Four Years' Sermons*, or *Four Years' Sermons* for short. The entire volume runs to more than 600 pages in the Thai original, the first half consisting of aphorisms and short passages, the second half of reconstructions, some fairly fragmentary, others more complete. The selection here consists of all the reconstructions in *Four Years' Sermons* that deal directly with the techniques of breath meditation, plus a number of passages dealing with the values underlying its practice.

To read these talks is, in effect, to eavesdrop on Ajaan Lee while he is teaching other people. This point is worth bearing in mind. Ajaan Lee's remarks are directed at people whose background, preconceptions, and experiences in the practice may or may not coincide with our own. For this reason, his comments should be read selectively.

In particular, his descriptions of the breath sensations in the body and how to deal with them touch on a matter very subjective and subject to change. The way these sensations are experienced varies widely from person to person, and even with the same person can change radically with time. For someone with a Western background, Ajaan Lee's explanations of these sensations will sound strange. They are based partly on Thai physiology, which unlike Western physiology describes physical processes as they feel from the inside, in terms of their four basic properties (see *dhātu* in the Glossary), rather than as they can be measured from the outside. Since in meditation we are exploring the body and mind from the inside, we would do well to familiarize ourselves with this approach and not dismiss it for its strangeness.

In any event, Ajaan Lee's comments are best read as food for thought—pointing out an area to be explored, suggesting various ways to understand and deal with it—

and not as hard and fast rules. Meditation is an art and a skill, to be mastered by using one's own powers of discernment, sensitivity, and observation while practicing it, and not by adhering blindly to any set system of instructions.

Another aspect of these talks that deserves comment is the frequent use of Pāli words and phrases. For many readers, they will be unfamiliar; for Ajaan Lee's listeners, though, they were not. They come mostly from chants that many Thai Buddhists—lay and ordained—repeat daily, or that monks chant at ceremonies in monasteries and homes. For many Thai Buddhists, the chants and the terms are Buddhism, and so Ajaan Lee makes reference to them to show that they reveal their true meanings only when related to the experience of the practice. For the reader unfamiliar with these terms, I have provided a glossary explaining the more important ones at the end of the collection. The remaining terms can be adequately understood from their context or, if not, passed over as stylistic devices—of interest to people already acquainted with them, but by no means necessary for understanding the meaning of what is being said.

I hope that these obstacles to eavesdropping on Ajaan Lee will not be deterrent, for the talks included here are among those that I personally have found most useful and inspiring my own practice, and my hope is that others will find them useful in theirs.

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I. Inner Wealth

The Last Sermon

“On February 19, 1956, Khun Nai Thawngmuan Siasakun invited Phra Ajaan Lee Dhammadharo to deliver a sermon for Khun Thao Satyanurak in Nekkhamma House, Wat Boromnivas. This sermon—which Khun Thao Satya listened to quietly, with her hands folded in respect as she lay on her sickbed—was the last sermon she ever heard. When it was over, I approached her and said, ‘If you die, I’d like to jot down this sermon and have it printed to distribute at your funeral.’ She smiled with her eyes, nodded slightly to show her approval, and asked, ‘Can you remember it all?’ ‘Not all of it,’ I answered, ‘but at least some of it.’ So she reviewed a few of the points for me. She seemed delighted and moved by the taste of the Dhamma all the while she spoke. Thus I have written out this summary of what I can remember of the sermon.”

**namo tassa bhagavato arahato sammā-sambuddhassa.
āyudo balado dhīro’ti.**

Now I will discuss a point from the Buddha’s teachings for you to listen to briefly as a means of fostering strength of body and strength of mind. All of us live in dependence on strength of body and strength of mind. Without these two things, life couldn’t last.

Strength of body, no matter how much we may foster it with the four necessities and with worldly wealth, can’t help but waste away and vanish by its very nature. It can’t escape from aging, illness, and death. And for strength of body to exist, it needs help from strength of mind. But strength of mind doesn’t need to depend on the four necessities or worldly wealth; and it doesn’t need to depend on strength of body at all. It can get along solely on ‘noble wealth.’ So strength of mind is more important than strength of body.

People who don’t have enough strength of their own have to start out by hoping to depend on others until they reach the point where they can stand on their own. In depending on others, we have to be careful in choosing a good mainstay, in line with

the Pāli phrase, *asevanā ca bālānaṃ, paṇḍitānañca sevanā*: We have to choose good people to associate with. If we associate with wise people and sages, they'll teach us to be good. If we associate with fools, we'll suffer for it.

So searching for a mainstay of this sort doesn't rank as being really good, because it's like shooting a bird: We might hit it on the wing or on the tail. If we really want to be right on target, we have to depend on another sort of mainstay: *attā hi attano nātho*, we have to depend on ourselves. This sort of mainstay the Lord Buddha praised as being the highest because it will teach us to have a sense of our own good and bad actions—'*kammassako'mhi*'—and we won't need to go pinning our hopes on other people any more.

To create this sort of mainstay, we have to develop five qualities—conviction, persistence, mindfulness, concentration, and discernment— which are called *bala*, or strengths, that will help give us the strength of mind to stride toward the good. All five of these qualities can be gathered under the headings of virtue, concentration, and discernment. Conviction comes under virtue; persistence, mindfulness, and concentration come under concentration; and discernment is discernment.

To have conviction is tantamount to having wealth. Virtue is like a white cloth that enwraps the body and makes it beautiful, just as the petals of a lotus enwrap the scent of its pollen. Virtue is the act of abandoning that cuts away evil and corruption from our deeds so that our deeds will be honest and upright. This is virtue, but it's not the ultimate good. When our body has virtue, our mind needs rectitude to go with it.

Persistence means diligence, determination, perseverance, being audacious and unrelenting in what we do, so as to be strong in progressing toward what is good.

Mindfulness means care and restraint to make sure that our thoughts, words, and deeds don't go off the mark; being conscious of good and evil so that our behavior doesn't fall into ways that are bad and unwise.

Concentration means keeping the mind firmly centered in a single object—the direct path (*ekāyana-magga*)—not letting it tip, lean, or waver under the influence of its preoccupations, whether good or bad, past or future; keeping the mind honest and upright.

All three of these qualities form the rectitude of the mind that abstains from thoughts of sensuality, ill-will, and harm. This is termed the resolve of renunciation (*nekkhamma-saṅkappo*): The mind isn't pleased or displeased with sensual moods or sensual objects, whether good or bad. This is a mind gone forth from the home life. Whether or not we ordain, whether we live at home or in a monastery, we're classed as having gone forth.

The next quality, which the Buddha classed as the highest good, is discernment.

Once we have virtue and concentration, discernment will arise from the mind in the first, second, third, and fourth levels of *jhāna*. This is the light of discernment that enables us to see the Dhamma both within us and without. We can see ourself from both sides. We can see that the aspect that takes birth, takes birth; and that there is also an aspect that doesn't take birth. The aspect that ages, ages; and there is also an aspect that doesn't age. The aspect that's ill, is ill; and there is also an aspect that isn't ill. The aspect that dies, dies; and the aspect that doesn't die, doesn't die. This is change-of-lineage knowledge (*gotarabhū-ñāṇa*), which sees both sides, like having two eyes. Whichever side we look at, we can see, but we aren't stuck on either side. We simply know things in line with their nature as fabrications, that they have to take birth, age, grow ill, and die. These four facts have made arahants of the many people who have contemplated them and seen their true nature clearly to the point of working free from unawareness.

The nature of the body is that it flows in one direction—toward decay—but the mind won't flow along with it. The mind is sure to progress in line with its strength. Whoever has a lot of strength will go far. Whoever gets stuck on birth will have to take birth. Whoever gets stuck on aging will have to age. Whoever gets stuck on illness will have to be ill. Whoever gets stuck on dying will have to die. But whoever isn't stuck on birth, aging, illness, and death is bound for a state that doesn't take birth, doesn't age, doesn't grow ill, and doesn't die.

When we can do this, we're said to have found a hunk of noble wealth in birth, aging, illness, and death. We needn't fear poverty. Even though the body may age, our mind doesn't age. If the body is going to grow ill and die, let it grow ill and die, but our mind doesn't grow ill, our mind doesn't die. The mind of an arahant is such that, even if someone were to break his head open, his mind wouldn't be pained.

* * *

When the mind is involved with the world, it's bound to meet with collisions; and once it collides, it will be shaken and roll back and forth, just as round stones in a large pile roll back and forth. So no matter how good or bad other people may be, we don't store it up in our mind to give rise to feelings of like or dislike. Dismiss it completely as being their business and none of ours.

* * *

The five hindrances are five diseases that fasten on and eat into the mind, leaving it thin and famished. Whoever has concentration reaching deep into the heart will be able to kill off all five of these diseases. Such a person is sure to be full in body and mind—free from hunger, poverty and want—and won't have to go asking for goodness from anyone.

The results we'll receive are: (1) We'll make ourselves rich in noble wealth. (2) If the Buddha were still alive, he'd be sure to be pleased, just as a parent whose child is wealthy and self-sufficient can stop being anxious and thus sleep in peace.

To summarize: Worldly wealth is what fosters strength of body; noble wealth is what fosters strength of mind. So I ask that we all put this teaching into practice, training ourselves and polishing our thoughts, words and deeds so that they're worthy and pure, reaching the stage of noble wealth, which is the path to the highest happiness: *nibbāna*.

A Mind of Pure Gold

July, 1958

The mind, the Buddha said, is like gold. An impure mind is like gold adulterated with various minerals that will make it hard and unmalleable. Before it can be put to use in any way, it first has to be melted down and its impurities—the various adulterations—removed completely. Only then will it be genuine gold, soft and malleable. Our mind, which is adulterated with various preoccupations, first has to be put into shape, and its impurities—its various defilements—completely removed. Only then will it be a pure mind, becoming a thing of supreme power and usefulness, like genuine gold malleable enough to be melted and poured into anything at all. A pure mind can pour around the world without getting snagged and can roll all around itself, like a bead of water on a lotus leaf, which will roll around without seeping into the leaf. This is what is meant by a mind that is Dhamma.

Or you might compare a pure mind to genuine beeswax, which doesn't need fire in order to melt. No matter how large or small a lump it may be, all it needs is a little sunlight or just the warmth of your hand, and it will be soft and malleable enough for you to form it into any shape at all. A pure mind can be put to every sort of use in line with your aspirations in just the same way. This is why the Buddha taught that every sort of achievement depends completely on the power of the mind.

Things that are genuine or pure, even though they may be small, can give rise to enormous results, just as a piece of genuine paper money—a tiny little slip of paper with the state seal—can be put to use in all sorts of ways. But if it's newsprint, even a bushel of it wouldn't be able to buy a thing. In the same way, a pure mind—even if we can make it pure for only a little while—can give results way in excess of its size. People who are really intent on purifying the mind may even lift themselves over and beyond the world.

So we're taught that people whose minds aren't pure—regardless of whether they've given donations or observed precepts by the tens or hundreds of thousands—may not escape going to hell. At best, they may make it back only as human beings. A mind adulterated with bad preoccupations will have to go to a bad bourn. A mind adulterated with good preoccupations is bound for a good bourn, as a heavenly being. A pure mind, though, will go above and beyond all this.

For this reason, you should focus on watching only your mind. Don't let your attention go leaking out your ears, eyes, nose, tongue, or body. If the mind is murky, make it clear. Keep trying to chase away its various preoccupations until they're completely gone, leaving only the genuine gold: a pure mind. Set your heart on doing it right now.

* * *

Just as we have to give rise to goodness in our actions, we have to give rise to goodness in our minds by letting go of physical and mental phenomena, which are a heavy load. This is why the Buddha taught, *bhārā have pañcakkhandhā*: 'The five khandhas are truly a burden.' The body is heavier than rock. How is it heavy? It's big. Weighty. Enormous. Its mouth can eat cattle by the herd, rice by the ton, and yet never be full for a second. You have to keep finding things to stuff in it all the time, which is a burden to the heart. We've been shoring up this body ever since we were little and red so that it will stay with us, and yet it won't stay. What does stay is nothing more than scraps. What's good leaves us completely. Don't go thinking that it'll stay. The part that's left loads us down, creating stress and pain. So we're taught to let go. *Cāga*: Relinquish what's outside, i.e., the body; and let go of what's in the mind, i.e., its various preoccupations that follow along with the world. If we can let go of these things, we'll be light in body and mind. And when we're light in this way, we can be at our ease.

Then we can consider further that all these things fall under the truths of the world. That is, they're inconstant, stressful, and not-self. They make us misconstrue everything, just as when we let ourselves get duped into spending our money. There are people, for instance, who make sugar water with various colors for us to drink at 10, 20, or 30 cents a glass. Actually, it's no different from the ordinary water we drink, but we have it all misconstrued and think that it's something special—so we'll come back to spend more money to drink it again. This is inconstancy. It's like waves that keep rising and falling, causing us to waver, keeping us from being still and at peace. When we see this, we should incline our hearts toward being trained in the Dhamma.

* * *

A person who lets the mind be defiled is like someone who lets his children play in the mud: They're bound to cause hardships for their parents, and not only that, they're bound to cause hardships for themselves, because they have no livelihood, no basis for setting themselves up in life. So we should train our hearts to be adults in order to outgrow our defilements and corruptions.

We shouldn't let ourselves get tied up in worldly affairs, because they're good

only from age 20 to 40. From that point on, our mouth gets smaller and smaller, our eyes get so small we can scarcely open them. Whatever we say doesn't get past our lips. Our hands get so small that we have to give them a one-meter extension called a 'cane.' Our back gets crooked—and with the body sure to run down like this, what are we going to want out of it? It's enough to make you heartsick. So we should develop what's good and becoming within ourselves. Develop goodness into noble wealth. In other words, relinquishment (*cāga*) and virtue (*sīla*) are two things we should foster in our hearts so that we can begin to grow up, unfold, and go beyond being children....

Once we've reached the middle of life, things start getting shorter and shorter, so we're taught not to be complacent. Whatever will give rise to knowledge, we should stir ourselves to pursue, like a child who studies math without playing truant or thinking only of fun and games. Such a child is sure to have a high level of knowledge in the future.

People in this world—even though they may be 80 years old—if they stay sunk in worldly matters, are still children. Relinquishment and virtue: Once we give rise to these things, we're headed for adulthood. Otherwise, we're still children. So we shouldn't let the heart settle on things that aren't good for it. Sometimes there are both good and bad things. The good things are hard to latch onto; the bad are easy. If we give our children free rein to go playing, they'll for the most part bring us nothing but trouble. Sometimes they hang around doing nothing at all and yet come back with other people's belongings in their pockets. In other words, sometimes other people do something, and yet we let it get stuck in our hearts. This is being infantile. Our minds are a mess of defilements, which is why we're said to be children.

So we should consider things carefully. Whatever will benefit us, we should take an interest in. If a poor person wanders shiftlessly about, nobody pays any mind; but if a rich person behaves that way, people really despise it. In other words, we shouldn't let our hearts go lurking about in shoddy or unwise preoccupations. We have to practice tranquillity meditation to make the mind still. That's when we'll begin to enter adulthood.

When the mind is still, it gradually gives rise to discernment, just as a kerosene lantern we keep looking after—adding kerosene, making sure that nothing disturbs the flame—is bound to grow bright. The wick is the breath, the theme of our meditation. The effort we make is like the kerosene. We keep looking after the mind, making sure that the various preoccupations coming in by way of the eyes, ears, nose, and so forth, don't collide with the heart. The mind will become bright and dazzling, like the wick of a kerosene lantern that we keep fed with fuel and whose burnt parts we keep scraping away.

If liberating insight arises, we'll see the absolute truth—that all our

preoccupations are inconstant, stressful, and not-self—appearing in our heart. When we can see things clearly in this way, we'll be able to let go of our various preoccupations. The mind will give rise to a brilliant radiance—termed *dhammo pajjoto*, the light of the Dhamma—and we'll attain to the transcendency of the mind. When we reach this point, that's when we're said to have grown up. We can go wherever we like, for no one will be able to pull the wool over our eyes.

Fabrications

February 6, 1956

*(Delivered at a funeral service for Somdet Phra Mahāvīravamsa (Tissa Uan),
Wat Boromnivas.)*

aniccā vata saṅkhārā uppāda-vaya-dhammino uppajjitvā nirujjhanti

....

The Dhamma, in one sense, is a means of nourishing the heart to make it pure. In another sense, the Dhamma is ourself. Every part of our body is a piece of the world, and the world is an affair of the Dhamma. But it's not the essence of the Dhamma. The essence of the Dhamma lies with the heart.

* * *

The development of all that is good and skillful comes from our own thoughts, words, and deeds. The good that comes from our words and deeds, such as the development of generosity and virtue, is goodness on the crude and intermediate levels. The refined level, goodness developed by means of the heart, is meditation. For this reason, the issues of the heart are the most important things we must learn to understand.

There are two issues to the heart: the aspect of the heart that takes birth and dies, and the aspect of the heart that doesn't take birth and doesn't die. If the heart falls for fabrications (*saṅkhāra*), it's bound to take birth and die repeatedly. But the heart that truly sees and clearly knows all fabrications can then let go of them, and so won't take birth and won't die. If we want to go beyond suffering and stress—not to take birth and not to die—we first have to learn the true nature of fabrications so that we can understand them.

Fabrications, as they appear in actuality, are of two sorts: fabrications on the level of the world and fabrications on the level of the Dhamma. Both sorts have their reality, but they're things that arise and then decay. This is why the Buddha said, '*aniccā vata saṅkhārā...*'—which means, 'Fabrications are inconstant...'—because both sorts of these fabrications begin by arising, then change, and finally disband. Whoever can focus in to know clearly and truly see this condition, curb the mind,

and become wise to all fabrications, is sure to gain release from all suffering and stress.

Fabrications on the level of the world are things that people create and conjure into being, such as wealth, status, pleasure, and praise. As for fabrications on the level of the Dhamma, whether or not we dress them up, we all have them in equal measure—in other words, properties (*dhātu*), aggregates (*khandha*), and sense media (*āyatana*).

Fabrications on the level of the world and of the Dhamma are like the changing colors on a movie screen. They flicker and flash: Green. Red. Yellow. White. Changing back and forth. When we watch, our eyes have to change along with them to follow them—and this is what gives rise to misunderstandings. When the mind fastens on tight to these fabrications, it gives rise to feelings of satisfaction and dissatisfaction. When they change for good or bad, our mind changes along with them—and so it falls into the characteristics of inconstancy, stress, and not-self.

From another point of view, fabrications can be divided into two sorts: those with a mind in possession, such as people or animals; and those without a mind in possession, such as trees. But although this may be the standard interpretation of fabrications without a mind in possession, I don't agree with it. Take the stairway to this hall: If you say that it doesn't have a mind in possession of it, try smashing it and see whether or not there'll be an uproar. The same holds true with fields—try planting rice in someone else's field—or with banana and other fruit trees planted in an orchard: Try hacking them with a knife to see whether or not their owner will have you thrown in jail. Everything in the world to which attachment extends has to have a mind in possession. Only the planet Mars, to which the sphere of attachment doesn't yet extend, doesn't have a mind in possession. Every sort of fabrication has a mind in possession—except for arahants, who don't have a mind in possession because they aren't attached to any fabrications at all.

Attachment to fabrications is the source of stress, because fabrications are inconstant, as we've already explained. So only if we can let go and not be attached to fabrications will we meet with happiness and ease—ease in the sense of the Dhamma, ease that is cool, quiet, solid, and unchanging. Ease in the worldly sense isn't any different from sitting in a chair: Only if the chair doesn't wobble will we have any ease. The wobbling of the mind is of two sorts: wobbling naturally and wobbling under the influence of intention and its fruit. How many times does the mind wobble in a day? Sometimes it wobbles from intentions in the present, sometimes from intentions in the past, but how it's wobbling, we don't know. This is *avijjā*, the unawareness that causes fabrications—thoughts—to arise.

The other side to all this is non-fabrication (*visaṅkhāra*). What is non-fabrication? No wobbling, no changing, no disbanding: That's non-fabrication.

Fabrications change, but our mind doesn't change. Fabrications are stress, but our mind isn't stressed. Fabrications are not-self, but our mind isn't not-self. Fabrications without a mind in possession: That's non-fabrication.

Most of us, by and large, are aware only of the knowledge offered by the Six Teachers—the senses of sight, hearing, smell, taste, feeling, and ideation—which are sources of change, uncertainty, stress, unawareness, and fabrications. So we should close off these senses, because fabrications can't see other fabrications. Only if we get on the other side will we be able to see.

The Tree is in its Seed

August 27, 1956

The purpose of sitting and meditating is to cut away the various thoughts that preoccupy our minds. The more preoccupations we can cut away, the lighter we'll feel. All of the various burdens that weigh down our hearts—all the stresses and strains we feel—will lessen and disappear.

Goodness doesn't come from concepts. Concepts of past and future are what obstruct and destroy our goodness.

The Buddha said,

*atītaṃ nānvāgameyya nappaṭikaṅkhe anāgataṃ...
paccuppannañca yo dhammaṃ tatha tatha vipassati:*

If we don't go conceiving the past or the future, leaving only the present, we'll come to see the truth of the Dhamma.

Concepts, even if they deal with the Dhamma, are fabrications because they fall in the area of mental concoction. There are three types of mental fabrications: (1) If we think in ways that are good, they're called meritorious concoctions (*puññābhisāṅkhāra*). (2) If we think in ways that are evil, they're called demeritorious concoctions (*apuññābhisāṅkhāra*). (3) If we think in ways that are neither good nor evil, they're called impassive concoctions (*aneñjābhisāṅkhāra*) or *avyākata*—neutral and indeterminate. Actually, *aneñjābhisāṅkhāra* has a higher meaning, because it refers to the four levels of absorption in formlessness (*arūpa jhāna*). *Avyākata* refers to such things as thinking about eating a meal or taking a bath, things that are completely unrelated to good and evil. All of these fabrications come from unawareness and ignorance. If we're really intelligent and aware, we shouldn't go conceiving them.

To cut off concepts means to let our mental fabrications disband, to let our trains of thought disband. We sit in meditation, making the body and mind quiet. When the body is still, the mind stays with the stillness. When the heart is at peace, the mind stays with the peace. Concentration develops. The mind comes up to the forefront. Mental fabrications disappear, but the mind is still there. Goodness is still there. In nibbāna, nothing disappears anywhere or gets annihilated, except for

unawareness.

When mental fabrications and unawareness disband, awareness arises. For example, knowledge of past lives: We see the mind's ancestry—its past lifetimes. Knowledge of death and rebirth: We know the good and bad actions of our fellow beings, how they die and are reborn. A mind trained to maturity in concentration develops quality, like a mature mango seed that's capable of containing all its ancestry, its parents and children, in itself. If anyone plants it, it'll break out into roots, stems, branches, leaves, flowers, and more fruits just like before. A mind not yet trained to maturity is like the seed of an unripe mango that's fallen from the tree. If you plant it, it won't grow. It'll just rot there in the dirt. Since it's not yet ripe, it isn't capable of containing its ancestry and descendants.

People aware of their own birth and death in this way are said not to be lacking. Not lacking in what? Not lacking in birth. They're acquainted with the births they've experienced through many lives and states of being in the past—so many that they're weary of it all, to the point where they don't want to take birth again. As for people who don't know, who don't have this awareness, they feel that they're lacking. They want to take birth again and so they keep on creating birth over and over again. As for those who do have awareness, they've had enough. They're smart enough. They won't give rise to any more births or states of being. Whatever is good, they keep within themselves, like putting a ripe mango seed in a showcase to look at, or peeling off its hard outer shell and then putting it in a storeroom. No one will be able to plant it again, and we can take it out for a look whenever we want.

To train the mind to a higher level is the apex of all that is good and worthwhile. To raise the level of our heart is like coming up and sitting here in the meditation hall. Once we've gotten up off the level of the ground, we've escaped from the rain, the heat of the sun, and from all sorts of dangers. Dogs, for instance, can't jump up to claw us or bite us.

Or we can compare this to a tall mountaintop. Nothing filthy or dirty can stay on a mountaintop. Whether it's rain, dew, or fog, when it comes into contact with the summit it all has to flow down to the lowlands and into the sea. It can't stay and form puddles on the summit. At the same time, fresh breezes come blowing from all four directions, keeping the mountaintop dry and free from dampness.

Or we can compare this to a tall treetop. Ordinarily, nobody—human or animal—can urinate or defecate or splash anything dirty on a tall treetop. And because the treetop is tall, its flowers and fruits are born tall. Anyone who wants to pick the topmost leaves or destroy the fruits and flowers will have a hard time of it because the height of the tree makes it hard to climb.

In the same way, once we've fed our heart full with what's good and worthwhile, then no matter if people praise or condemn us, we won't want anything

of what they have to say. If they say we're not good, it flows right back to them. As for what's really good within us, it stays as it always was. A person whose heart is fed full with what's good and worthwhile is like a person whose stomach is full of food and so is bound to be satisfied and not want to eat anything more: free from hunger and craving. No matter what fantastic food other people may offer him, he won't want any of it. Or if anyone offers him poison, he won't take it. In other words, we aren't interested in the goodness or evil that comes from other people. We want only the goodness that we build up within ourselves.

Ignorant people think that good and evil are things we have to get from other people, and not that they come from within us—and so they close their eyes and keep on groping. They have no sense of the good that lies within them, like the person who goes groping for a mango tree without realizing that the mango tree lies in its seed. Once we realize this, though, all we have to do is take the seed and plant it, and soon it'll sprout roots and become a tree, with leaves and branches, flowers and fruits that will keep on multiplying into hundreds of trees. In no time at all we'll be millionaires, because mangoes, even when they've grown only to the size of a thumb, already begin to fetch a price. People buy and sell mangoes from the time they're still unripe, until they're half-ripe, fully ripe, and even over-ripe. Sometimes mangoes that are half-rotten can still get a price, although not as much as mangoes that are still good.

People whose minds haven't yet really reached a high level, when they meet with criticism, will usually keep it and brood over it. By and large, we like to think that we're intelligent and yet we let our minds feed on bad moods and preoccupations. Bad moods are like scraps and bones that other people have spit out. If we're really poor and starving, to the point where we have to beg others for food, we should feed on the good moods they have to offer us, which are like food that hasn't been spit out by anyone. But even then we're still counted as poor, as stupid and ignorant, because even though we have genuine goodness within us, we still go running off to gather good and evil from other people. This has to be wrong.

The right way is that no matter what anyone else may say, we let it pass. We should view what they say as their property and none of ours. As for the goodness we're developing, it's bound to stay with us. Like eating a wormy mango: An intelligent person will eat only the good flesh and leave the spoiled part to the worms. In other words, don't go moving in with the worms. To be intelligent in this way is to qualify as a human being—which means a high-minded being—just as when we come up the stairs to the meditation hall we escape the cats and dogs that would otherwise bother us. Here, they can't jump up and pounce on us. But if we sit on the ground, we're exposed to the sun and rain and all sorts of disturbances. We're mixed up with sages and fools.

When wise people practice the Dhamma, they have to be selective and choose

only what's good. They won't let their minds feed on anything spoiled, because spoiled things, when we feed on them, can be toxic and harmful. As for good things, when we eat them, they don't cause any harm. They can only benefit us.

Goodness, evil, purity—all come from within us. The Buddha thus taught that each of us has his or her own kamma. What he said on this point is absolutely true. There's no way you can argue with it. 'Kamma' means the good and bad actions that come from intentions. Intentions are thoughts that come from the mind, so the mind lies at the essence of intention and kamma, because the mind is what thinks and gives the orders. When an intention is shoddy or dishonest, the resulting action is bad kamma and will result in suffering. When an intention is good, proper, and honest, the action will be good kamma and will result in pleasure. So whether we're to suffer or to experience pleasure, to be good or shoddy, pure or impure, depends on our own actions and intentions, not on anything anyone else may do for us. Once we realize this, there's no more confusion.

The Lessons of Unawareness

August 21, 1956

“*The sermon this afternoon was on the theme, ‘vijjā-caraṇa-sampanno sugato lokavidū.’ I didn’t listen to the beginning. All I can remember is this:”*

...The real nature of the Dhamma isn’t all that difficult for people who have awareness; but it’s hard for people who don’t. It’s hard because it goes against our wishes. If it followed our wishes, it’d be easy. The genuine Dhamma is something that goes against our wishes because good things ordinarily are bound to be that way. It’s the nature of things that are beneficial and useful to us that they’re hard and require effort. Even worldly things are this way. Things actually beneficial are usually hard to obtain. But as for things of no real use to us, there’s no need to go to any great trouble to search for them. There are heaps of them right in our own back yard.

I’m referring here to unawareness—ignorance of what’s real. But this ignorance of what’s real is the wellspring that can give rise to awareness, or knowledge of what’s real. This knowledge of what’s real exists everywhere, like water vapor that rises into the atmosphere. Whoever has the ingenuity to find it and bring it inwards will feel cool, content and refreshed. This is called *vijjā-caraṇa-sampanno*, which is the opposite of unawareness. So I’d like to explain one more point in the theme, *vijjā-caraṇa-sampanno*, which means, ‘Those who really search for the Dhamma are sure to be always giving rise to knowledge within themselves.’

Here we first have to explain the word ‘dhamma.’ Dhamma is something that exists in each and every one of us. It can be divided into three sorts: skillful, unskillful, and neutral.

1. Skillfulness (*kusala-dhamma*) means the goodness that exists naturally, whether or not there’s a Buddha to point it out. This dhamma is what gives comfort and benefit to living beings in proportion to how much they practice it. Don’t go thinking that goodness comes from having been formulated by the Buddha, or that it comes from his teachings. Goodness has been in the world ever since long before the time of the Buddha, but no one was really acquainted with it because no sage had been able to identify it. But when the Buddha came and ferreted out awareness itself, he was able to see the dhamma that has existed in the world from time immemorial.

This sort of dhamma didn't arise from anything he said or taught. It's the goodness that exists naturally in the world. If this sort of goodness didn't exist as a normal part of the world, the human race would have died out long ago. The fact that we have any peace and wellbeing at all comes from our having imbued our hearts with this goodness as we've been able to discover it. Otherwise we wouldn't be able to withstand all the fires of worldliness.

2. Unskillfulness (*akusala-dhamma*): The same holds true with evil. It doesn't come from anything the Buddha said or taught. It exists on its own in the world, by its nature. But people who haven't thought about it or observed it misunderstand things. They think that evil comes from what the Buddha taught and so they don't pay it any attention because they think good and evil were made up by the Buddha. In this way, good and evil get all mixed up together, without anyone knowing their truth.

But the Buddha was endowed with supreme intelligence and so was able to tell what was unhusked rice, what was husked rice, what was bran, and what was chaff. He then sorted them into separate lots so that people could choose whichever they prefer, with the realization that each of us is responsible for his or her own kamma: Whoever does good will have to meet with good; whoever does evil will have to meet with evil.

All dhammas—the good and evil that exist naturally—ultimately come down to the mind right here in this very body. It's not the case that we have to go searching for them anywhere outside. If we were to ask where it all came from, the Buddha would probably be able to answer us, but it'd be like hitting the earth with your fist. If we were to ask where the mind comes from, we'd have to answer that it comes from us. And where do we come from? From our parents. That's as far as we'd get.

If we were to answer on a different level—one that's more difficult to see, and that only people of awareness can manage—we'd say that the mind comes from unawareness. And what does unawareness come from? From fabrications. And what do fabrications come from? From unawareness. It's like the old question, where does the chicken come from? The egg. And the egg? From the chicken. If we keep asking and answering, we simply go around in circles without ever coming to the end of it. This is how things are on the level of the world.

The issues of the mind all boil down to two minds: one that likes to do good, and one that likes to do evil. One mind, but there's two of it. Sometimes an inclination to do good takes hold of us, and so we want to do good. This is called being possessed by skillfulness. Sometimes an inclination to do evil takes hold of us, and so we want to do evil. This is called being possessed by unskillfulness. In this way, our mind is kept always unsettled and unsure.

So the Buddha taught us to develop our awareness in order to know what's good

and worthwhile, and what's evil and worthless. If unawareness obscures our mind, we can't see anything clearly, just as when haze obscures our eyesight. If our knowledge gets really far up away from the world, we'll have even less chance of seeing anything, just as a person who goes up high in an airplane and then looks down below won't be able to see houses or other objects as clearly as when he's standing on the ground. The higher he goes, the more everything becomes a haze. He won't be able to see any sign of human life at all. This is why the Buddha taught us to fill ourselves with as much awareness as possible, so that our ears and eyes will be bright and clear, unobscured by fog or haze.

Awareness, of the sort taught by the Buddha, can arise in three ways:

1. *Sutamaya-paññā*: This is the awareness in which we study and listen to what other people say so that we can understand what evil things will lead us in the direction of suffering and stress, and what good things will lead us in the direction of wellbeing and ease. Once we know, we can then ask ourselves, 'Do we want to go in the direction of suffering?' If we answer, 'No, we don't, because it's a hardship. We'd rather go in the direction of wellbeing,' we have to set our hearts on giving rise to goodness. That goodness is then sure to lead us in the direction of wellbeing. For example, some people are born way out in the sticks and yet they train and educate themselves to the point where they end up important and influential. The same holds true with us. If we train and educate ourselves, we're all bound to end up as good people. This is education on the elementary level—our ABC's—called *sutamaya-paññā*.

2. *Cintāmaya-paññā*: Once we've learned that certain things are good, we should try each of them until we see good results arising within us. Don't go jumping to any fixed conclusions that this or that has to be good or right. For example, some things may be correct in terms of the Dhamma you've learned, but when you try them out, they may be wrong in terms of other people's feelings. So when we're taught something that seems right, we should remember it. When we're taught something that seems wrong, we should remember it. We then take these things and evaluate them on our own until we give rise to an understanding. Only then can we be called intelligent.

In other words, we don't simply believe what's in books, what other people say, or what our teachers tell us. Before we do anything, we should consider it carefully until it's certain and clear to us. Only then should we go ahead and do it. This is called believing in our own sense of reason. This is the second level of awareness, but it's not the highest. It can eliminate only some of the unawareness that exists within us. Both of the levels mentioned so far are awareness on the low level.

3. The truly high level of awareness is called *bhāvanāmaya-paññā*. This level of awareness arises in a trained mind. This is what is meant by *vijjā-caraṇa-sampanno*

sugato lokavidū. The awareness here includes knowledge of one's past lives; knowledge of death and rebirth—knowing the mental stream of other people, what sort of good and evil they've done, and where they will go after death; and knowledge of the end of mental fermentation: Whoever develops the mind to the point of right concentration, giving rise to intuitive insight, will be able to let go of:

(i) Self-identification (*sakkāya-diṭṭhi*). They'll see that the body isn't really theirs.

(ii) Uncertainty (*vicikicchā*). Their doubts about the virtues of the Buddha, Dhamma, and Saṅgha will be gone for good. They'll have no more doubts about the paths and their fruitions (*magga, phala*). The paths, their fruitions, and nibbāna will have to exist for whoever is true in practicing the Dhamma, no matter what the time or season. This is termed *akālika*: The Dhamma gives results no matter what the time or season. *Opanayiko*: People who give rise to virtue, concentration, and discernment within themselves are sure to see that the qualities of the Buddha, Dhamma, and Saṅgha can actually ward off insecurity and dread. Such people will also let go of:

(iii) Grasping at habits and practices (*sīlabbata-parāmāsa*). The virtues of the five precepts will be firmly established in their hearts.

To let go in this way is called knowledge of the end of mental fermentation (*āsavakkhaya-ñāṇa*), or *vijjā-caraṇa-sampanno*—being consummate in knowledge and conduct. In addition to these three primary forms of awareness, we may also develop clairvoyance, clairaudience, and psychic powers. But unless we can still our mind in concentration, we won't be able to gain any of these forms of awareness, even if we study all 84,000 divisions of the Canon, because all of these forms of awareness depend on the stillness of concentration. The ability to put away all forms of evil depends on the stillness of concentration. When awareness arises within us, we're sure to see the truth of what's good and what's evil. As long as this awareness doesn't arise, we're still deluded and groping.

For example, we may latch on to the body as being our own, or to the five khandhas—form, feelings, perceptions, mental fabrications, and consciousness—as being our own. Some people identify themselves with greed, anger, or delusion. For example, when greed arises they identify with the greed. When anger arises they identify with the anger. When delusion arises they identify with the delusion. But these things arise only at certain times. Sometimes when lack of anger arises, these people identify themselves with the lack of anger. And when lack of greed or delusion arises, they identify with the lack of greed or delusion—and so these things get all mixed up because of unawareness, or ignorance of the truth.

But once we've developed awareness, then when greed arises we won't identify with it. The same holds true with anger and delusion. This is a step we have to master

so that we can catch sight of how these three defilements actually come and go.

In other words, when greed comes we sit and keep watch on the greed until it dies of its own accord. We'll then be able to know exactly what ugly features it has when it comes and exactly how good it is when it goes. We just sit there and watch it until it disbands and we'll feel an immediate sense of relief. When anger or delusion comes, we sit and keep watch on the anger or delusion—don't go running off anywhere else—and we'll be able to see exactly how bad anger is when it comes, and how good it is when it goes. What delusion is like when it comes—no matter which side it's going to be deluded about—we make a point of keeping our gaze fixed on it. When we can hold ourselves in check this way, that's awareness.

But if, when greed comes, we get carried along with the greed, or when anger or delusion comes, we get carried along with the anger or delusion, that's unawareness. If we're constantly on the look-out for these three defilements, the day is sure to come when they grow ashamed of themselves. We'll know how they arise, we'll see how they take a stance, we'll perceive how they disband. This is the awareness that comes from unawareness.

When we can contemplate things in this way, we'll be able to gain all eight forms of cognitive skill. If we can hold ourselves in check in the midst of our defilements, without feeling obliged to let them come out in our actions, we'll give rise to awareness within. This is what is meant by *vijjā-caraṇa-sampanno*. Our hearts will be pure, free from greed, anger, and delusion. *Sugato lokavidū*: We'll fare well whether we come or go, and wherever we stay. This sort of awareness is the real thing. It's the awareness that will bring us success in the sphere of the Dhamma.

II. Inner Skill

The ABC's of the Breath

September 27, 1957

There are three important parts to meditating: thinking, awareness, and the breath. All three of these parts have to be kept right together at all times. Don't let any one of them come loose from the others. 'Thinking' refers to thinking '*buddho*' together with the breath. 'Awareness' means knowing the breath as it goes in and out. Only when thinking and awareness are kept fastened constantly with the breath can you say that you're meditating.

The in-and-out breath is the most important part of the body. In other words, (1) it's like the earth, which acts as the support for all the various things in the world. (2) It's like the joists or girders that hold up a floor and keep it sturdy. (3) It's like a board or a sheet of paper: When we think '*bud-*' with an in-breath, it's as if we rubbed our hand once across a board; and when we think '*dho*' with an out-breath, it's as if we rubbed the board once again. Each time we rub the board, some of the dust is bound to stick to our hand, so if we keep rubbing it back and forth, the board is going to become glossy. When it's very glossy, it'll be so clear that we can see our reflection in it. These are the results that come from our thinking. But if we go rubbing hit-or-miss, we won't be able to see our reflection even in a mirror, much less in a board.

In another sense, the breath is like a piece of paper. When we think '*bud-*' in with the breath, it's as if we took a pencil and wrote a letter of the alphabet on a piece of paper. If we keep doing this, eventually we'll be able to read what we've written. But if our mind doesn't stay constantly with the breath, it's as if we wrote sometimes right and sometimes wrong. The letters we'd write would be a mess and wouldn't even be letters. No matter how large our piece of paper might be, the whole thing would be a mess. We wouldn't be able to read what letters we had written or what they were supposed to say.

If we're intent, though, and think of the breath as a piece of paper, we'll write down whatever message we want on the paper and know for ourselves what we've written. For example, thinking 'bud-' is like taking a pen to our paper. It'll give us knowledge. Even after we've stopped writing, we'll still benefit. But if we're not really intent on our writing, our letters won't be letters. If we draw a picture of a person, it won't be a person. If we draw an animal, it won't be an animal.

* * *

When we start learning to write, we have to use chalk because it's big, easy to write with and easy to erase. This is like thinking 'buddho.' Once we advance in our studies, we start using a pencil because its mark is clear and longer-lasting. For example, the sentence, 'Where's Dad?' is a piece of knowledge. If we can only read the separate letters, 'W' or 'D', it doesn't really count as knowledge. So we then throw away our chalk. In other words, we don't have to repeat 'buddho.' We use our powers of evaluation (*vicāra*) to see, as we're breathing: Is the in-breath good? Is the out-breath good? What kind of breathing is comfortable? What kind of breathing isn't?

Then we correct and adjust the breath. Pick out whichever way of breathing seems good and then observe it to see if it gives comfort to the body. If it does, keep that sense of comfort steady and put it to use. When it's really good, benefits will arise, perfecting our knowledge. Once we've obtained knowledge, we can erase the pencil marks in our notebooks because we've seen the benefits that come from what we've done. When we go back home, we can take our knowledge with us and make it our homework. We can do it on our own at home; and when we stay at the monastery, we can keep at it constantly.

So the breath is like a piece of paper, the mind is like a person, knowledge is like a note: Even just this much can serve as our standard. If we're intent on just these three things—thinking, awareness, and the breath—we'll give rise to knowledge within ourselves that has no fixed limits and can't possibly be told to anyone else.

As the Mind Turns

August 9, 1958

Every person has both awareness and unawareness, like a doctor who has studied various diseases: He's knowledgeable about the diseases he's studied, but not about the ones he hasn't. We human beings have both darkness and brightness. The darkness is unawareness; the brightness, awareness.

* * *

The affairs of the world keep spinning around like a wheel. We who live in the world thus have both pleasure and pain in line with worldly conditions—the wheel of rebirth. Whenever we spin around and run into the cycle of pain, we feel that the world is really narrow and confining. Whenever we spin around and run into the cycle of pleasure, we feel that the world is wide and refreshing, an inviting place to live. This happens because we spin along with the world and so don't really know the world as it actually is. Once we stop spinning, though, we'll come to know the ways of the world and the true nature of the Dhamma.

Whenever we run along after the world, we can't see the world easily. For this reason, we first have to stop running. Then we'll see it clearly. If the world is spinning and we're spinning too, how can we expect to see it? It's like two persons running: They'll have a hard time seeing each other's faces. If one stops but the other is running, they can see each other somewhat, but not clearly. If they're both running, they'll see each other even less clearly. For example, if we're sitting or standing still and someone sneaks up, hits us over the head, and then runs off, we'll have a hard time catching him. In the same way, if we spin around or get involved in the spinning of the world, we'll have even less chance of knowing or seeing anything. The Dhamma thus teaches us to stop spinning the wheel of rebirth so that we can know the world clearly.

When an airplane propeller or any bladed wheel is spinning, we can't see how many blades it has, what shape they are, or how fine they are. The faster it spins, the less we can see its shape. Only when it slows down or stops spinning can we see clearly what shape it has. This is an analogy for the spinning of the currents of the world—the outer world—and for our own spinning, we who live in the world.

The outer world means the earth in which we live. The world of fabrications means ourself: our body and mind, which are separate things but have to depend on each other, just as the world and people, which are separate things, have to depend on each other. If we had a body but not a mind, we wouldn't be able to accomplish anything. The same would be true if we had a mind without a body. So the mind is like a person dwelling in the world. The mind is the craftsman; the body, its work of art. The mind is what creates the body. It's what creates the world.

The world is something broad and always spinning, something hard to see clearly. This is why the Buddha teaches us to stop spinning after the world and to look only at ourself. That's when we'll be able to see the world. We ourself are something small—a fathom long, a span thick, a cubit wide—except that our belly is big. No matter how much we eat, we're never full. We never have enough. This stands for the greed of the mind, which causes us to suffer from our lack of enough, our desires, our hunger.

To see ourself or to see the world, the Buddha teaches us to survey ourself from the head to the feet, from the feet to the head, just as if we're going to plant a tree: We have to survey things from the ground on up to the tips of the branches. The ground stands for the purity of our livelihood. We have to examine the ground to see if it has any termites or other pests that will destroy the roots of our tree. Then we have to add the right amount of fertilizer—not too little, not too much. We have to care for it correctly in line with its size. For example, how do we observe the five precepts so that they're pure? How do we observe the eight, the ten, and the 227 precepts so that they're pure? What things should we abstain from doing? What things should we do? This is called right livelihood.

If we attend too much to our physical pleasure, we tend not to give rise to virtue, like certain kinds of trees that are very healthy, with large branches and lush foliage, but tend not to bear fruit. If a person eats a lot and sleeps a lot, if he's concerned only with matters of eating and sleeping, his body will be large and hefty, like a tree with a large trunk, large branches, large leaves, but hardly any fruit. We human beings—once our bodies are well-nourished with food—if we then listen to a sermon or sit in meditation, tend to get drowsy because we're too well nourished. If we sit for a long time, we feel uncomfortable. If we listen to a sermon, we don't know what's being said, because we're sleepy. This ruins our chance to do good. People who are too well nourished tend to get lazy, sloppy, and addicted to pleasure. If they sit in meditation, they tend to get numb, tired, and drowsy.

This is why we're taught to observe the eight *uposatha* precepts as a middle path. We eat only during half of the day, only half full. That's enough. This is called having a sense of moderation with regard to food. We don't have to load up or compensate for missing the evening meal. We eat just enough. 'I abstain from eating at the wrong time': After noon we don't have to turn to another meal, so that the heart

won't turn after the world. This is like giving just enough fertilizer to our tree.

'I abstain from dancing, singing and ornamenting the body': The Buddha doesn't have us beautify the body with cosmetics and perfumes, or ornament it with jewelry. This is like giving our tree just the right amount of water. Don't let the soil get water-logged. Otherwise the roots will rot. In other words, if we get attached to scents and to beauty of this sort, it'll make us so infatuated that our virtue will suffer. This is like taking scraps of food and pouring them around the foot of our tree. Dogs will come to trample over the tree, chickens will peck at the leaves and flowers, and fire ants will eat into the roots, causing our tree to wither or die. All sorts of complications will come to hassle us.

'I abstain from high and large beds': When we lie down to sleep, the Buddha doesn't have us use soft mattresses or cushions that are too comfortable, because if we have a lot of comfort we'll sleep a lot and not want to get up to do good. The results of our concentration practice will be meager, and our laziness will grow rampant. This is like caterpillars and worms that burrow throughout the soil: They'll keep whispering to us, teaching us all sorts of things until ultimately they tell us to stop doing good—and so we stop. This is like insects crawling up from the ground and eating into our tree, climbing higher and higher up until they reach the tiptop branches: the mind. Ultimately, when they eat the tips of the branches, the tree won't bear flowers. When it has no flowers, it won't bear fruit. In the same way, if we lack a sense of moderation in caring for ourself, we won't be practicing right livelihood. If we don't have a proper sense of how to nourish and care for the body, our conduct will have to degenerate. But if we have a proper sense of how to nourish and care for the body, our conduct will have to develop in the direction of purity, and the mind will have to develop along with it, step by step.

* * *

The world has its highs and lows, its good and evil, and we're just like the world. Our body—no matter how much we care for it to make it strong and healthy, beautiful and comfortable—will have to be good in some ways and to malfunction in others. What's important is that we don't let the mind malfunction. Don't let it go branching out after its various preoccupations. If we let the mind go around thinking good and evil in line with its preoccupations, it won't be able to advance to a higher level. So we have to make our tree have a single tip: We have to center the mind firmly in a single preoccupation. Don't let your moods hold sway over the mind. We have to cut off the mind from its preoccupations with sights, sounds, smells, tastes, and tactile sensations, leaving only a single mental preoccupation. Let a preoccupation with what's good and worthwhile arise in the mind. Don't let any of the forms of mental corruption arise.

Mental corruption means (1) greed for sights, sounds, smells, tastes, etc.; (2) ill

will—focusing on this matter or that person as bad, and going from there to a desire for retribution, leading to a confrontation or to violence; (3) wrong views—seeing that doing good doesn't lead to good results; for example, seeing that being generous, observing the precepts, or practicing meditation doesn't make a person rich or happy, so that we stop doing good. We have to rid the heart of these three forms of mental corruption. When the heart is freed from corruption, it will have to enter mental rectitude, becoming a worthwhile mind, pursuing right action: in other words, meditation.

In practicing meditation, we really have to be true in our work if we want results. We have to be true in our body, true in our speech, true in our heart. Our body has to sit straight and unmoving in a half-lotus position. Our speech has to be silent, not saying a thing. Our heart has to be set straight and still, not flitting out after allusions to past or future. If we can be true in our work in this way, we'll have to succeed and see results. If we're slipshod and desultory, our work won't succeed. This is why we're taught,

anākulā ca kammantā etam-maṅgalam-uttamaṃ:
'Activities not left unfinished are a supreme good omen.'

In practicing meditation, the mind is what gives the orders. In other words, we should have a base or a frame of reference, contemplating the breath so that it becomes refined—because the more refined something is, the higher its value. Our breath sensations are of five sorts:

(1) The first are the breath sensations that flow from the head down to the tips of our feet. (2) The second are those that flow from the tips of the feet to the head. These two sorts take turns running back and forth like a rope over a pulley that we pull up and down.

(3) The third sort are the breath sensations that flow throughout the body. These are the sensations that help ventilate the body, receiving our guests—the breath permeating in through the skin—and expelling the inner breath, keeping the pure, beneficial breath in the body and expelling the harmful breath out through the pores.

(4) The fourth sort is the breath in the upper abdomen, guarding between the heart, lungs, and liver on the one hand, and the stomach and intestines on the other. It supports the upper organs so that they don't press down on the lower ones and keeps the lower organs down so that they don't push up and crowd the upper ones. This sort of breath we have to observe in order to see in what way it's heavy on the left or right side.

(5) The fifth sort are the breath sensations flowing in the intestines, helping to warm the fires of digestion, just as if we were steaming fish or other foods to keep them from spoiling. When our food is cooked, it can be of use—like the steam

condensing on the lid of a pot—to enrich the blood that nourishes the various parts of the body. Whichever kind of nourishment should become hair, nails, teeth, skin, etc., the blood sends to those parts.

These breath sensations are always flowing in waves through the intestines to disperse the heat of digestion. When we eat, it's like putting food in a pot on the stove and then closing the lid. If there's no ventilation in the pot at all, and we simply add fire, it won't be long before our stomach is wrecked and our intestines ruined, because we've closed the lid so tightly that no air can pass in or out, until the heat becomes too strong and burns our food to a crisp. Our body won't get any benefit from it. On the other hand, if the heat is too low, our food won't cook through. It'll spoil, we'll get an upset stomach, and again our body won't get any benefit. These sorts of breath sensations help keep our digestive fires just right for the body.

If we look at these five sorts of breath sensations in the correct way, we're sure to reap two sorts of results: (1) In terms of the body, those of us with many diseases will have fewer diseases; those of us with few diseases may recover completely. Diseases that haven't yet arisen will have a hard time arising. (2) In terms of the mind, we'll become contented, happy, and refreshed. At the same time, meditation can help free us from bad kamma because unskillful mental states won't have a chance to infiltrate the mind. Our life will be long, our body healthy. If we keep developing our meditation to higher and higher levels, the four properties (*dhātu*) of the body will become clear and pure.

* * *

If we practice meditation by keeping the breath in mind until the breath is refined and the mind is refined, the breath settles down to a stop and the mind settles down to be still, then we'll be able to see our body and mind clearly. The body and mind will separate from each other, each existing independently—just as when outsiders don't come entering in and insiders don't go out. Awareness will arise within us as to how the body is functioning, how the mind is functioning. How has our body come into being? We'll know. And where will it go from here? We'll know where it came from, where it's going—we'll know it completely. What actions we did in our past lives that caused us to be born in this state, we'll know. This is called knowledge of past lives.

2. The people and other living beings who've been our parents, brothers, sisters, relatives, and friends: Where have they come from? When they die, what sorts of pleasures and pains will they meet with? And where? We might be able to make contact with them and send streams of mental energy to help them. This is called knowledge of death and rebirth.

3. We'll see that the body and mind are inconstant, stressful, and not-self, to the

point where we become disenchanted with them. This will cause us to let go of the body and will free us from the fetters of attachment. These fetters include such things as attachment to worldly phenomena (*loka-dhamma*): When we let ourselves get pleased with gain, status, pleasure, and praise, it's no different from the King of Death tying our hands up tight. Then when he gives a single lash with his whip—i.e., we suffer loss, disgrace, pain, and censure—we come tumbling right down.

Another kind of fetter is self-identification—attachment to the body, seeing it as 'us' or as an entity, which gives rise to misconceptions. Another fetter is uncertainty—doubts and hesitation, running back and forth, not knowing which way to go and ending up spinning around along with the world.

Once we know the ways of the body and mind, we'll be released from these fetters. The mind will gain release from the body and shed the fermentations of defilement. This is called knowledge of the end of mental fermentation. The mind will gain liberating insight and flow into the current of Dhamma leading ultimately to nibbāna.

When we stop spinning along with the world, we'll be able to see the world—our body—clearly. Once the mind stops, we can then see the body. For this reason, we should slow down the spinning of the body by distilling and filtering its properties, making them more and more refined; slow down the spinning of our words by keeping silent; and slow down the spinning of the mind, making it firm and still by centering it in concentration, thinking about and evaluating the breath. When the mind stops spinning after its various concepts and preoccupations, our words and body will stop along with it. When each one has stopped, we can see them all clearly. The mind will know the affairs of the body through and through, giving rise to liberating insight that will slow down the spinning of the wheel of rebirth. Our births will become less and less until ultimately we won't have to come back to live in a world ever again.

* * *

To practice meditation is one sort of food for the heart. Food for the body isn't anything lasting. We eat in the morning and are hungry by noon. We eat at noon and are hungry again in the evening. If we're full today, tomorrow morning we'll be hungry again. We keep eating and defecating like this, and the day will never come when we've had enough. We'll have to keep looking for more and more things to eat. As for food for the heart, if we prepare it really well, even for a little space of time, we'll be full for the rest of our life.

Mental Power, Step by Step

July 26, 1956

Try to be mindful as you keep track of the breath going in and out. Don't let yourself forget or be distracted. Try to let go of all concepts of past or future. Silently repeat 'buddho' in your mind—'bud-' in with every in-breath, and 'dho' out with every out—until the mind settles down and is still. Then you can stop your mental repetition and begin observing the in-and-out breath to see how fast or slow, long or short, heavy or light, broad or narrow, crude or subtle it is. Stick with whichever way of breathing is comfortable. Adjust whichever way of breathing isn't comfortable or easy until it's just right, using your own discrimination—*dhamma-vicaya-sambojjhaṅga*—as your standard of judgment. (When you're making adjustments in this way, you don't have to do any mental repetition. You can let 'buddho' go.)

You have to keep an eye on your mind to make sure that it doesn't wander, waver, or fly out after any external concepts. Keep the mind still, equanimous and unconcerned, as if there were only you sitting alone in the world. Let the breath spread throughout every part of the body, from the head to the tips of the fingers and toes, in front, in back, in the middle of the stomach, all the way through the intestines, along the blood vessels, and out through every pore. Breathe long and deep until the body feels full. The body will feel light, open and spacious, just like a sponge full of water: When we squeeze the water out, it all comes out easily without any interference.

At this point, the body will feel light and at ease. The mind will feel as cool as the water that permeates the soil, seeping into the roots of trees, keeping them nourished and fresh. The mind will be set straight and upright, not leaning to the left or right, forward or back. In other words, it doesn't stretch out to any concepts or outside preoccupations at all.

Concepts lie at the essence of mental fabrication. The mind thinks of matters either past or future, and then starts elaborating on them as good or bad, liking or disliking them. If we see them as good, we get pleased and taken with them: This is delusion. If we see them as bad, we get displeased, which clouds and defiles the mind, making it irritated, restless and annoyed: This is ill will. The things that give rise to unrest and disturbance in the mind are all classed as hindrances (*nīvaraṇa*)

—fabrications that fashion the mind, destroying whatever is good in our practice of concentration. So we have to do away with them all.

Mental fabrications, if we think in terms of the world, are world-fabrications. If we think in terms of dhamma, they're dhamma-fabrications. Both sorts come from *avijjā*, unawareness. If this unawareness disbands, awareness will arise in its stead. So we have to try to increase the strength of our concentration to the point where fabrications disband—and at that point, unawareness will disband as well, leaving only awareness.

This awareness is identical with discernment, but it's a discernment that arises from within. It doesn't come from anything our teachers have taught us. It comes from the stillness of mind focused on events in the present. It's an awareness that's very profound, but it's still mundane—not transcendent—discernment, because it comes from labels and concepts. It's still tied up with affairs of being and birth.

Perhaps we may become aware of matters of the past, knowing and seeing the states of being and birth we've been through. This is called knowledge of past lives. Perhaps we may become aware of the future, knowing the affairs of other people, how they die and are reborn. This is called knowledge of death and rebirth. Both these forms of knowledge still have attachment infiltrating them, causing the mind to waver in line with its likes and dislikes. This is what corrupts our insight.

Some people, when they learn of the good states of being and birth in their past, get engrossed, pleased, and elated with the various things they see. If they meet up with things that aren't so good, they feel disgruntled or upset. This is simply because the mind still has attachment to its states of being and birth. To like the things that strike us as good or satisfying is indulgence in pleasure. To dislike the things that strike us as bad or dissatisfying is self-affliction. Both of these attitudes are classed as wrong paths that deviate from the right path, or right view.

Matters of the past or future, even if they deal with the Dhamma, are still fabrications, and so are wide of the mark. Thus the next step is to use the power of our concentration to make the mind even stronger, to the point where it can snuff out these mundane forms of discernment. The mind will then progress to transcendent discernment—a higher form of discernment, an awareness that can be used to free the mind from attachment—right mindfulness, the right path. Even though we may learn good or bad things about ourself or others, we don't become pleased or upset. We feel nothing but disenchantment, disinclination, and dismay over the way living beings in the world are born and die. We see it as something meaningless, without any substance. We're through with feelings of liking and disliking. We've run out of attachment for ourself and everything else. The mind has moderation. It's neutral. Even. This is called six-factored equanimity (*chalaṅg'ūpekkhā*). We let go of the things that happen, that we know or see, letting them follow their own regular course

without our feeling caught up in them. The mind will then move up to liberating insight.

At this point, make your strength of mind even more powerful, to the point where it is freed from attachment even to the realizations it has come to. Knowing is simply knowing; seeing is simply seeing. Keep the mind as something separate. Don't let it flow out after its knowing. We know, and then leave it at that. We see, and then leave it at that. We don't latch onto these things as being ours. The mind will then gain full power and grow still of its own accord—not involved, not dependent on anything at all.

Fabrications disappear completely, leaving just a pure condition of dhamma: emptiness. This is the phenomenon of non-fabrication. Release. The mind is free from the world— exclusively within the current of the Dhamma, without going up or down, forward or back, progressing or regressing. The mind is a stake driven firmly in place. Just as when a tree is attached to a stake by a rope: When the tree is cut down, the rope snaps in two, but the stake stays put. The mind stays put, unaffected by any objects or preoccupations. This is the mind of a noble disciple, a person free from the fermentations of defilement.

Whoever trains his or her heart in line with what has been mentioned here will meet with security, contentment, and peace, free from every sort of trouble or stress. What we have discussed briefly here is enough to be used as a guide in the practice of training the mind to gain release from suffering and stress in this lifetime. To take an interest in these things will be to our advantage in the times to come.

Observe & Evaluate

July 24, 1956

In fixing our attention on the breath, the important point is to use our powers of observation and evaluation and to gain a sense of how to alter and adjust the breath so that we can keep it going just right. Only then will we get results that are agreeable to body and mind. Observe how the breath runs along its entire length, from the tip of the nose on down, past the Adam's apple, windpipe, heart, lungs, down to the stomach and intestines. Observe it as it goes from the head, down past your shoulders, ribs, spine, and tail bone. Observe the breath going out the ends of your fingers and toes, and out the entire body through every pore. Imagine that your body is like a candle or a Coleman lantern. The breath is the mantle of the lantern; mindfulness, the fuel that gives off light. Your body, from the skeleton out to the skin, is like the wax of the candle surrounding the wick. We have to try make the mind bright and radiant like a candle if we want to get good results.

* * *

Everything in the world has its pair: There's dark and so there has to be bright. There's the sun and there's the moon. There's appearing and there's disappearing. There are causes and there are results. Thus, in dealing with the breath, the mind is the cause, and mindfulness the result. In other words, the mind is what acts, mindfulness is what knows, so mindfulness is the result of the mind. As for the properties of the body—earth, water, fire, and wind—the breath is the cause. When the mind makes the cause good, the physical result is that all the properties become radiant. The body is comfortable. Strong. Free from disease. The results that arise by way of the body and mind are caused by the act of adjusting. The result is that we notice and observe.

When we sit and meditate, we have to observe the breath as it goes in and out to see what it feels like as it comes in, how it moves or exerts pressure on the different parts of the body, and in what ways it gives rise to a sense of comfort. Is breathing in long and out long easy and comfortable, or is breathing in short and out long easy and comfortable? Is breathing in fast and out fast comfortable, or is breathing in slow and out slow? Is heavy breathing comfortable, or is light breathing comfortable? We have to use our own powers of observation and evaluation, and gain a sense of how

to correct, adjust, and ease the breath so that it's stable, balanced, and just right. If, for example, slow breathing is uncomfortable, adjust it so that it's faster. If long breathing is uncomfortable, change to short breathing. If the breath is too gentle or weak—making you drowsy or your mind drift—breathe more heavily and strongly.

This is like adjusting the air pressure on a Coleman lantern. As soon as the air and the kerosene are mixed in the right proportions, the lantern will give off light at full strength—white and dazzling—able to spread its radiance far. In the same way, as long as mindfulness is firmly wedded to the breath, and we have a sense of how to care for the breath so that it's just right for the various parts of the body, the mind will be stable and one, not flying out after any thoughts or concepts. It will develop a power, a radiance called discernment—or, to call it by its result, knowledge.

This knowledge is a special form of awareness that doesn't come from anything our teachers have taught us or anyone has told us. Instead, it's a special form of understanding praised by the Buddha as right view. This form of understanding is coupled with mindfulness and alertness. It ranks as right mindfulness and right concentration as well. When a mind rightly concentrated gains increased strength, the results can lead to intuitive insight, direct realization, purity of knowledge, and ultimately to release, free from any sort of doubt.

The mind will be independent, quiet, light, and at ease—self-contained like a flame in a glass lantern. Even though insects may come and swarm around the lantern, they can't put out the flame; and at the same time, the flame can't lick out to burn the hand of the person carrying it. A mind that has mindfulness constantly watching over it is bound to be incapable of stretching or reaching out to take up with any preoccupations at all. It won't lick out in front or flicker back behind, and external preoccupations won't be able to come barging into the heart. Our eyes—the eyes of our discernment—will be clear and far-seeing, just as if we were sitting in the interstices of a net, able to see clearly in whichever direction we looked.

* * *

What does discernment come from? You might compare it with learning to become a potter, a tailor, or a basket weaver. The teacher will start out by telling you how to make a pot, sew a shirt or a pair of pants, or weave different patterns, but the proportions and beauty of the object you make will have to depend on your own powers of observation. Suppose you weave a basket and then take a good look at its proportions, to see if it's too short or too tall. If it's too short, weave another one, a little taller, and then take a good look at it to see if there's anything that still needs improving, to see if it's too thin or too fat. Then weave another one, better-looking than the last. Keep this up until you have one that's as beautiful and well-proportioned as possible, one with nothing to criticize from any angle. This last basket you can take as your standard. You can now set yourself up in business.

What you've done is to learn from your own actions. As for your previous efforts, you needn't concern yourself with them any longer. Throw them out. This is a sense of discernment that arises of its own accord, an ingenuity and sense of judgment that come not from anything your teachers have taught you, but from observing and evaluating on your own the object that you yourself have made.

The same holds true in practicing meditation. For discernment to arise, you have to be observant as you keep track of the breath and to gain a sense of how to adjust and improve it so that it's well-proportioned throughout the body—to the point where it flows evenly without faltering, so that it's comfortable in slow and out slow, in fast and out fast, long, short, heavy, or refined. Get so that both the in-breath and the out-breath are comfortable no matter what way you breathe, so that—no matter when—you immediately feel a sense of ease the moment you focus on the breath. When you can do this, physical results will appear: a sense of ease and lightness, open and spacious. The body will be strong, the breath and blood will flow unobstructed and won't form an opening for disease to step in. The body will be healthy and awake.

As for the mind, when mindfulness and alertness are the causes, a still mind is the result. When negligence is the cause, a mind distracted and restless is the result. So we must try to make the causes good, in order to give rise to the good results we've referred to. If we use our powers of observation and evaluation in caring for the breath, and are constantly correcting and improving it, we'll develop awareness on our own, the fruit of having developed our concentration higher step by step.

* * *

When the mind is focused with full circumspection, it can let go of concepts of the past. It sees the true nature of its old preoccupations, that there's nothing lasting or certain about them. As for the future lying ahead of us, it's like having to sail a small boat across the great wide sea: There are bound to be dangers on all sides. So the mind lets go of concepts of the future and comes into the present, seeing and knowing the present.

The mind stands firm and doesn't sway.

Unawareness falls away.

Knowledge arises for an instant and then disappears, so that you can know that there in the present is a void.

A void.

You don't latch on to world-fabrications of the past, world-fabrications of the future, or dhamma-fabrications of the present. Fabrications disappear. *Avijjā*—

counterfeit, untrue awareness—disappears. ‘True’ disappears. All that remains is awareness: *‘buddha... buddha...’*

Bodily fabrication, i.e., the breath; verbal fabrication, i.e., thoughts that formulate words; and mental fabrication, i.e., thinking, all disappear. But awareness doesn’t disappear. When bodily fabrication moves, you’re aware of it. When verbal fabrication moves, you’re aware of it. When mental fabrication moves, you’re aware of it, but awareness isn’t attached to anything it knows. In other words, no fabrications can affect it. There’s simply awareness. At a thought, the mind appears, fabrications appear. If you want to use them, there they are. If not, they disappear on their own, by their very nature. Awareness is above everything else. This is release.

Meditators have to reach this sort of awareness if they’re to get good results. In training the mind, this is all there is. Complications are a lot of fuss and bother, and tend to bog down without ever getting to the real point.

The Refinements of the Breath

August 3, 1956

When we sit in meditation, the important point is to be observant of the levels of the breath. The breath in the body has three levels: common, refined, and profound.

1. The common breath is the breath we breathe into the body. It comes in two sorts. (a) That which is mixed with impure or polluted air: When it goes into the lungs, it doesn't all come out. The dregs hang on in the body. And when these dregs mix with the blood in the heart, they can cause the blood to be harmful to the body, giving rise to diseases. But these diseases don't need to be treated with medicine. If we treat them using the breath, they'll go away. (b) The other sort of common breath is that which is beneficial—the breath mixed with pure air. When it mixes with the blood in the heart, it's beneficial to the body.

2. The refined breath is gentle and soft. It's the delicate breath sensations derived from the in-and-out breath that permeate between the blood vessels and nerves. This breath is what gives rise to our sense of feeling throughout the body.

3. The profound breath lies deeper than the refined breath. It's cool, spacious, empty, and white.

The refined breath that spreads to nourish the body is the important level of breath to use as a basis for observing all three levels of the breath. When this refined breath is spread fully throughout every part of the body, the body will feel light, empty, and quiet—but we're still mindful and alert. The mind is stable and so is the sense of the body. When this is the case, we're constantly mindful and alert. At this point, a bright light will appear in our sensation of the breath. Even though our eyes are closed, it's as if they were open. We'll feel as if the breath in our body had a white glow, like the mantle of a Coleman lantern bathed with light. This is the profound breath. The mind becomes serene and still; the body becomes serene and still.

The mind at this point is said to be in right concentration, which can lead to liberating insight. Liberating insight can cut away all concepts dealing with past and future. In other words, the mind is content to stay with the profound breath, the spacious and empty breath. As long as the mind hasn't penetrated to this level of the breath, it isn't free from hindrances. It doesn't give rise to discernment; it has no true

awareness. But when the awareness that comes from stillness gains power, it gives rise to strength and light. The mind and breath are both bright. When every aspect of the breath is equally strong, the profound breath becomes apparent: quiet and smooth, free from waves, motionless and resilient. The breath at this point isn't affected by the in-and-out breath. The body is quiet, with no feelings of pain. It feels buoyant, saturated, and full, like the mantle of a Coleman lantern: There's no need to pump, there's no sound, the air inside seems still, and yet the light is dazzling. All that's needed is the vapor of the kerosene, and the lantern will give off light.

The body is quiet, with no ups or downs, highs or lows. When the breath is smooth and level in this way, it makes the body feel light, empty, and quiet. This is called *kāya-passaddhi*: physical serenity. The mind, which stays with the quiet body, is termed *citta-passaddhi*: a serene mind. When the mind stays with this stillness, it becomes bright. This brightness comes from the mind's being firmly centered. When the mind is firmly centered, it leads to insight.

When insight arises, we can be aware on the level of physical sensations (*rūpa*) and mental acts (*nāma*) that arise from the in-and-out breath. We're aware of the common breath, the refined breath, and the profound breath. We can keep tabs on all three levels of the breath. When our awareness reaches this point, we can be said to know the breath, or to know sensation. Then we observe how these things affect the mind. This is called knowing mental acts. Once we can know both sensation and mental acts, we'll know: 'This is true awareness. This is how true awareness goes about knowing.' As long as we can't make the mind behave in this way, we can't know. And when we can't know, that's *avijjā*, unawareness.

Unawareness is darkness. The common breath is dark, the refined breath is dark, the profound breath is dark. How harmful this darkness is for the body and mind, we don't know: more darkness. Unawareness. Unawareness is like putting tar oil in a Coleman lantern. *Avijjā* has all the bad features of tar oil. It gives rise to nothing but trouble—darkness—for other people, at the same time being destructive to our own heart and mind, just as a fire fed with tar oil will give off nothing but black smoke. The more tar oil we feed it, the blacker the smoke—and then we go around thinking that our black smoke is something special, but actually it's unawareness, i.e., unaware of the fact that it's unawareness. So we get more and more wrapped up in our unawareness until we're covered thick with soot.

Soot is a form of filth that gives rise to harm. When a fire gives off black smoke, its light is bad, the fire is bad, the smoke is bad. Bad smoke is the nature of unawareness; and because it's bad, the knowledge it gives rise to is bad, the results it gives rise to are bad. These are all things that give rise to suffering and stress. This is the sort of harm that comes from unawareness.

The harm caused by unawareness is like a wood-fire. A wood-fire makes us

sweat and—as if that weren't enough—its light is red and fierce like the light of the sun. Whatever it's focused on will go up in flames. Any place a wood-fire burns for a long time will become black with soot, in the same way that a person who builds a wood-fire gets himself all dirty. His face and arms get black, his clothes get black, but because he sees this blackness as his own, he doesn't take offence at it. Just like an infected sore on his body: No matter how dirty or smelly it may be, he can still touch it without feeling any revulsion. But if he saw the same sore on someone else, he'd be so repulsed that he couldn't stand to look at it and wouldn't even want to go anywhere near.

Anyone whose mind is wrapped up in unawareness is like a person covered with open sores who feels no embarrassment or disgust at himself. Or like soot on our own kitchen walls: Even though we see it, we simply see it, without any sense that it's ugly, disgusting, or embarrassing. But if we saw it in someone else's kitchen, we'd want to run away.

Unawareness is what kills people. Unawareness is a trap. But ordinarily a trap can catch only dull-witted animals. Sharp-witted animals usually don't let themselves get caught. If we're stupid, unawareness will catch us and eat us all up. If we live under the sway of ignorance—if we aren't acquainted with the three levels of breath in the body—we'll have to reap harm. To know them, though, is to have right mindfulness. We'll know the causes of our actions and their results. To know this is to be mindful and alert. Our body and actions will be clear to us, like a fire that's bright in and of itself. Where does its brightness come from? From the energy in the kerosene. So it is with the profound breath. It's quiet in the body, like a Coleman lantern glowing dazzlingly bright: It's quiet, as if no air had been pumped into it at all.

This is *kāya-passaddhi*, physical serenity. As for the mind, it's crystal clear all around. And like the glow coming off the mantle of the lantern, it's of use to people and other living beings. This is what's meant by '*pabhassaram idam cittam*'—the mind is radiant. When we can keep the mind pure in this way, it gains the power to see what lies deeper still—but as of yet we can't know clearly. We'll have to make our strength of mind even more powerful than this: That's *vipassanā*, clear-seeing insight.

When *vipassanā* arises, it's as if we put kerosene directly on the mantle of a lantern: The fire will flame up instantly; the light will dazzle in a single flash. The concepts that label sensations will disappear; the concepts that label mental acts will disappear. All labeling and naming of things will disappear in a single mental instant. Sensations are still there, as always; mental acts are still there, as always, but the labels that take hold of them are cut, just like a telegraph line: The transmitter is there, the receiver is there, the line is there, but there's no connection—the current

isn't running. Whoever wants to send a message can go ahead and try, but everything is quiet. So it is with the heart: When we cut through labels and concepts, then no matter what anyone may say to us, the heart is quiet.

This is *vipassanā*, an awareness beyond the sway of unawareness, free from clinging and attachment. The mind rises to the transcendent, released from this world. It dwells in a 'world' higher than the ordinary worlds, higher than the human world, the heavenly and the Brahma worlds. This is why, when the Buddha gained the knowledge of unsurpassed right self-awakening, a tremor went through the entire cosmos, from the lowest reaches of hell up through the human world to the worlds of the Brahmas. Why? Because his mind had gained full power so that it could part its way up above the Brahma worlds.

For this reason, we should reflect on the common breath we're breathing right now. It gives rise to benefits mixed with harm. The refined breath nourishes the blood vessels and nerves. The profound breath adjusts the breath sensations throughout the body so that the breath is self-sufficient in its own affairs. The earth property, the fire property, and the water property all become self-sufficient in their own affairs. And when all four properties are self-sufficient, they become equal and balanced, so there's no turmoil in the body. The mind is self-sufficient, the body is self-sufficient, and we can stop worrying about them, just like a child we've raised to maturity. The body and mind each become mature and independent in their own affairs.

This is termed *paccattaṃ*: We see on our own and become responsible for ourselves. *Sandiṭṭhiko*: We can see clearly for ourselves. *Akāliko*: No matter when, as soon as we reflect on the three levels of the breath we immediately gain comfort and ease. To speak in legal terms, we've come of age. We're no longer minors and have full rights to our parents' legacy in accordance with the law. To speak in terms of the monastic discipline, we no longer have to stay under our teachers because we're fully able to look after ourselves. And to speak in terms of the Dhamma, we no longer have to depend on teachers or texts.

What I've been saying here is aimed at giving us a sense of how to apply our powers of observation to the three levels of the breath. We should attend to them until we gain understanding. If we're observant in keeping tabs on the three levels of the breath at all times, we'll reap results—ease of body and mind—like an employer who constantly keeps tabs on the workers in his factory. The workers won't have a chance to shirk their duties and will have to set their minds on doing their work as they're supposed to. The result is that our work is sure to be finished quickly, or to make steady progress.

The Direct Path

September 14, 1956

When you fix your attention on the breath, you must try to cut away all outside preoccupations. Otherwise, if you let yourself be distracted, you won't be able to observe the subtleties of the breath and mind.

The breath energy in the body can be divided into three parts: one in the heart and lungs, another in the stomach and intestines, and a third in the blood vessels throughout the body. All three are breaths that are always moving; but there's another breath—a still breath, light and empty—centered in the diaphragm, between the heart and lungs on the one hand and the stomach and intestines on the other. This breath is motionless, unlike the breath distilled in the heart and lungs. It exerts no pressure on any part of the body at all.

As for the moving breath, when it strikes the blood vessels it feels warm or hot, and sometimes causes excretions in your nose. If the breath is predominant over the fire property, it causes the blood to be cool. If the fire property is predominant over the breath property, it causes the blood to be hot. If these properties are combined in the right proportions, they give rise to a feeling of comfort and ease—relaxed, spacious, and still—like having an unobstructed view of the open sky. Sometimes there's a feeling of ease—relaxed, spacious, but moving: This is called *pīti*, or rapture.

The best breath to focus on is the empty, spacious breath. To make use of the breath means to use whichever feeling is most predominant, as when you feel very relaxed, very empty, or very comfortable. If there's a feeling of motion, don't use it. Use just the feelings of emptiness, relaxation, or lightness. To use them means to expand their range so that you feel empty in every part of the body. This is called having a sense of how to make use of the feelings you already have. But in using these feelings, you have to be completely mindful and alert. Otherwise, when you start feeling empty or light, you might go thinking that your body has disappeared.

In letting these sensations expand, you can let them spread either one at a time or all together at once. The important point is that you keep them balanced and that you focus on the whole body all at once as the single object of your awareness. This is called *ekāyana-magga*, the direct path. If you can master this, it's like having a

white cloth that you can either keep hidden in your fist or spread out for two meters. Your body, although it may weigh 50 kilograms, may feel as light as a single kilogram. This is called *mahā-satipaṭṭhāna*—the great frame of reference.

When mindfulness saturates the body the way flame saturates every thread in the mantle of a Coleman lantern, the elements throughout the body work together like a group of people working together on a job: Each person helps a little here and there, and in no time at all, almost effortlessly, the job is done. Just as the mantle of a Coleman lantern whose every thread is soaked in flame becomes light, brilliant, and white, in the same way if you soak your mind in mindfulness and alertness so that it's conscious of the entire body, both body and mind will become buoyant. When you think using the power of mindfulness, your sense of the body will immediately become thoroughly bright, helping to develop both body and mind. You'll be able to sit or stand for long periods of time without feeling tired, to walk for great distances without getting fatigued, to go for unusually long periods of time on just a little food without getting hungry, or to go without food and sleep altogether for several days running without losing energy.

As for the heart, it will become pure, open, and free from blemish. The mind will become bright, fearless, and strong. *Saddhā-balaṃ*: Your sense of conviction will run like a car running without stop along the road. *Viriya-balaṃ*: Your persistence will accelerate and advance. *Sati-balaṃ*: Your mindfulness and alertness will be robust, capable of knowing both past and future. For instance, knowledge of past lives and knowledge of other beings' death and rebirth: These two kinds of intuition are essentially forms of mindfulness. Once your mindfulness is fully developed, it can give you knowledge of people's past actions and lives. *Samādhi-balaṃ*: Your concentration will become unwavering and strong. No activity will be able to kill it. In other words, no matter what you're doing—sitting, standing, talking, walking, whatever—as soon as you think of practicing concentration, your mind will immediately be centered. Whenever you want it, just think of it and you've got it. When your concentration is this strong, insight meditation is no problem. *Paññā-balaṃ*: Your insight will be like a double-edged sword. Your insight into what's outside will be sharp; your insight into what's inside will be sharp.

When these five strengths appear in the heart, the heart will be fully mature. '*Saddh'indrīyaṃ viriy'indrīyaṃ sat'indrīyaṃ samādh'indrīyaṃ paññ'indrīyaṃ*': Your conviction, persistence, mindfulness, concentration, and discernment will be mature and pre-eminent in their own spheres. It's the nature of mature adults that they cooperate. When they work together on a job, they finish it. So it is when you have these five adults working together for you: You'll be able to complete any task. Your mind will have the power to demolish every defilement in the heart, just as a nuclear bomb can demolish anything anywhere in the world.

When your mind has this sort of power, liberating insight will arise like a lance with sharp edges on all four sides or a power saw whose blade has teeth all the way around. The body is like the stand on which the saw rests; the mind is the circular blade: Wherever it spins, it can cut through whatever is fed into it. This is the nature of liberating insight.

These are some of the results that come from knowing how to refine the breath and how to expand the still breath so that it benefits both body and mind. We should take these matters to heart and put them into practice as we are able, so as to share in these benefits.

Knowledge & Vision

July, 1958

The parts of the body that ache, that are tense, painful, or sore—think of them as hoodlums or fools. As for the parts that are relaxed and comfortable, think of them as sages. Ask yourself: Do you want to live with sages or fools?

It's not the case that the body will be painful in every part all at the same time. Sometimes our hand hurts, but our arm doesn't hurt; our stomach aches, but our back doesn't ache; our legs hurt, but our feet are fine; or our eyes hurt, but our head doesn't hurt. When this is the case, we should choose to stay with the good parts. If we take up company with more and more good people, they'll reach the point where they can drive out all the hoodlums. In the same way, when the mind is very still, the sense of comfort will become so great that we'll forget about aches and pains.

The breath energy in the body is like a messenger. When we expand the breath—this is what's meant by *vicāra*, or evaluation—mindfulness will spread throughout the body, as if it were going along an electric wire. Being mindful is like sending electricity along a wire; alertness is like the heat of the electricity that energizes us and wakes us up. When the body is energized, no pains will overcome it. In other words, we wake up the properties of earth, water, wind, and fire so that they get to work. The properties of the body will become strong and healthy, making the body feel comfortable and well. This is termed *mahābhūta-rūpa*. When this sense of *mahābhūta-rūpa* is nourished with breath and mindfulness in this way, it will grow and mature. The properties will grow quiet and mature, and become *mahā-satipaṭṭhāna*, the great frame of reference.

This is threshold concentration, or *vicāra*—spreading the breath.

In centering the mind, we have to put it on the middle path, cutting away all thoughts of past and future. As for worldly phenomena—gain and loss, status and disgrace, praise and censure, pleasure and pain—no matter how bad they may be or how fantastically good, we aren't interested—because even when they really have been good, they've left us long ago; and as for the good lying ahead, it hasn't reached us yet.

To feed on moods that are past is like eating things that other people have spit out. Things that other people have spit out, we shouldn't gather up and eat. Whoever

does so, the Buddha said, is like a hungry ghost. In other words, the mind is a slave to craving, which is like saliva. We don't get to eat any food and so we sit swallowing nothing but saliva. The mind isn't in the middle way. To think of the future is like licking the rim of tomorrow's soup pot, which doesn't yet have even a drop of soup. To think about the past is like licking the bottom of yesterday's soup pot when there isn't any left.

This is why the Buddha became disenchanted with past and future, because they're so undependable. Sometimes they put us in a good mood, which is indulgence in pleasure. Sometimes they get us in a bad mood, which is indulgence in self-affliction. When you know that this sort of thing isn't the path of the practice, don't go near it. The Buddha thus taught us to shield the mind so that it's quiet and still by developing concentration.

When a person likes to lick his or her preoccupations, if they're bad, it's really heavy. If they're good preoccupations, it's not so bad, but it's still on the mundane level. For this reason, we're taught to take our stance in the present. When the mind isn't involved in the past or the future, it enters the noble path—and then we realize how meaningless the things of the past are: This is the essence of the knowledge of past lives. Old things come back and turn into new; new things come back and turn into old. Or as people say, the future becomes the past and the past becomes the future. When you can dispose with past and future, the mind becomes even more steadfast.

This is called right mindfulness. The mind develops strength of conviction (*saddhā-balaṃ*), i.e., your convictions become more settled in the truth of the present. *Viriya-balaṃ*: Your persistence becomes fearless. *Sati-balaṃ*: Mindfulness develops into great mindfulness. *Samādhi-balaṃ*: The mind becomes firm and unshaking. *Paññā-balaṃ*: Discernment becomes acute to the point where it can see the true nature of the khandhas, becoming dispassionate and letting go of the body and self so that the mind is released from the power of attachment. This, according to the wise, is knowledge of the end of mental fermentation.

To know where beings go and take birth is termed knowledge of death and rebirth. We become disenchanted with states of being. Once we know enough to feel disenchantment, our states of being and birth lessen. Our burdens and concerns lighten. The mind's cycling through states of being slows down. Just like a wheel when we put thorns in the tire and place logs in the way: It slows down. When the mind turns more slowly, you can count the stages in its cycle. This is called knowing the moments of the mind. To know in this way is liberating insight. It's awareness. To know past, future, and present is awareness.

* * *

The noble ones aren't attached to activities—to acting, speaking, or thinking—in any way. When the processes of action fall silent, their minds are empty and clear like space. But we ordinary people hold on to speaking, standing, walking, sitting, lying down, everything—and how can it help but be heavy? The noble ones let go of it all and so are at ease. If they walk a long time, they don't get weary. If they sit a long time, they don't ache. They can do anything without being weighed down. The people who are weighed down are those who hold on.

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Stress for ordinary people is pain and suffering. The stress of sages is the wavering of pleasure.

* * *

The breath of birth or of life is the in-breath. The out-breath, when there's no in-breath, is the breath of death. Whether a person is to have the potential for a short or a long life depends on the in-and-out breath. Thus the breath is termed *kāya-saṅkhāra*, bodily fabrication. It's the crucial factor in life. When you can catch hold of the breath, you can keep tabs on your own birth and dying. This is birth and dying on the obscured level. As for birth and dying on the open level, even fools and children can know it: 'Birth' means breathing, sitting, lying down, standing, walking, and so on. 'Death' means to stop breathing and to get hauled off and cremated. But birth and dying on the obscured level can be known only within. And not everyone can know them. Only those who still their minds can.

To focus on the breath this way is, at the same time, mindfulness of death, mindfulness of breathing, and mindfulness immersed in the body. Or you can call it *ekāyana-magga*—unifying the sense of the body into a single, direct path. *Vitakka* is to bring the topic of meditation to the mind, to bring the mind to the topic of meditation. *Vicāra* means to spread, adjust, and improve the breath carefully. The longer you keep at this, the more comfortable your going will be, just as when we work at clearing a road. The sense of the body will benefit in three ways, feeling light, cool, and comfortable. At this point, our meditation theme becomes even stronger, and the mind feels even greater ease and detachment, termed *citta-viveka*, or mental solitude. The sense of the body becomes more quiet and detached, termed *kāya-viveka*, or physical solitude.

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The breath energy in the body falls into two classes. One class is called the 'feminine breath,' the gentle flow of energy from below the navel up to the head and out the nose. The other class is called the 'masculine breath,' the solid flow of energy

from the ends of the feet up through the spine. Once you can focus on these breaths, don't go against their basic nature. Be conscious of them when you go in to coordinate and connect them, and observe the results that come from spreading and adjusting the breath. As soon as things feel smooth and easy, focus in on the breath in the stomach and intestines, and the breath energy that acts as a sentinel between them, keeping them from rubbing against each other, like the cotton wool used to pack a stack of glassware to keep the glasses from striking against one another.

* * *

When the breath is quiet and the mind at ease, this is goodness in its greater form. When the mind is at ease but the body in turmoil, this is goodness in a lesser form. Let the mind settle wherever there's a sense of comfort in the body, in the same way that we go to look for food in places where in the past we've found enough to eat our fill. Once the mind is full, rapture (*pīti*) arises. Pleasure (*sukha*) saturates the heart, just as salt saturates pickled fish. The mind will take on value. The sense of the body will become bright, clear, and cool. Knowledge will begin to see bit by bit, so that we can come to see the nature of our own body and mind. When this state of mind becomes stronger, it turns into *ñāṇa-dassana*—knowledge and vision.

Knowledge on this level comes from mindfulness, and vision from alertness. When the wavering of the mind stops, then craving for sensuality, for becoming, and for no becoming all stop. Pain and pleasure, let go of them. Don't give them a second thought. Think of them as words that people speak only in jest. As for the truth, it's there in the heart. If the mind still wavers and strays, there will have to be more states of being and birth. If sensual craving moves, it leads to a gross state of being. If craving for becoming moves, it leads to an intermediate state of being. If craving for no becoming moves, the mind will latch onto a subtle state of being. Only when we see this happening can we be said to know past, future, and present.

When this awareness is clear and full, the mind becomes dispassionate and loosens its attachments, coming to a full stop: the stopping of unawareness, the stopping of birth. This is why the Buddha felt no attachment for home or family, for wealth, servants, or material pleasures of any kind.

Coming Home

September 22, 1956

When you close your eyes while sitting in meditation, simply close your eyelids. Don't try to close off your eyes like a person sleeping. You have to keep your optic nerves awake and working. Otherwise you'll put yourself to sleep.

Think of your internal meditation object—the in-and-out breath—and then think of bringing your external meditation object—'*buddho*,' awake, which is one of the virtues of the Lord Buddha—in with the breath.

Once you can focus comfortably on the breath, let the breath spread throughout the body until you feel light, supple, and at ease. This is called maintaining the proper quality in practicing concentration. To keep the mind fixed so that it doesn't slip away from the breath is called maintaining the proper object. Being firmly mindful of your meditation word, without any lapses, is called maintaining the proper intention. When you can keep your mind fixed in these three component factors, you can say that you're practicing meditation.

Once we set our mind on doing good in this way, things that aren't good—*nīvaraṇa*, or hindrances—are bound to come stealing into the mind. If we call the hindrances by name, there are five of them. But here we aren't going to talk about their names; we'll just talk about what they are: (1) Hindrances are things that defile and adulterate the mind. (2) They make the mind dark and murky. (3) They're obstacles that prevent the mind from staying firmly with the component factors of its meditation.

Hindrances come from external preoccupations, and external pre-occupations arise because our internal preoccupation is weak. To say that our internal preoccupation is weak means that our mind doesn't stay firmly with its object. Like floating a dipper in a barrel of water: If it doesn't have anything to weigh it down, it's bound to wobble and tip. The wobbling of the mind is what creates an opening for the various hindrances to come pouring in and make the mind lose its balance.

We should make ourselves aware that when the mind starts tipping, it can tip in either of two directions: (1) It may go toward thoughts of the past, matters that happened two hours ago or all the way back to our very first breath. Distractions of this sort can carry two kinds of meaning for us: Either they deal in terms of worldly

matters—our own affairs or those of other people, good or bad—or else they deal in terms of the Dhamma, things good or bad that have happened and that we’ve taken note of. (2) Or else our mind may tip toward thoughts of the future, which are the same sort of thing—our own affairs or those of others, dealing in terms of the world or the Dhamma, good or bad.

When our mind starts drifting in this way, we’re bound to receive one of two sorts of results: contentment or discontentment, moods that indulge either in sensual pleasure or in self affliction. For this reason, we have to catch hold of the mind constantly and bring it into the present so that these hindrances can’t come seeping in. But even then the mind isn’t really at equilibrium. It’s still apt to waver to some extent. But this wavering isn’t really wrong (if we know how to use it, it isn’t wrong; if we don’t, it is) because the mind, when it wavers, is looking for a place to stay. In Pāli, this is called *sambhavesin*. So we’re taught to find a meditation theme to act as a focal point for the mind, in the same way that a movie screen acts as a reflector for images so that they appear sharp and clear. This is to keep external preoccupations from barging in.

In other words, we’re taught to meditate by focusing the mind in one place, on the breath. When we think of the breath, that’s called *vitakka*—as when we think ‘*bud-*’ in and ‘*dho*’ out, like we’re doing right now. As for the wavering of the mind, that’s called *vicāra*, or evaluation. When we bring *vicāra* into the picture, we can let go of part of *vitakka*. In other words, stop repeating ‘*buddho*’ and then start observing how much the body is affected by each in-and-out breath. When the breath goes out, does it feel easy and natural? When it comes in, does it feel comfortable? If not, improve it.

When we direct the mind in this way, we don’t have to use ‘*buddho*.’ The in-breath will permeate and spread throughout the body, along with our sense of mindfulness and alertness. When we let go of part of *vitakka*—as when we stop repeating ‘*buddho*,’ so that there’s only the act of keeping track of the breath—the act of evaluating increases. The wavering of the mind becomes part of our concentration. Outside pre-occupations fall still. ‘Falling still’ doesn’t mean that our ears go deaf. Falling still means that we don’t stir the mind to go out after external objects, either past or future. We let it stay solely in the present.

When the mind is centered in this way, it develops sensitivity and knowledge. This knowledge isn’t the sort that comes from studying or from books. It comes from doing—as when we make clay tiles. When we first start out we know only how to mix the clay with sand and how to make plain flat tiles. But as we keep doing it we’ll start knowing more: how to make them attractive, how to make them strong, durable, and not brittle. And then we’ll think of making them different colors and different shapes. As we keep making them better and more attractive, the objects we make

will in turn become our teachers.

So it is when we focus on the breath. As we keep observing how the breath flows, we'll come to know what the in-breath is like; whether or not it's comfortable; how to breathe in so that we feel comfortable; how to breathe out so that we feel comfortable; what way of breathing makes us feel tense and constricted; what way makes us feel tired—because the breath has up to four varieties. Sometimes it comes in long and out long, sometimes in long and out short, sometimes in short and out long, sometimes in short and out short. So we should observe each of these four types of breath as they flow in the body to see how much they benefit the heart, lungs, and other parts of the body.

When we keep surveying and evaluating in this way, mindfulness and alertness will take charge within us. Concentration will arise, discernment will arise, awareness will arise within us. A person who develops this sort of skill may even become able to breathe without using the nose, by breathing through the eyes or the ears instead. But when we're starting out, we have to make use of the breath through the nose because it's the obvious breath. We first have to learn how to observe the obvious breath before we can become aware of the more refined breath sensations in the body.

The breath energy in the body, taken as a whole, is of five sorts: (1) The 'sojourning breath' (*āgantuka-vāyas*) continually flowing in and out. (2) The breath energy that stays within the body but can permeate through the various parts. (3) The breath energy that spins around in place. (4) The breath energy that moves and can flow back and forth. (5) The breath energy that nourishes the nerves and blood vessels throughout the body.

Once we know the various kinds of breath energy, how to make use of them, and how to improve them so that they feel agreeable to the body, we'll develop expertise. We'll become more adept with our sense of the body. Results will arise: a feeling of fullness and satisfaction pervading the entire body, just as kerosene pervades every thread in the mantle of a Coleman lantern, causing it to give off a bright white glow.

Vitakka is like putting sand into a sifter. *Vicāra* is like sifting the sand. When we first put sand into a sifter, it's still coarse and lumpy. But as we keep sifting, the sand will become more and more refined until we have nothing but fine particles. So it is when we fix the mind on the breath. In the first stages, the breath is still coarse, but as we keep using more and more *vitakka* and *vicāra*, the breath becomes more and more refined until it permeates to every pore. *Oḷārika-rūpa*: All sorts of comfortable sensations will appear—a sense of lightness, spaciousness, respite, freedom from aches and pains, etc.—and we'll feel nothing but refreshment and pleasure in the sense of the Dhamma, constantly cool and relaxed. *Sukhumāla-rūpa*: This sense of

pleasure will appear to be like tiny particles, like the mist of atoms that forms the air but can't be seen with the naked eye. But even though we feel comfortable and relaxed at this point, this mist of pleasure pervading the body can form a birthplace for the mind, so we can't say that we've gone beyond stress and pain.

This is one of the forms of awareness we can develop in concentration. Whoever develops it will give rise to a sense of inner refreshment: a feeling of lightness, like cotton wool. This lightness is powerful in all sorts of ways. *Hīnam vā*: The blatant sense of the body will disappear—*paṇītam vā*—and will turn into a more refined sense of the body, subtle and beautiful.

The beauty here isn't the sort that comes from art or decoration. Instead, it's beauty in the sense of being bright, clear, and fresh. Refreshing. Soothing. Peaceful. These qualities will give rise to a sense of splendor within the body, termed *sobhaṇa*, a sense of rapture and exhilaration that fills every part of the body. The properties of earth, water, fire, and wind in the body are all balanced and full. The body seems beautiful, but again this isn't beauty in the sense of art. All of this is termed *paṇīta-rūpa*.

When the body grows full and complete to this extent, all four of the elementary properties become mature and responsible in their own spheres, and can be termed *mahābhūta-rūpa*. Earth is responsible in its own earth affairs, water in its own water affairs, wind in its own wind affairs, and fire in its own fire affairs. When all four properties become more responsible and mature in their own affairs, this is termed *oḷārika-rūpa*. The properties of space and consciousness also become mature. It's as if they all become mature adults. The nature of mature adults, when they live together, is that they hardly ever quarrel or dispute. Children, when they live with children, tend to be squabbling all the time. So when all six properties are mature, earth won't conflict with water, water won't conflict with wind, wind won't conflict with fire, fire won't conflict with space, space won't conflict with consciousness. All will live in harmony and unity.

This is what is meant by *ekāyano ayam maggo sattānam visuddhiyā*: This is the unified path for the purification of beings. All four physical properties become mature in the unified sense of the body, four-in-one. When the mind enters into this unified path, it's able to become well-acquainted with the affairs of the body. It comes to feel that this body is like its child; the mind is like a parent. When parents see that their child has grown and matured, they're bound to feel proud. And when they see that their child can care for itself, they can put down the burden of having to care for it. (At this point there's no need to speak of the hindrances any longer, because the mind at this point is firmly centered. The hindrances don't have a chance to slip in.)

When the mind can let go of the body in this way, we'll feel an inner glow in

both body and mind, a glow in the sense of a calm pleasure unlike the pleasures of the world—for instance, the body feels relaxed and at ease, with no aches or fatigue—and a glow in the sense of radiance. As for the mind, it feels the glow of a restful sense of calm and the glow of an inner radiance. This calm glow is the essence of inner worth (*puñña*). It's like the water vapor rising from ice-cold objects and gathering to form clouds that fall as rain or ride high and free. In the same way, this cool sense of calm explodes into a mist of radiance. The properties of earth, water, wind, fire, space, and consciousness all become a mist. This is where the 'six-fold radiance' (*chabbanna-raṅsi*) arises.

The sense of the body will seem radiant and glowing like a ripe peach. The power of this glow is called the light of the Dhamma (*dhammo padīpo*). When we've developed this quality, the body is secure and the mind wide awake. A mist of radiance—a power—appears within us. This radiance, as it becomes more and more powerful, is where intuitive liberating insight will appear: the means for knowing the four noble truths. As this sense of intuition becomes stronger, it will turn into knowledge and awareness: a knowledge we haven't learned from anywhere else, but have gained from the practice.

Whoever can do this will find that the mind attains the virtues of the Buddha, Dhamma, and Saṅgha, which will enter to bathe the heart. Such a person can be said to have truly reached the refuge of the Buddha, Dhamma, and Saṅgha. Whoever can do even just this much is capable of reaching Awakening without having to go and do much of anything else. If we're careful, circumspect, persistent, mindful, and discerning, we'll be able to open our eyes and ears so that we can know all kinds of things—and we may not even have to be reborn to come back and practice concentration ever again. But if we're complacent—careless, inattentive, and lazy—we'll have to come back and go through the practice all over again.

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The reason we practice concentration is to disband the hindrances from the heart. When the hindrances are absolutely quiet, the mind can reach *vihāra-dhamma*—the inner quality that can form its home. We'll then be able to gain complete freedom from the hindrances. Our future states of rebirth will be no lower than the human level. We won't be forced to gain rebirth in the four realms of deprivation (*apāya*). Once the mind reaches its inner home, it's capable of raising itself to the transcendent level, to the stream flowing to nibbāna. If we're not lazy or complacent, if we keep persevering with our meditation, we'll be able to gain release from the mundane level. If our mind gains the quality of stream-entry, we will never again have to be born in the realms of deprivation.

Stream-winners, if we were to explain them in really simple terms, are people

whose minds are certain and sure, but who still have some forms of shoddy thoughts—although they would never dare let that shoddiness show in their actions. As for ordinary run-of-the-mill people, once they have a shoddy thought, it's bound to appear in their words and deeds—killing, stealing, etc. Although stream-winners may still have some forms of shoddiness to them, they don't act shoddy at all, like a person who has a knife in his hand when he's angry, but who doesn't use it to cut off anyone's head.

Ordinary people usually can't say No to their defilements. They usually have to act in line with their defilements as they arise. For example, when they feel strong anger they can't bear it. They have to let it show, to the point where they can get really ugly and do things that fly right in the face of morality. Stream-winners, although they do have defilements, can say No to them. Why? Because they have the discipline of mindfulness embedded within them, enabling them to tell right from wrong.

When the mind wavers in a good direction, they're aware of it. When it wavers in a bad direction, they're aware of it. They see, hear, smell aromas, taste flavors, feel tactile sensations just like ordinary people, but they don't let these things make inroads on the heart. They have the self-control that enables them to withstand their defilements, like a person who is able to carry a bowlful of water while running, without spilling a single drop. Even though stream-winners may be 'riding a bicycle'—i.e., sitting, standing, walking, lying down, speaking, thinking, eating, opening or closing their eyes—the permanent quality of their hearts never gets overturned. This is a quality that never disappears, although it may waver sometimes. That wavering is what can cause them to be reborn. But even though they may be reborn, they're reborn in good states of being, as human or heavenly beings.

As for ordinary people, they take birth without any real rhyme or reason, and they keep doing it over and over again. Stream-winners, however, understand birth. Although they experience birth, they let it disband. In other words, they have no use for shoddy impulses. They respond weakly to shoddy impulses and strongly to good ones. Ordinary people respond strongly to bad impulses and weakly to good ones. For example, a person who decides to go do good at a monastery—if someone then makes fun of him, saying that people who go to the monastery are old-fashioned or have hit rock-bottom—will hardly feel like going at all. But no matter how other people may try to talk him into doing good, he hardly responds. This is because the level of the mind has fallen very low.

As for stream-winners, no matter how many times shoddy impulses may occur to them, the goodness of nibbāna acts as a magnet on their hearts. This is what draws them to keep on practicing until they reach the end point. When they reach the end point, there can be no more birth, no more aging, no more illness, no more death. Sensations stop, feelings stop, concepts stop, fabrications stop, consciousness stops.

As for the six properties, they also stop. Earth stops, water stops, wind stops, fire stops, space stops, consciousness stops. The properties, khandhas, and sense media all stop. There's no concept labeling any of the khandhas. Mental labels are the media that let the khandhas come running in. When mental labels stop, there's nobody running. And when everyone has stopped running, there's no pushing and shoving, no colliding, no conversing. The heart looks after itself in line with its duties.

As for the properties, khandhas, and sense media, each is independent in its own area, each is in charge of its own affairs. There's no trespassing on anyone else's property. And once there's no trespassing, what troubles will there be? Like a match left lying alone in a match box: What fires can it cause? As long as its head isn't struck on anything abrasive, fire won't have a chance to arise. This doesn't mean that there's no fire in the match. It's there as it always was, but as long as it doesn't latch onto anything combustible it won't flare up.

The same is true of a mind that no longer latches on to the defilements. This is what is meant by nibbāna. It's the ultimate good, the ultimate point of the religion, and our own ultimate point as well. If we don't progress in the threefold training—virtue, concentration, and discernment—we won't have any chance to reach the ultimate. But if we gather these practices within ourselves and advance in them, our minds will develop the knowledge and awareness capable of pushing us on to an advanced point, to nibbāna.

* * *

Noble disciples are like people who realize that rain water is the vapor that heat sucks up from the salt water of the ocean and then falls down as rain—and so that rain water is ocean water, and ocean water is rain water. Ordinary run-of-the-mill people are like people who don't know what rain water comes from. They assume that rain water is up there in the sky and so they deludedly wait to drink nothing but rain water. If no rain comes, they're sure to die. The reason for their ignorance is their own stupidity. They don't know enough to search for new resources—the qualities of the noble ones—and so will have to keep gathering up the same old things to eat over and over again. They keep spinning around in the cycle of rebirth in this way, with no thought of searching for a way out of this mass of suffering and stress. They're like a red ant that keeps probing its way around and around the rim of a bushel basket—whose circumference isn't even two meters—all because it doesn't realize that the rim of the basket is round. This is why we keep experiencing birth, aging, illness, and death without end.

As for the noble ones, they see that everything in the world is the same old stuff coming over and over again. Wealth and poverty, good and bad, pleasure and pain, praise and censure, etc., keep trading places around and around in circles. This is the

cycle of defilement, which causes ignorant people to misunderstand. The world itself spins—Sunday, Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday, Saturday, and then back to the same old Sunday all over again. January, February, March, April, May, etc., up to November and December, and then back to January. The year of the rat, the ox, the tiger, all the way up to the year of the pig, and then back to the same old year of the rat all over again. Everything is like this, night following day, day following night. Nighttime isn't for sure: Our daytime is other people's nighttime, their daytime is our nighttime. Things keep changing like this. This is called the wheel of the world, which causes people with only partial knowledge to misunderstand and to quarrel.

When noble ones see in this way, they develop a sense of dispassion and don't ever want to be born in a world again—for there are all sorts of worlds. Some worlds have nothing but cold, others nothing but heat—no living beings can be born there. Some have only sunlight; others only moonlight; still others, neither sunlight nor moonlight. This is what is meant by *lokavidū*.

For this reason, once we've learned this, we should take it to think over carefully. Whatever we see as worthy of credence, we should then use to train our hearts so that the paths and their fruitions will arise within us. Don't be heedless or complacent in anything you do, for life is like dew on the grass. As soon as it's touched by the light of the sun, it vanishes in no time without leaving a trace.

We die with every in-and-out breath. If we're the least bit careless, we are sure to die, for death is something that happens very easily. It's lying in wait for us at every moment. Some people die from sleeping too much, or eating too much, or eating too little; of being too cold, too hot, too happy, too sad. Some people die from pain, others die without any pain. Sometimes even when we're sitting around perfectly normal we can still die. See that death has you surrounded on all sides—and so be earnest in developing as much goodness as you can, both in the area of the world and in the Dhamma.

III. Inner Release

The Truth & its Shadows

Undated, 1959

The Dhamma of attainment is something cool, clean, and clear. It doesn't take birth, age, grow ill, or die. Whoever works earnestly at the Dhamma of study and practice will give rise to the Dhamma of attainment without a doubt. The Dhamma of attainment is *paccattam*: You have to know it for yourself.

* * *

We should make a point of searching for whatever will give rise to discernment. *Sutamaya-paññā*: Listen to things that are worth listening to. *Cintāmaya-paññā*: Once you've listened, evaluate what you've learned. Don't accept it or reject it right off hand. *Bhāvanāmaya-paññā*: Once you've put what you've learned to the test, practice in line with it. This is the highest perfection of discernment—liberating insight. You know what kinds of stress and pain should be remedied and so you remedy them. You know what kinds shouldn't be remedied and so you don't.

For the most part we're really ignorant. We try to remedy the things that shouldn't be remedied, and it just doesn't work—because there's one kind of stress that should simply be observed and shouldn't be fiddled with at all. Like a rusty watch: Don't polish away any more rust than you should. If you go taking it apart, the whole thing will stop running for good. What this means is that once you've seen natural conditions for what they truly are, you have to let them be. If you see something that should be fixed, you fix it. Whatever shouldn't be fixed, you don't. This takes a load off the heart.

Ignorant people are like the old woman who lit a fire to cook her rice and, when her rice was cooked, had her meal. When she had finished her meal, she sat back and had a cigar. It so happened that when she lit her cigar with one of the embers of the fire, it burned her mouth. 'Damned fire,' she thought, 'burned my mouth.' So she put

all her matches in a pile and poured water all over them so that there wouldn't be any more fire in the house—just like a fool with no sense at all. The next day, when she wanted fire to cook her meal, there wasn't any left. At night, when she wanted light, she had to go pestering her neighbors, asking this person and that, and yet still she hated fire. We have to learn how to make use of things and to have a sense of how much is enough. If you light only a little fire, it'll be three hours before your rice is cooked. The fire isn't enough for your food. So it is with us: We see stress as something bad and so try to remedy it—keeping at it with our eyes closed, as if we were blind. No matter how much we treat it, we never get anywhere at all.

People with discernment will see that stress is of two kinds: (1) physical stress, or the inherent stress of natural conditions; and (2) mental stress, or the stress of defilement. Once there's birth, there has to be aging, illness, and death. Whoever tries to remedy aging can keep at it till they're withered and grey. When we try to remedy illness, we're usually like the old woman pouring water all over her matches. Sometimes we treat things just right, sometimes we don't—as when the front step gets cracked, and we dismantle the house right up to the roof.

Illness is something that everyone has—in other words, the diseases that appear in the various parts of the body. Once we've treated the disease in our eyes, it'll go appear in our ears, nose, in front, in back, in our arm, our hand, our foot, etc., and then it'll sneak inside. Like a person trying to catch hold of an eel: The more you try to catch it, the more it slips off every which way. And so we keep on treating our diseases till we die. Some kinds of disease will go away whether we treat them or not. If it's a disease that goes away with treatment, then take medicine. If it's one that goes away whether we treat it or not, why bother? This is what it means to have discernment.

Ignorant people don't know which kinds of stress should be treated and which kinds shouldn't, and so they put their time and money to waste. As for intelligent people, they see what should be treated and they treat it using their own discernment. All diseases arise either from an imbalance in the physical properties or from kamma. If it's a disease that arises from the physical properties, we should treat it with food, medicine, etc. If it arises from kamma, we have to treat it with the Buddha's medicine. In other words, stress and pain that arise from the heart, if we treat them with food and medicine, won't respond. We have to treat them with the Dhamma. Whoever knows how to manage this is said to have a sense of how to observe and diagnose stress.

If we look at it in another way, we'll see that aging, illness, and death are simply the shadows of stress and not its true substance. People lacking discernment will try to do away with the shadows, which leads only to more suffering and stress. This is because they aren't acquainted with what the shadows and substance of stress come from. The essence of stress lies with the mind. Aging, illness, and death are its

shadows or effects that show by way of the body. When we want to kill our enemy and so take a knife to stab his shadow, how is he going to die? In the same way, ignorant people try to destroy the shadows of stress and don't get anywhere. As for the essence of stress in the heart, they don't think of remedying it at all. This ignorance of theirs is one form of *avijjā*, or unawareness.

To look at it in still another way, both the shadows and the real thing come from *taṇhā*, craving. We're like a person who has amassed a huge fortune and then, when thieves come to break in, goes killing the thieves. He doesn't see his own wrongdoing and sees only the wrongdoing of others. Actually, once he's piled his house full in this way, thieves can't help but break in. In the same way, people suffer from stress and so they hate it, and yet they don't make the effort to straighten themselves out.

Stress comes from the three forms of craving, so we should kill off craving for sensuality, craving for becoming, and craving for no becoming. These things are fabricated in our own heart, and we have to know them with our own mindfulness and discernment. Once we've contemplated them until we see, we'll know: 'This sort of mental state is craving for sensuality; this sort is craving for becoming; and this sort, craving for no becoming.'

People with discernment will see that these things exist in the heart in subtle, intermediate, and blatant stages, just as a person has three stages in a lifetime: youth, middle age, and old age. 'Youth' is craving for sensuality. Once this thirst arises in the heart, it wavers and moves—this is craving for becoming—and then takes shape as craving for no further becoming—a *sambhavesin* with its neck stretched out looking for its object, causing itself stress and pain. In other words, we take a liking to various sights, sounds, smells, flavors, etc., and so fix on them, which brings us stress. So we shouldn't preoccupy ourselves with sights, sounds, etc., that provoke greed, anger, or delusion (craving for sensuality), causing the mind to waver and whisk out with concepts (this is craving for becoming; when the mind sticks with its wavering, won't stop repeating its motions, that's craving for no further becoming).

When we gain discernment, we should destroy these forms of craving with *anulomika-ñāṇa*, knowledge in accordance with the four noble truths, knowing exactly how much ease and pleasure the mind has when cravings for sensuality, becoming, and no becoming all disappear. This is called knowing the reality of disbanding. As for the cause of stress and the path to the disbanding of stress, we'll know them as well.

Ignorant people will go ride in the shadow of a car—and they'll end up with their heads bashed in. People who don't realize what the shadows of virtue are, will end up riding only the shadows. Words and deeds are the shadows of virtue. Actual virtue is in the heart. The heart at normalcy is the substance of virtue. The substance

of concentration is the mind firmly centered in a single preoccupation without any interference from concepts or mental labels. The bodily side to concentration—when our mouth, eyes, ears, nose, and tongue are quiet—is just the shadow, as when the body sits still, its mouth closed and not speaking with anyone, its nose not interested in any smells, its eyes closed and not interested in any objects, etc. If the mind is firmly centered to the level of fixed penetration, then whether we sit, stand, walk, or lie down, the mind doesn't waver.

Once the mind is trained to the level of fixed penetration, discernment will arise without our having to search for it, just like an imperial sword: When it's drawn for use, it's sharp and flashing. When it's no longer needed, it goes back in the scabbard. This is why we are taught,

mano-pubbaṅgamā dhammā mano-seṭṭhā mano-mayā:

The mind is the most extraordinary thing there is.

The mind is the source of the Dhamma.

This is what it means to know stress, its cause, its disbanding, and the path to its disbanding. This is the substance of virtue, concentration, and discernment. Whoever can do this will reach release: nibbāna. Whoever can give rise to the Dhamma of study and practice within themselves will meet with the Dhamma of attainment without a doubt. This is why it's said to be *sandiṭṭhiko*, visible in the present; *akāliko*, bearing fruit no matter what the time or season. Keep working at it always.

Beyond Right & Wrong

January 17, 1959

For the heart to go and do harm to other people, we first have to open the way for it. In other words, we start out by doing harm to ourselves, and this clears the way from inside the house for us to go out and do harm to people outside.

The resolve to do harm is a heavy form of self-harm. At the very least, it uses up our time and destroys our opportunity to do good. We have to wipe it out with the resolve not to do harm—or in other words, with concentration. This is like seeing that there's plenty of unused space in our property and that we aren't making enough for our living. We'll have to leap out into the open field so as to give ourself the momentum for doing our full measure of goodness as the opportunity arises.

* * *

Nekkhamma-saṅkappo (the resolve for renunciation), i.e., being at ease in quiet, solitary places. *Abyāpāda-saṅkappo* (the resolve for non-ill-will): We don't have to think about our own bad points or the bad points of others. *Avihīṅsā-saṅkappo* (the resolve for harmlessness), not creating trouble or doing harm to ourselves, i.e., (1) not thinking about our own shortcomings, which would depress us; (2) if we think about our own shortcomings, it'll spread like wildfire to the shortcomings of others. For this reason, wise people lift their thoughts to the level of goodness so that they can feel love and good will for themselves, and so that they can then feel love and good will for others as well.

When our mind has these three forms of energy, it's like a table with three legs that can spin in all directions. To put it another way, once our mind has spun up to this high a level, we can take pictures of everything above and below us. We'll develop discernment like a bright light or like binoculars that can magnify every detail. This is called *ñāṇa*—intuitive awareness that can know everything in the world: *Lokavidū*.

The discernment here isn't ordinary knowledge or insight. It's a special cognitive skill, the skill of the noble path. We'll give rise to three eyes in the heart, so as to see the reds and greens, the highs and lows of the mundane world: a sport for those with wisdom. Our internal eyes will look at the Dhamma in front and behind,

above and below and all around us, so as to know all the ins and outs of goodness and evil. This is discernment. We'll be at our ease, feeling pleasure with no pain interfering at all. This is called *vijjā-caraṇa-sampanno*—being consummate in cognitive skill.

A person whose heart has discernment is capable of helping the nation and the religion, just as a farmer who grows rice that can be sold both inside and outside the country strengthens the nation's economy. A person without discernment will make the religion degenerate. When he brings disaster on himself, the disaster will have to spread to others as well. In other words, a single, solitary person with no goodness to him—nothing but defilements and craving—can do evil to the point where he wipes himself out, and it will spread to wipe out people all over the country. But when a person has the three above virtues in his or her heart, they will turn into the strength of concentration. The heart will be as clear as crystal or a diamond. The whole world will become transparent. Discernment will arise, the skill of liberating insight, and intuitive understanding, all at once.

Whoever sees the world as having highs and lows doesn't yet have true intuitive discernment. Whoever has the eye of intuition will see that there are no highs, no lows, no rich, no poor. Everything is equal in terms of the three common characteristics: inconstant, stressful, and not-self. It's like the equality of democracy. Their home is the same as our home, with no differences at all. People commit burglaries and robberies these days because they don't see equality. They think that this person is good, that person isn't; this house is a good place to eat, that house isn't; this house is a good place to sleep, that house isn't, etc. It's because they don't have insight, the eye of discernment, that there's all this confusion and turmoil.

* * *

Keep your attention focused exclusively on the body—a cubit wide, a fathom long, a span thick. This is the middle path. If you make your awareness of the breath too narrow, you'll end up sitting stock stiff, with no alertness at all. If you make your awareness too broad—all the way to heaven and hell—you can end up falling for aberrant perceptions. So neither extreme is good. You have to keep things moderate and just right if you want to be on the right track. If you don't have a sense of how to practice correctly, then even if you ordain until you die buried in heaps of yellow robes, you won't succeed in the practice. You lay people can sit in concentration till your hair turns white, your teeth fall out, and your backs get all crooked and bent, but you'll never get to see nibbāna.

If we can get our practice on the noble path, though, we'll enter nibbāna. Virtue will disband, concentration will disband, discernment will disband. In other words, we won't dwell on our knowledge or discernment. If we're intelligent enough to

know, we simply know, without taking intelligence as being an essential part of ourselves. On the lower level, we're not stuck on virtue, concentration, or discernment. On a higher level, we're not stuck on the stages of stream-entry, once-returning, or non-returning. Nibbāna isn't stuck on the world, the world isn't stuck on nibbāna. Only at this point can we use the term 'arahant.'

This is where we can relax. They can say 'inconstant,' but it's just what they say. They can say 'stress,' but it's just what they say. They can say 'not-self,' but it's just what they say. Whatever they say, that's the way it is. It's true for them, and they're completely right—but completely wrong. As for us, only if we can get ourselves beyond right and wrong will we be doing fine. Roads are built for people to walk on, but dogs and cats can walk on them as well. Sane people and crazy people will use the roads. They didn't build the roads for crazy people, but crazy people have every right to use them. As for the precepts, even fools and idiots can observe them. The same with concentration: Crazy or sane, they can come and sit. And discernment: We all have the right to come and talk our heads off, but it's simply a question of being right or wrong.

None of the valuables of the mundane world give any real pleasure. They're nothing but stress. They're good as far as the world is concerned, but nibbāna doesn't have any need for them. Right views and wrong views are an affair of the world. Nibbāna doesn't have any right views or wrong views. For this reason, whatever is a wrong view, we should abandon. Whatever is a right view, we should develop—until the day it can fall from our grasp. That's when we can be at our ease.

Point Zero

April 22, 1957

“Asokaram, the night of April 22, 1957: After we had gathered at the meditation hall and said our chants, Ajaan Lee delivered a sermon. At first, all I heard was the opening phrase, ‘namo tassa, etc.,’ without hearing what Pāli stanza he was going to take as his theme, as his voice was very weak and the wind outside so strong that my ears were ringing. So I tried to still my mind and keep listening, even though I couldn’t make out a word he said until the sermon was almost over, when I was able to catch the following:”

To purify the heart, we have to disentangle our attachments to self, to the body, to mental phenomena, and to all the objects that come passing in through the senses. Keep the mind intent on concentration. Keep it one at all times. Don’t let it become two, three, four, five, etc., because once you’ve made the mind one, it’s easy to make it zero. Simply cut off the little ‘head’ and pull the two ends together. But if you let the mind become many, it’s a long, difficult job to make it zero.

And another thing: If you put the zero after other numbers, they become ten, twenty, thirty, forty, fifty, hundreds, thousands, on to infinity. But if you put the zero’s first, even if you have ten thousand of them, they don’t count. So it is with the heart: Once we’ve turned it from one to zero and put the zero first, then other people can praise or criticize us as they like but it won’t count. Good doesn’t count, bad doesn’t count. This is something that can’t be written, can’t be read, that we can understand only for ourselves.

When there’s no more counting like this, the heart attains purity and the highest happiness, as in the Pāli stanza,

*nibbānaṃ paramaṃ suññaṃ
nibbānaṃ paramaṃ sukhaṃ,*

which means, ‘Nibbāna is the ultimate emptiness, void, zero. Nibbāna is the ultimate ease.’

This is why we’re taught to make the mind one at all times—so that we can easily erase it into zero. Once we can make it zero, we’re bound to loosen our attachments to all things. Our heart will reach purity—

which is nibbāna.

Parting Gifts

Introduction

Only in the last year of his life did Ajaan Lee's students make recordings of his talks. We have transcripts of nine recordings altogether. The four translated in this collection are the only ones for which copies of the original tapes are still available.

I have been told that Ajaan Lee had strong premonitions of his impending death, and in listening to the tapes of these talks it's easy to sense that he was giving them not only as instructions for the people present, but also as gifts for posterity. Hence the title of the collection.

The first talk was a farewell—the closing talk at the dedication of the new ordination hall at Ajaan Lee's monastery, Wat Asokaram. As events would have it, this was the last talk he gave to a large-scale gathering of his students, supporters, and friends. The second talk takes up the concept of practice as a battle with internal enemies, and shows how the wisest strategy is to win one's enemies over to one's side. The third covers the eight classical forms of knowledge and skill (*vijjā*) that come from the practice of concentration, discussing how they relate to the methods of science and other forms of worldly knowledge. Three of the knowledges toward the end of the list are barely touched on, and the end of the talk is fairly abrupt. This may have been due to the tape's running out, for Ajaan Lee had quite a lot to say on these knowledges in his other talks and writings. Still, the heart of the talk—the role of thinking and not-thinking in developing concentration and liberating insight—is discussed in considerable detail, making this a helpful guide to the “how” of meditation practice. The fourth talk closes the collection with a lively discussion of the ways in which the concepts of “self” and “not-self” relate to the phenomena of consciousness—one of Ajaan Lee's most remarkable teachings.

All four talks contain extended metaphors, and a large measure of their appeal lies in the wit and imagination with which Ajaan Lee explores his imagery. The wit here is not simply a stylistic device. Instead, it's a form of intelligence essential to the path: the ability to perceive unexpected parallels and to use them as tools in the practice. Ajaan Lee's example in this regard is not the least of his many gifts to those who pursue the path to liberation in his wake.

Thānissaro Bhikkhu

Crossing the Ocean of Life

May 19, 1960

I'd now like to explain the Dhamma as a gift for those of us who have gathered here. All of us, both lay and ordained, have come here with skillful intentions from many different provinces. Our coming here is of two sorts. The first sort is connected with our having received an invitation or notice of this gathering, so that we've come to join in with the merit-making for the past eleven days. The second sort didn't receive any notice or invitation, but as soon as word of this gathering passed by our ears, we gave rise to a good intention—good in one of two ways. The first is that we see the people here are doing something good and so we should join in. That's why some of you are here. This includes many of the monks and novices who came: You simply heard the news of this gathering and so you came to join your hearts with ours. This is called a skillful intention that has borne fruit in the hearts of all of us.

And then there are those who considered that this is a gathering of our friends, of our teacher: Even though we haven't been called to join, we should go. Some of you have thought in this way and so have joined in our gathering, participating in the various activities up to today. For all of these things, I'd like to express my thanks and appreciation to each and every one of you—because this celebration has involved many duties, many activities of many sorts. If I were to try to do it all by myself, I'm sure I wouldn't succeed. The fact that we have managed to succeed so well is due to the goodness of all of you together.

Now, the fact that you've succeeded in completing these activities will give you results in two ways: The first is through merit—there's no need to doubt that. The second is through benefaction.

Results through merit means that we've never been here before, we're not intimate with the people here, but we've learned that what they're doing here is meritorious, and so we've come in hopes of merit.

The other way is, as I've said earlier: We've come on the basis of being students or friends, or of being students of the same teacher. When we willingly come to help in these activities, this too is meritorious. The results we'll receive will come in two

ways: through merit and through benefaction.

Merit is an individual affair, something for which each person has to be responsible in terms of him or her own self. As for benefaction, the person who has benefited from your help and support won't forget your kindness. The memory will stay buried there in the heart, that when we held the celebration in that year or that time, our friends came to help us. If they have any need for our help, then—to the extent that we're able—we should take the opportunity to return their kindness in line with our ability. Whether they call for our help or not, and whether or not we can actually go to help, we can't escape having the intention to benefit them in one way or another. Even though my body may not be able to go, or my words can't reach you, still my mind—when I hear the news one way or another of any meritorious activities, and there's some way I can help—will remember your kindness and the merit I've accumulated myself, and so I'll spread thoughts of good will, dedicating the fruits of that merit to pour down on you all.

It's as if all of you were farming in a certain place, planting rice or vegetables, or starting an orchard, and then ran into difficulties, such as a drought. When this happens, there are things that have to be done: finding water, for instance, or repairing the dikes in the rice field. When a person who has received your help in the past learns of your difficulties, but can't carry the water to you or help with the repair work, he'll spread thoughts of good will.

Spreading thoughts of good will is something subtle and hard to perceive, like the energy that flows out of our eyes. The eyes of every person shoot beams of energy out into the air, the same way that the beams of car headlights light up a road. The energy from our eyes, though, is refined. No matter where we look, we don't see the energy flowing past because the current is subtle. It's because the current is subtle, though, that it can flow far. If the current were blatant, it would go only a short distance. This is why, when people develop solid concentration, they're able to see many subtle worlds. In other words, the nature of eye-energy has no limit, but we simply get no use out of it. Why? Because our minds aren't still. If our minds aren't still, we're like a person preoccupied, all wrapped up in his work. When the mind is wrapped up in confusion this way, then even though the eyes have potential energy, we can't get any use out of it because it's very subtle. The energy can go very far, but the problem is that the mind isn't quiet. If the mind were really quiet, we could immediately see very far. That's clairvoyance.

This is something ordinary and natural that exists in every human being. If the mind is weak, then outside currents cut off the energy coming from our eyes. If the mind is strong and resilient, the currents of the world can't cut that energy off. Such people can see far regardless of whether their eyes are open or closed. This is a quality that exists in the human body—something of very high quality by its nature, but we can't get any use out of it because our minds are distracted and restless.

When our minds are distracted and restless, we're like people who are dead drunk: Even though drunk people may have tools in their possession, they can't put them to any use other than as weapons to kill one another. Only if they're good and sober will they be able to use those tools to amass wealth and provide for their physical wellbeing. But if they're mentally unbalanced, you give them a knife and they'll use it to slice somebody's head open. As a result, they end up in prison. Even if they don't end up in prison, they'll have to get caged or locked up at home.

The same is true with the human beings born in this world: Even though they're endowed with good things by nature, their minds aren't at normalcy. And so the good things within them end up causing various kinds of harm.

Here we've been talking about physical nature. When we talk about subtle matters, like merit or the mind, they're much more refined than the body. For this reason, helping people by way of the mind is something much more profound. When a person trains his own mind, and trains it well, to the point where he experiences happiness and peace, and then hears that other people are suffering and that there's a way he can be of help, he uses the strength of the mind. He cultivates the mind until it's firmly established and then can send that clean current to be of immediate help.

The hearts of ordinary people, though, are like salt water in the ocean. If you use it to bathe, you're not really comfortable—although it can help you get by in a pinch. If you try to drink it, it doesn't nourish the body. You use it only if you really don't have anything else at all.

In the same way, the hearts of human beings in this world are adrift in the ocean: the flood of sensuality, the flood of becoming, the flood of views, the flood of ignorance. These four oceans are deep: deeper than the water in the sea. We depend on our minds that are swimming in these oceans, sinking in salt water. That's why, when some people are in really salty water, the waves are strong. If they lie down to sleep, they toss and turn just like waves in the sea. They lie down on their left side and can't sleep. They turn over and lie on their right side and still can't sleep. It comes from the waves.

And where do these waves come from? The ocean. In other words, they come from the flood of sensuality: sensual desires, attachment to sensual objects; the flood of becoming: wanting to be this, wanting to be that, struggling to escape from the state we're in; the flood of views: holding fast to our own views to the point of getting into arguments—a sign that we're adrift in salt water; and the flood of ignorance: darkness behind us—not knowing the past; darkness in front of us—not knowing the future; darkness in the present—not knowing what's good and evil within ourselves, letting the mind fall for the ways of the world of rebirth. That's what's meant by ignorance.

The normal nature of the human mind is to be floating adrift in this way, which

is why the Buddha had the great kindness to want us to develop our merit and skillfulness. That's why he advised us to build a boat for ourselves: The boat, here, is the activity of our physical body. As for the provisions that we'll need for crossing the ocean, those are the requisites that we as Buddhists sacrifice in order to benefit monastics in our development of generosity. If you can give a lot, it means that you'll have enough to help you cross over the ocean, for you'll have enough to eat. If you give only a little, you might run out of provisions and start drifting aimlessly with the currents and waves in the middle of the ocean. If you're lucky, the waves may wash you ashore, so that you manage to survive. But if the waves are large, and your boat small, you won't be able to reach land. You'll end up sinking in the middle of the sea.

The Buddha contemplated this fact, which is why he advised us to develop our goodness. On one level, developing goodness is involved with the way we use our material possessions. On another, it's involved with the way we look after our actions, improving the way we use our physical body so that it becomes fully trained. The results we'll receive are of two sorts. The first is that our boat won't sink. The second is that we'll have plenty of provisions for crossing over the vast expanse of the sea.

But even when people have a seaworthy boat and plenty of provisions, they can still run out of water to drink. When that happens, then although they have plenty of provisions, they're put to difficulties. To prevent this, the Buddha taught us another skill: how to distill salt water so that we can drink it. If we're intelligent, we can distill salt water so that we can drink it. We'll be able to reach America without having to stop off anywhere along the way. If we have discernment, we'll be able to drink salt water. In what way? Salt water comes from fresh water, so wherever there's salt water, there has to be fresh water. They can't escape from each other. Once you realize this, you can travel around the world. If you're skilled at distilling, your salt water can turn into fresh water. Once we can turn salt water into fresh water in this way, we can be at our ease. Even though we're in the middle of the ocean, we'll have fresh water to drink and to bathe our bodies. That way we'll be at our ease.

In the same way, those of us who are adrift in the ocean of life have to:

- 1) caulk our boat so that it's nice and tight,
- 2) stock our boat with enough provisions, and
- 3) learn how to distill fresh water from salt water.

The "boat" here stands for our body. It's not a big boat. If it were larger than this, we human beings would have lots of hardships. The body is a fathom long, a cubit wide, and a span thick. This is a boat that we have to caulk so that it's nice and tight. Caulking the boat here stands for restraint of the senses: restraining the eye—being careful not to give rise to bad kamma because of the eye, not letting barnacles build up on it; restraining the ear—don't let anything evil come in by way of the ear,

for anything evil is like a barnacle. The same holds true with our nose, tongue, body, and mind: We shouldn't take an interest in anything evil or bad, for things of that sort are like barnacles or insects that will bore into the wood of our boat and destroy it.

This is why we're taught to practice restraint over our eyes, ears, nose, tongue, body, and mind. We abstain from doing whatever shouldn't be done. We have to protect ourselves and practice restraint, considering things thoroughly before we act. If we let barnacles develop all over our body, this boat of ours—this Body Ship—will wear out and sink into the ocean.

As for the mind, we have to be careful that defilements don't arise in the heart. We have to exercise restraint like this at all times, continually caulking our six sense media, caulking our eyes with the right sights, our ears with the right sounds, our nose with the right smells, our tongue with the right flavors, our body with the right tactile sensations, and our mind with the Dhamma.

Caulking the eye means that if we see a lack anywhere that will give us a chance to develop merit and skillfulness—whether it's inside the monastery or out—we shouldn't be indifferent to it. We should fill up the lack as we can, step by step. This is called caulking the eye.

Caulking the ear means that when we hear people say anything—regardless of whether they have the intention of telling or teaching us—when their voices come scraping into our ears, we should tell ourselves that the sound is a chance for us to develop our goodness. In that way the sound will be useful to us. No matter what kind of person is speaking—child or adult; monk, novice, or nun; tall, short, black, white, whatever: We should choose to pay attention only to the things that will be of use to us. This is called using sounds as pitch for caulking for the ears.

When we encounter smells passing by our nose, we should search only for smells that will make us cheerful, that will give rise to skillful mental states as a way of caulking our nose. This is what will bring happiness and peace to the mind.

Caulking the body stands for the way we sit here quietly listening to the Dhamma without moving around or making any disturbance. It also stands for sitting in meditation, sitting and chanting, performing a candle circumambulation ceremony, using the body to bow down to the Buddha. All of these things count as caulking for the body.

As for caulking the mind, that stands for *dhamma-osatha*: the medicine of the Dhamma. We caulk the mind by the way we think. If, when we think of something, the mind sours, we shouldn't think about that thing. Whether it's a matter of the world or of the Dhamma, if thinking about it gives rise to anger or delusion in the mind, we shouldn't pay it any attention. We should think instead of the good we've done in the past. For instance, we can think of the good things we did together in the celebration of the year 2500 B.E. Even though we've parted ways since then, we've

come back together to do skillful and meritorious things once more. This is a caulking for the mind. In addition to that, we foster another form of goodness, called developing concentration. Developing concentration is a way of caulking the mind so that it doesn't develop any gaps, leaks, or holes.

All of this is called caulking our boat—the boat of the body. In Pāli, this is called *indrīya-saṁvara-sīla*, the principles of restraint over the sense faculties. We exercise restraint over our eyes, ears, nose, tongue, body, and mind, so that our boat will float on the ocean without sinking. This is called caulking our boat.

What do we do next? We have to stock our boat with provisions. Once we're born in the world, our wellbeing depends on the requisites of life. We've eaten food, worn clothing, lived in shelter, and used medicine to treat the body. That's why we've been able to find as much comfort as we have. When we consider this fact, we have to turn and consider how others are getting along. When we see that we need these things to get along, we start stocking our boat by giving gifts of alms food and making other donations to provide all four requisites. This is called stocking our boat with provisions. Then we put up a mast and unfurl a sail. In other words, we invite a monk to get up on the sermon seat and teach the Dhamma as a way of inclining the mind in the right direction. The mind will then zip right along in line with the breeze of the Dhamma. And the body will go right along with it.

For example, once we've heard the Dhamma we gain a feeling of contentment so that we want to hear it again. This is a sign that our boat has caught wind, and the wind is strong, so we sail right along. This will help our boat reach the other shore easily. If there's no sail to help it along, and we stock the boat with too many things, it may sink. That's why there's the custom, when anyone makes a donation, to have a sermon at the same time as a way of inclining the mind in the direction of the Dhamma. For our boat to get anywhere, it needs a sail. Then no matter how many or few provisions we haul on board, the boat will head in the direction we want it to. This is the second thing we need to know.

The third thing is the method for distilling salt water so that it can become fresh. This stands for practicing tranquility meditation and insight meditation. We give rise to directed thought and evaluation within the mind. And what is salt water? Salt water stands for defilement. The defilements of the mind are saltier than salt. When we try to eat salt—even just a little—we can't swallow it because we find it so salty, but the defilements are even saltier than that. They can crust us over so that we spoil and rot in all sorts of ways. When this is the case, what can we do? We have to filter or distill them. Filtering refers to *yoniso manasikāra*, appropriate attention. Whatever we do, we have to reflect, to be observant, to consider things carefully before we act. This is the first vat in our distillery.

Our second vat is meditation, contemplating our fabrications by using skillful

strategies, giving rise to the factors of *jhāna*. The first factor is directed thought: keeping in mind the preoccupation that can act as a foundation for the mind—its *gocara-dhamma*, or proper range—as a way of aiming it in the right direction by developing the four frames of reference (*satipaṭṭhāna*). This is how we distill salt water.

The four frames of reference are: focusing on the body in and of itself, focusing on feelings in and of themselves, focusing on the mind in and of itself, and focusing on mental qualities in and of themselves. All four of these are gathered in the body and mind. This is one way of looking at them, called *anuloma*, or in line with the standard way. The other way is called *paṭiloma*, in reverse of the standard way, in which we take all four and turn them into one. The standard way is when we practice directed thought and evaluation. But when we take all four and turn them into one, we take only one part of the body, as they say in the Great Frames of Reference Discourse: We focus on the body in and of itself as an object of tranquility meditation. In other words, we take all four parts and gather them into the body: the properties of earth, water, fire, and wind. That's the body. When we see that it has many parts and many aspects, preventing the mind from growing still, making it distracted, we choose only one of the parts. For example, we put aside the properties of earth, water, and fire, and stay still only with the property of wind. We focus down on the wind property as the object we keep in mind: This is called the body in and of itself.

The wind property here means the in-and-out breath. When we keep the breath in mind and watch constantly over it, that's called developing the body in and of itself. When the breath comes in, we watch it. When it goes out, we watch it. We keep surveying it constantly. Sometimes it's coarse, sometimes it's refined, sometimes it's cool, sometimes it's warm. No matter what it's like, we keep watching it. Sometimes, just as we're about to reach something good in the meditation, we get discouraged. It's like boiling water in our distillery. Normally, two sorts of things can happen. If the fire is too strong, the water starts boiling so fast that it all turns into steam, overflows the vat, and puts out the fire. If the fire is too weak, the water doesn't boil and so it produces no steam at all. Sometimes the fire is just right—not too strong, not too weak—just right in between. The middle way. The fire is just enough to give rise to steam—not so much that it overflows the vat, but enough for steam to come out of the vat, enough for the steam to become drops of fresh water.

This is why we're taught to be observant. When the desire to succeed in the meditation is really strong, it can prevent the mind from growing still. The breath gets stirred up and can't grow subtle. This is called desire getting in the way. Other times the desire is too weak. You sit there, the mind still, the breath refined, light—and you drift right to sleep. The water never comes to a boil. You have to put things

together in the right proportions, just right, with mindfulness and alertness monitoring things at all times. When the mind is staying with coarse breathing, you know. When it's staying with refined breathing, you know. When your mindfulness and alertness are constant in this way, the result is rapture: The body is light, cool, comfortable, and at ease. The mind has a sense of fullness, blooming and bright in its concentration.

This is where fresh water is beginning to gather in your distillery. The salt water begins to disappear. In other words, the salt water of sensual desire, ill will, sloth & drowsiness, restlessness & anxiety, and uncertainty—letting the mind run to the past, run to the future, not clearly seeing the present—begins to disappear. When the mind is really still and refined, it gives rise to concentration, with a sense of ease and fullness, so that you can sit for many hours.

This is the same as taking a single jar of fresh water with us in our boat. If we have the intelligence to distill fresh water out of salt water, our one jar of water will become a magic jar, providing us with enough water to drink all the way around the world. In the same way, when we develop concentration by using directed thought to lift the mind to its object as the first step in the first jhāna, and evaluation to keep contemplating the object of our meditation to make it subtle and refined—when the properties of the body have been thoroughly evaluated, the mind will be able to contemplate the drawbacks of the five hindrances. The body will grow quiet—this is called *kāya-passaddhi*, physical serenity; and the mind will grow still—*citta-passaddhi*, mental serenity. The body will be at ease, with no pains or heaviness: This is *kāya-lahutā*, physical lightness. This is where rapture arises. The mind will feel full and satisfied, with no restlessness or distraction, like a person who has eaten his fill, or a child who has eaten its fill so that it no longer disturbs its mother or father.

When the heart has rapture as its companion, it will be free from unrest. It will be cool. It will be able to use the fresh water it has distilled from salt water as a means of washing its clothing, as a means of bathing its body. Then it will be able to wash the earth property—which is like a rag—the water property, the wind property, and the fire property, all of which are like rags. They're always ripping and tearing, always getting dirty. This is why we have to care for them at all times. When the mind has given rise to the factors of concentration, the power of rapture will come to wash our properties of earth, water, wind, and fire. Then, if we want to be warm, we won't have to sit in the sunlight; if we want to be cool, we won't have to sit in the breeze. If, when we're stuck in the sunlight, we want to be cool, we'll be cool. If, when we're stuck in water, we want to be warm, we'll be warm. That way we can be at our ease, like a person who has clothing to cover his body and so has no need to feel bashful when entering human society.

This is why meditators have no fear of difficult conditions. Why is that? Because they have their own source of fresh water: water to bathe in, water to drink. They've got all the water they need to use for bathing their body; for bathing their eyes, ears, nose, tongue, body, and mind; for bathing the properties of earth, water, wind, and fire. That's water for using. As for water for drinking, they can develop concentration to an even higher level, to give rise to a sense of inner pleasure: pleasure that arises from within the mind itself. When the mind feels pleasure, both the body and mind will be at their ease. The mind will imbibe nothing but pleasure—and there's no pleasure higher than that of the mind at peace. Thus rapture is water for using, for bathing the body and mind; whereas pleasure is drinking water specifically for the mind.

So whoever has the discernment to distill fresh water from salt water will experience ease and wellbeing. This is our first distillery. The second distillery is where we take the water from the first and distill it to even greater purity. This is the same as when they refine sugar: After the first stage it still contains some alcohol, so they have to refine it a second time. This stands for developing insight meditation, something very refined—so refined that nobody else can see it. You can stand and practice insight meditation, sit and practice insight meditation, you can lie down, you can even be giving a Dhamma talk and practice insight meditation: The mouth speaks, the mind thinks of its topic—when you think of something to say, or thoughts simply arise within the mind, there's no attachment to bodily fabrication, i.e., the processes of the body; no attachment to verbal fabrication, i.e., the thoughts that fabricate words for other people to hear. There's no attachment to your words, and your mind doesn't run out after them. As for thoughts that arise from ignorance and craving, you know them immediately for what they are. The mind in that state isn't involved in bodily fabrication, verbal fabrication, or mental fabrication. The mind is then released from all fabrications.

All fabrications that arise simply change and then disband. This is true of bodily fabrications, verbal fabrications, and mental fabrications. When you see these things in terms of their common characteristics, when you see them as inconstant, constantly spinning around; stressful, hard to bear; and not-self, beyond your control, then whether you're standing, sitting, lying down, performing physical work, or speaking—even when you're just sitting and thinking alone by yourself—you'll find all things good and noble flowing to you at all times. This is called practicing insight meditation.

A person like this can then set up an enormous distillery, turning the water of the sea into clouds. When the water of the sea has been turned into clouds, they'll float through the sky. Wherever people are suffering from hardships, the water in the clouds will come raining down, watering the land where people live so that they can grow food conveniently. In the same way, when people have released their hearts

from the power of worldliness, their goodness is like clouds. When the clouds turn into rain, the rainwater will help good people live in happiness and wellbeing. This is one of the benefits that comes from those who have developed discernment.

So I ask that all of you make a mental note of these three maxims:

- 1) Caulk your boat.
- 2) Set up a mast, unfurl your sails so that they catch the wind, and then stock your boat with provisions by practicing generosity.
- 3) Learn how to take salt water and distill it into fresh.

Whoever can give rise to these skills within themselves will, at the very least, become good people. If they're not heedless, and make a continual effort, they will be able to take the mind beyond all becoming.

So, all of you who have gathered together to make merit on this occasion: I ask that you accept as a gift the Dhamma described here, take it with you, and put it into practice. You will experience happiness, flourish, and thrive in the Buddha's teachings.

The Demons of Defilement

It's the nature of the world that nothing is totally bad. Everything has to have at least some good to it. The same holds true with the various forms of Māra, or the demons of temptation, that get in the way of our practice. It's not the case that they always obstruct us. Sometimes they turn into our friends and companions; sometimes into our workers and supporters; sometimes into our slaves, helping us and caring for us. This is why, if you're discerning, you have to walk a middle course. On one hand, you have to focus on their bad side. On the other, you have to focus on their good. Their good and bad sides are realities that have to exist together. As for us, we have to take a stance in the middle, examining things so that we don't act out of suspicion or prejudice. Once we see the good side of these things, we can get more familiar with them. We can get intimate. When we get familiar and intimate, we develop a sense of kinship with them. As the Buddha said, *vissāsā paramā ñātī*: Familiarity is the highest form of kinship.

Even our enemies, when we become familiar with them, can become our friends. Our companions. Our servants. Our slaves. When we can look at things in this way, both sides benefit. We benefit and our Māras benefit as well. In the time of the Buddha, for instance, the Buddha got so familiar with Māra that eventually Māra got converted and felt favorably inclined to the merit and skillfulness the Buddha had developed. Once Māra had no more power over the Buddha, he paid homage to the Buddha and found himself transported to heaven. And that's not all. He became a bodhisattva. In the future he'll gain Awakening as a fully self-awakened Buddha. So he benefited and the Buddha benefited. This is the nature of people with discernment: They can take bad things and turn them into good.

As for us, we still lie under the sway of Māras of various kinds. These intimidating Māras are called Kilesa-Māras, the demons of defilement. The big ones, the really infamous ones, are greed, aversion, and delusion. These are the famous ones. As for the ones that stay more in the background, behind the scenes, those are *kāma-taṇhā*, craving for sensuality, struggling to get things in ways that are offensive to the Dhamma; *bhava-taṇhā*, craving for things to be this way or that; and *vibhava-taṇhā*, craving that things not happen. For instance, once we've gained wealth, we

don't want to lose it; once we've gained status, we don't want anyone to wipe out the edge we have over others. This is *vibhava-taṇhā*. These three forms of craving are also demons of defilement, but they're not very well known. Only once in a long, long while do you hear anyone mention their names.

As for greed, aversion, and delusion, they're very big, very powerful, very well known. The mother of all these Māras is ignorance (*avijjā*). Everything comes out of ignorance. Goodness comes from ignorance. Evil comes from ignorance. To call things by their proper names, ignorance is the requisite condition for fabrications (*saṅkhāra*), and fabrications, when they arise, come in three sorts:

meritorious fabrications: intentions and considerations that head in the direction of giving rise to goodness;

demeritorious fabrications: thoughts that head in the direction of what's evil, corrupt, and improper, defiling the mind and making it lose its luster; and

neutral fabrications: thoughts that are neither meritorious nor evil. For instance, when we think about going to the market tomorrow, or about going to work in our field, or about taking a bath or eating a meal. When thoughts like this arise in the mind, they're called neutral fabrications: thinking that isn't yet either good or bad.

These forms of fabrication are also demons of defilement. They're the children of Māra, but they rarely show their faces in public. They're like the children of nobility, children in the royal palace. They hardly ever show their faces outside, so very few people know their names, very few people have seen their faces. Unless you develop the mind in concentration you won't get to see these beauties. If you develop concentration, you can peer inside, using your discernment to part the curtains, and then you'll get to see these children of Māra.

The mother of Māra, ignorance, lies even deeper inside. Ignorance means not being acquainted with your own mind—mistaking your thinking for your mind; mistaking your knowledge for the mind; thinking that your thoughts of the past or future are the mind; thinking that the body is the mind or the mind is the body; that feeling is the mind or the mind is feeling; that mental qualities are the mind, or that the mind is mental qualities; that the mind is the self or the self is the mind; not being able to separate these things from yourself, getting yourself all entangled: That's called ignorance. In short, ignorance means getting caught up in the present.

All of the things I've mentioned so far are called the demons of defilement. They bother us all the time, get in our way all the time, which is why they're called the demons of defilement. How are they demons? When you get really greedy, for instance, it gets in the way of your being generous and giving donations. You simply want to get and don't want to give. That's how greed is a demon. When we get possessive of things, holding on tight, and someone destroys what we're holding onto, we get upset and feel mistreated. This puts our mind into a turmoil and gets it

all stirred up. This is how greed is a demon.

The same holds true for anger. Once it arises, you don't give a damn about anything. You see other people as nothing more than red or black ants: All you have to do is step on them and they're finished. The explosive power of anger is more violent than anything else. Whether or not you'll actually be able to get your way, you don't care. You're brazen and foolhardy. But if anyone comes along at that time and tries to persuade you to act in a skillful way, you don't want anything of what they have to say. The anger has to go its course until it runs out on its own. This is why it's called a demon, because you can't do anything good while you're under its power.

Delusion is even worse. Delusion seeps into you, the way blood seeps throughout every part of your body. When we do evil, we're deluded. When we do good, we're still deluded. Even though we're well-educated in the Dhamma, we can't yet escape from the power of delusion. No matter who we are, it stays right on our heels. We may want to make merit, but when we're deluded we don't know what's right and what's wrong. We simply want the merit. We observe the precepts because we want to be good, but we don't know what real virtue is. It's the same when we practice concentration. We want to get results, but we can't tell right concentration from wrong. We simply keep on wanting.

This is called delusion, in that our knowledge isn't in line with the truth. It's not that we don't know anything. We know, but what we know goes straying away from the truth. We're like a person who has lost his way: He can still keep going; it's just that he's not on the right path. Suppose, for instance, that we want to go to Bangkok but we get confused about the way and start heading to BangPuu. We're off the path as far as Bangkok is concerned, but we're on the right path for BangPuu—and we can keep on going. It's not the case that when you're on the wrong path you can't go. You can, but it's the wrong path as far as the destination you want. You're simply going to end up disappointed. This is why delusion is called a demon.

The second level of demons are the forms of craving. There are three forms of craving, but they boil down to two sorts. We translate craving as "desire," and desire has two types. One is desire mixed with lust, in the ordinary way of the world. The second has no lust. It's simply a sense of inclination, affection, a liking for objects. For example, we feel a liking for certain sights. We see certain material objects and we like the way they look, so we search for them—in other words, we want to get them. This, too, is a type of craving. The same holds true for the various sounds we like. We struggle to get hold of them. Our desire pulls us, yanks us, drags us along—whether or not we'll get what we want, we have to keep running. If we get what we want, we have at least something to show for our efforts. If we don't, it's a waste of time and energy, and we suffer. This kind of desire is also called craving: craving for objects, for sights, sounds, smells, tastes, tactile sensations: things we like. This is

desire combined, not with lust, but with greed.

So craving has these two flavors, distilled out of *kāma-taṇhā*, *bhava-taṇhā*, and *vibhava-taṇhā*: desire combined with lust, and desire free of lust. These, too, are demons of defilement. Each of them prevents the mind from inclining toward right concentration. This is why desire—*chanda*—is classed as a hindrance. Desire on the level of a hindrance covers inclination, a sense of liking, without any lust mixed in. But there's another type of *chanda*—called *chanda-rāga*, or desire-and-passion—which is heavier than *chanda* as a hindrance. *Chanda* as a hindrance is light. *Chanda-rāga* is an enemy of the precepts. *Chanda* as a hindrance is an enemy of concentration. This is why desire in either sense of the word is classed as a demon, a demon of defilement. This is the second level.

The next level of demons are the forms of mental fabrication. For example, meritorious fabrications: the mind's thoughts of concocting or giving rise to merit. Now suppose that those thoughts don't succeed. The mind sours. Like King Asoka, who ruled over the Indian subcontinent, governing in two ways. One was through his goodness as a person. His subjects respected him, honored him, and so they obeyed him. The other way was through his military power and might. This was why there was law and order among his people. In the area of the religion, he gave tremendous support and encouragement, building a great deal of goodness—so much so that it backfired on him. He gave continual donations to the Bhikkhu Saṅgha until one day, toward the end of his life, he decided that he wanted to use some money to buy donations as a form of homage to the Buddha, homage to the Dhamma, and homage to the Saṅgha. After he had formulated this intention, but before he had had the opportunity to spend as much as he wanted, he fell ill. So he wanted to hurry up and finish making merit in line with his plans. He sent one of his officials to withdraw more money from the treasury, which held both government funds and the king's private funds. When the official got to the treasury, the treasurer wouldn't hand over the money, because he felt that it should go only to the government.

So the official returned to inform King Asoka, who got upset. "These are my funds," he thought. He wanted to use the funds as a form of homage to the Buddha, homage to the Dhamma, and homage to the Saṅgha, but when he couldn't do it, his mind turned sour. And it so happened that while his mind was soured, he died. Now, because he died while he was angry at his treasurer for not letting him make merit, the result was that he was born as a gigantic snake, an enormous python, slithering back and forth around the royal treasury. And there he had to stay, fixated on his possessions, for many days, which prevented him from enjoying the results of the good he had done. When he was alive, he had done good in lots of ways: building temples, building chedis, planting huge numbers of Bodhi trees, giving huge donations to the Saṅgha, observing the precepts, listening to the Dhamma. When he

died, he should have been reborn as a male or female deva, but instead he went and took birth as a snake. This is an instance of how good intentions, meritorious intentions, when they aren't fulfilled, can lead to defilement and rebirth as a common animal. This is why thoughts of making merit, even though they're meritorious, can turn into demons.

The same is even more true with demeritorious fabrications, thoughts of doing evil. Simply thinking evil is enough to get in the way of our goodness. When thoughts of this kind arise in the mind—even though we haven't yet acted on them, even though we haven't yet spoken under their influence—the mere fact of having a bad intention in the mind is enough to prevent us from reaching the noble paths and fruitions. An example of this is the story of two villagers, two friends, on the Buddhist sabbath. Early in the morning, the people in the village heard the sound of the bell and gong in the local temple, so they got up before daylight and got ready to go give food and listen to a sermon at the temple. One of the friends thought to himself, "If I go make merit at the temple, then when I get back home I won't have anything to eat. I'd better go fishing instead." So he cooked some rice and prepared the food for the other friend to take to the temple.

As for the friend who went to the temple: While he was placing food in the monks' bowls, taking the precepts, and listening to the sermon, all he could think was evil thoughts: "Will my friend catch any fish for us to eat this evening, I wonder." As he thought about this, he developed a strong desire to eat fish curry, made from the fish his friend was out killing in the stream. That's all he could think about as he was putting food in the monks' bowls and listening to the sermon. He wasn't thinking about the killing. He simply thought, "If my friend catches some fish, I'll get to eat." As for the friend who was out catching fish, all he could think about was, "I wonder if my friend has put food in the monks' bowls yet.... By now, he's probably taken the precepts.... By now he's probably listening to the sermon and getting lots and lots of merit." That's all he could think about. Now, through the strong meritorious power of his thinking, not a single fish got caught in his net. Every time he heard the gong being struck at the temple, he'd put down his net, raise his hands, and say, "*Sādhu!*"—all day until darkness fell. Because his thoughts were so lost in doing good, his efforts to do evil didn't succeed.

As for the friend who went to make merit in the temple, his thoughts were lost in eating fish with his friend, so he ended up getting hardly any merit at all. The returns on his merit weren't worth all the time and effort that had gone into fixing food for the monks, taking the precepts, and listening to the sermon with his hands folded in respect. In other words, his state of mind canceled out his goodness, so he ended up no match for his friend who was out doing evil without really wanting to. Thus his state of mind turned into a demon and harmed him in two ways: The first was that he wanted to eat fish but didn't get a single bite. The second was that even

though he did gain some merit from the donations he had made to the monks, it was only a little bit. He simply went through the motions of putting food in the monks' bowls, taking the precepts, listening to the sermon, but his mind was focused on eating murrel-fish curry with his friend. So he didn't get any of the good results that he should have from his actions.

This is why it's said that evil thoughts cancel out our goodness. Even if we're doing good, thoughts of this sort cut off our goodness, like a palm tree or a coconut tree with its crown cut off. Or a banana tree that has borne fruit: it won't be able to grow any further, to bear flowers or produce any more fruit. People who think in ways that are evil, even if they do good, don't meet with any progress in life. They meet with nothing but failure. This is called demeritorious fabrication, another kind of demon that prevents us from succeeding at giving rise to goodness.

The third kind of mental fabrication is thinking that's neutral, that isn't yet good or evil. This kind of thinking can also be a demon of defilement. Say, for instance, that we plan to work on our farm. "We don't have time to go to the monastery," we tell ourselves. "We don't yet have enough to eat." Or if we plan to go selling things. "If we go to the monastery, we won't have time to get a good return." Or we spend our time thinking about some important business we have to do, that we'll have to do this and say that. Or we think about going out to cruise around and relax a bit. When we think in this way, it takes up the time we can use to develop goodness within ourselves. We keep putting it off.

In what way? When we're children, we tell ourselves that we can wait until we're older. We're not going to die anytime soon, so we should take the time to study instead. When we become young adults, we tell ourselves that we can wait until we get married. Once we get married and get ourselves established in our career, we tell ourselves to wait until our children are grown and they get married. Going to the monastery can wait until we've aged a bit. We keep on putting it off and turn ourselves into nice sweet pigs for Māra to swallow down easily without our even realizing it.

Finally, if we really do survive until old age, our children get worried and try to dissuade us from going. "Mom, don't go to the monastery. You're old. You'll suffer all sorts of hardships." And we believe them. "If you feel faint or get sick, it's going to be hard for you." Your eyes get so that you can't see, your ears get so that you can't hear. You can't hear the sermons, can't hear when they're giving the precepts. Your eyes, your ears, every path for doing good gets closed off and sealed up tight.

This is what happens to people who get all wrapped up in their work—worried about how they're going to eat, sleep, and live; worried about wealth and poverty to the point where they can't develop any skillfulness and see it through. These ways of thinking are a type of mental fabrication that fools us, trips us up, pulls us back, ties

us down. That's why they count as a type of Māra, as demons of defilement.

The demon of defilement on the fourth level is ignorance, not being acquainted with things. We aren't acquainted with suffering and stress; aren't acquainted with the cause of stress; aren't acquainted with the cessation of stress or with the path of practice leading to the cessation of stress. Our not being acquainted with these four noble truths is one aspect of ignorance. Another aspect is not knowing which affairs are past, which ones are future, and which ones are present. These three, plus the four noble truths, add up to seven. And then there's not knowing ignorance itself, which makes eight. These forms of unawareness are called *avijjā*, or ignorance.

What this all boils down to is not knowing the path. For instance, when we practice the four frames of reference: *kāyānupassanā*—we focus on the body in and of itself, but we don't understand the body. We think that the body is the mind or the mind is the body. This is ignorance. It's dark. It closes off the body and closes off the mind, so that we think that they're one and the same thing. We can't separate the body from the mind or the mind from the body. This is called not knowing our path.

Vedanānupassanā: We focus on feelings in and of themselves, but we aren't really acquainted with feelings. "Feelings" here means the act of savoring sensations, which sometimes are pleasant, sometimes painful, sometimes neither pleasant nor painful. We think that the pleasure is the same thing as our own mind, or that our self is what has pleasure. Or we think that the pain is the same thing as our self, or that our self is what has pain. We can't separate the pleasure and pain from the mind, so they get tightly tangled up together. We can't separate them, can't tell what's what. This is called ignorance, not being acquainted with the path.

Cittānupassanā: We focus on the mind in and of itself, but we aren't really acquainted with the mind. What is the mind? Actually, there are two aspects to the mind. There's mental consciousness, and then there's the mind itself. We think that consciousness is the mind, that the mind is consciousness. Actually, consciousness is what goes. Say that we see a sight in Bangkok: *Cakkhu-viññāṇa*—eye-consciousness—is what goes to the sight, but the mind doesn't go. The act of going is what's called consciousness, but there's no substance to it.

Sota-viññāṇa: Sometimes we remember sounds from the past. Thoughts of sounds appear in the mind and we focus on them, so that we can remember what this or that person said, how beautiful it was. What we've remembered is *sota-viññāṇa*, consciousness at the ear. Then there's consciousness at the nose. We can recognize what smells are making contact. We can remember what smells there were and what things we smelled in the past. The mental current that goes out to know these things is called *ghāṇa-viññāṇa*. Then there's *kāya-viññāṇa*, consciousness at the body. We can recognize hot air, cold air. We can recognize that "This kind of coolness is the coolness of water; that kind of coolness is the coolness of wind; this kind of heat is

the heat of fire; this kind of heat is the heat of hot air; that kind of heat is the heat of the sun.” We can recognize these things clearly. We could even write a textbook about them. Knowing these things is called *kāya-viññāṇa*.

Mano-viññāṇa, consciousness at the intellect. Our thinking goes out: to Bangkok, to the forest, to the wilderness, all around the world. Our knowledge of these thoughts is *mano-viññāṇa*, while the mind is what stays right here in the present. It can’t go anywhere. The part of the mind that’s awareness itself can’t go anywhere at all. It stays right here. It goes out only as far as the skin. There’s awareness of things beyond the skin, but that awareness isn’t the mind. It’s consciousness. There’s no substance to consciousness, no substance at all, just like the air. So we don’t have to get entangled with it. We can separate consciousness out of the mind, separate the mind out of consciousness. The mind is like a fire; consciousness, the light of the fire. The light and the fire are two different things, even though the light comes out of the fire. When we don’t understand this, that’s called ignorance. We conceive consciousness to be the mind, and the mind to be consciousness. When we have things all mixed up like this, that’s called ignorance.

Dhammānupassanā. We focus on dhammas in and of themselves, i.e., the mental qualities that arise in the mind. When unskillful qualities arise in the mind, we don’t know how much harm they cause. That’s ignorance. As for skillful qualities: Which ones give only small benefits, which ones give medium benefits, and which ones give overwhelming benefits, we don’t know. This means that we aren’t acquainted with the qualities of the mind. When we don’t know the qualities of the mind, we can’t separate good from evil or evil from good, we can’t separate the mind from its qualities or the qualities from the mind. Everything is firmly glommed together in a big, thick mass so that we can’t pry them apart. This is called ignorance. Ignorance is a Māra, a demon, a demon that stands in the way, preventing us from attaining the highest good, i.e., nibbāna.

All four of these types of defilement are called the Māras or demons of defilement. The mother of Māra is ignorance. The children of Māra are mental fabrications; the grandchildren of Māra are the three forms of craving; and the great-grandchildren of Māra are greed, aversion, and delusion. Sometimes these members of the Māra family help us develop merit and skill. Sometimes they get up and sit on our heads, lording it over us, ordering us around. Say, for instance, that greed gets really strong. We grab hold of whatever we can get our hands on, with no thought for who it belongs to, or whether taking it is right or wrong. When greed gets really strong, it can pressure us into doing evil. When anger gets really strong, it puts pressure on our nerves to the point where we can hand down a death sentence and commit murder. The same is true with delusion.

Each of these things is an enemy, blocking off our goodness, but each can also

benefit us as well. If we have any discernment, greed can help us. Anger can help us. Delusion can help us. If we have any discernment, craving can help motivate us to develop goodness. Don't look down on it. We've come here to listen to a sermon. Who talked us into coming? Craving, that's who. When people ordain as monks and novices, what forces them to do it? Craving, that's what. We shouldn't focus only on its bad side. As for meritorious fabrications, if we didn't have any of them at all, we wouldn't be able to develop any goodness. Everyone who develops goodness in any way has to start out with the intention to do it. Ignorance is also good. When we know that we have ignorance, we hurry up and find some way to overcome it. Ignorance is what leads us astray, but ultimately ignorance is what will have to lead us back. Knowledge never led anyone to study. Ignorance is what makes people want to learn. When people already know, why would they want to look further? Delusion is what makes us look for knowledge—by joining society, by associating with people. Our knowledge grows broader and broader from the first impulse born in ignorance.

So when dealing with the demons of defilement, you have to look for both their good and their bad points. Only when you see both sides can you be said to be discerning and wise. When you can take bad things and make them good, that's when you're really outstanding. If you take good things and make them bad, that's no good at all. Even when you take good things and make other good things out of them, that's not really special. There are three levels of goodness: good, excellent, and outstanding. A good person does good. An excellent person takes something good and makes it better. That's excellent, but not outstanding. An outstanding person takes bad things and makes them good, takes good things and makes them excellent. So these are the three levels of goodness: good, excellent, and outstanding.

So today I've talked about the demons of defilement, after the talk the other day on the demons of the aggregates (*khandha-māra*). We should all learn to think, to consider things, to ponder things over, so that we can find goodness on every side, in every corner we look. This way, if we look beneath us we'll find treasures. If we look above us we'll find treasures. Looking beneath us means looking at the things that are our enemies. We'll be able to gain treasures from them: goodness on the outstanding level. When we look at the things that are our friends, we can gain excellence from them. We should try to develop all three levels of goodness. If we have discernment, we can gain all three levels of goodness from the demons of defilement and the demons of the aggregates, and we'll gain all three of the benefits I've mentioned.

For this reason we should develop our mental faculties (*indrīya*) until they're strong, capable, and mature, so that they don't fear Māras of any sort. A person who has studied snakes can pick them up with no fear of their venom. A person who has studied tigers can catch them and they won't bite. In the same way, if we have any

discernment, we can capture and tame the demons of defilement so that they support us in being outstanding, all the way to the paths (magga) and fruitions (phala) leading to nibbāna. Whoever doesn't have the ability or discernment will get carried off by the demons of defilement to get tortured and killed. So we should use our sharpest discernment to consider these things. That's what will lead us to the noble paths and their fruitions.

So when we've heard this we should consider what we've heard and take it to heart, bringing it inside to see the ways things actually are inside us and then practicing accordingly, in line with the way of right practice. That's when we can be at our ease. Evil people will help us. Good people will help us. We'll be free of danger. Thieves will be our servants, helping us in our various tasks. Wise people will help us in our work—so how can we fail? If we look to bad people, they come and help us. If we look to good people, they come and help us. If we focus on the Māras who are our enemies, they turn into our friends and companions. When we reach this point, we won't know what's a Māra—because nothing's a Māra in any way at all. Everything's neutral, the common property of the world. Whoever can see things in this way has no more suffering, no more obstacles. Everything is bright, beaming, and easy. If you go forward, you don't get stuck. If you go back you don't get entangled. You can go as smoothly as a boat over water. That's why this sort of person is said to be *sugato*: someone who goes well, who's well-gone.

So all of us who are developing our perfections should practice in this way.

And now that I've explained the demons of defilement, I'll end right here.

Knowledge

October 4, 1960

Vijjā-caraṇa-sampanno: Consummate in knowledge & conduct.

I'm going to talk about knowledge—the highest level of knowledge, not ordinary knowledge. Ordinary knowledge is adulterated with a lot of defilements and mental fermentations, and so it's called *heṭṭhima-vijjā*, lower knowledge. Lower knowledge is something everyone has, Buddhist and non-Buddhist alike: the various branches of worldly knowledge that people study from textbooks so as to run their societies and administer their nations. And then there are the special branches of knowledge, the scientific ways of thinking that people use to invent all sorts of amazing contraptions for the human race—things like clairvoyance (television), clairaudience (telephones), and powers of levitation (airplanes). They've gotten to the point where these contraptions can work in place of people. During the last war, for instance, I heard that they were able to drop bombs on other countries without sending people along with them. With a push of a button they could tell the missile where to go, what to do, and when it had finished the job to their satisfaction, have it come back home.

This is what's called progress in worldly knowledge—or *lokiya-vijjā*. This kind of knowledge is common all over the world and falls into the two sorts that I've mentioned: the sort that comes from studying books (*sutamaya-paññā*), and the sort that comes from thinking things through, or *cintāmaya-paññā*.

This second kind of knowledge arises within the mind itself. People with a lot of education in the theoretical sciences work with their thinking. They think to the point where an idea appears as a picture in the mind, like an *uggaha-nimitta* (spontaneous image). When the picture appears in the mind, they may sketch it down on paper, and then experiment with physical objects to see if it works. If it doesn't work, they make adjustments, creating a new idea from their old idea—adjusting it a bit here, expanding it a bit there—keeping at it until they find what works in line with their aims.

If we think about this on a shallow level, it's really amazing. But if we think a little bit deeper, it's not so amazing at all. They take their starting point with something really simple: for example, how to make a small person large, or a large person small—something really, really simple. Then they take a mirror and bend it in, so that a tall person will turn into a small person. They bend it out, so that a small person will become tall. That's all to begin with. Then they keep thinking along these lines until they can take a faraway object and make it appear up close. The people who get these things started tend to be military strategists. They're the ones who usually get these ideas first. Another important branch of science is medicine. People in both these branches have to think deeper than people in general.

For example, people in ships out at sea got it into their heads that they'd like to see the ships approaching them from a distance. "How can we see them? How can we get their image to appear in our ship?" They worked on this idea until they succeeded. First they started out really simple-minded, just like us. Simple-minded in what way? They thought like a mirror, that's all, nothing special. They put a mirror up high on a mast and then had a series of mirrors pick up the image in the first mirror and send it on down into the ship. They didn't have to look in the first mirror. They could look at a little tiny mirror down in the ship and see ships approaching from far away. That's all they used in the beginning. After a while they made a single mirror in waves. When an image hit the top wave, the next wave picked it up and sent it on down the waves of the mirror into the ship. They kept thinking about this until now, no more: They have radar, a tiny little box that doesn't use a series of mirrors, and doesn't use a mirror in waves, but can still pull the image of a faraway ship and make it appear in your ship. This is how knowledge develops to a high level in the sciences.

As for medicine, doctors these days are researching into how they can keep people from dying. Lots of people are doing the research, but no one has found the solution. No matter how much research they do, people are still dying. They haven't succeeded in making people live longer than their ordinary span. This is another branch of knowledge that comes from thinking and not from textbooks.

And there's still another branch that's moving even further out, but how far they'll get is hard to say. These are the people who want to go and live on Mars. It must be really nice up there. But the chances of their succeeding are small. Why small? Because the people aren't really sincere. And why aren't they sincere? Because they're still unsure and uncertain. The idea isn't really clear in their heads. This uncertainty is what gets in the way of success.

So this is the second level of worldly knowledge, the level that comes from thinking and ideas, or *cintāmaya-paññā*.

But in the final analysis, neither of these two levels of knowledge can take us

beyond suffering and stress. They're the type of knowledge that creates bad kamma about 70 percent of the time. Only 30 percent of the time do they actually benefit the human race. Why only 30 percent? If another war gets started: total disaster. The kinds of knowledge that are really useful, that give convenience to human transportation and communication, are few and far between. For the most part, worldly knowledge is aimed at massive killing, at amassing power and influence. That's why it doesn't lead beyond suffering and stress, doesn't lead beyond birth, aging, illness, and death.

Take, for instance, the countries at present that are clever in building all kinds of weapons. They sell their weapons to other countries, and sometimes those other countries use the weapons to kill people in the countries that built them. There are countries that can't build their own weapons, yet they declare war on the countries who gave them military aid. That's about as far as the results of worldly knowledge can take you.

This is why the Buddha taught us a higher level of knowledge: Dhamma knowledge. Dhamma knowledge arises in two ways, through thinking and through not thinking. The first level of thinking is called appropriate attention (*yoniso manasikāra*). When we hear the Dhamma, we have to use appropriate attention to consider things before we're asked to believe them. For instance, suppose we want to make merit. We simply hear the word "merit" and we want some, but usually without stopping to think about what sorts of things are appropriate to give as donations, and what sorts of people are appropriate to receive our meritorious offerings. You have to consider things carefully: Consider yourself, then consider the object you want to give, and then consider the recipient of the object, to see if all these things go together. Even if they don't, you can still go ahead and give the object, of course, but it's best that you know what you're doing, that you're not acting out of delusion, not simply acting out of desire. If you want merit and simply act without giving appropriate attention to things, you're lacking the kind of discernment that comes from thinking, *cintāmaya-paññā*. You have to reflect on things on many levels if you want your act of merit-making to lead to purity. This is called doing good based on discernment.

This is what's meant by *kusala dhamma*, the quality of skillfulness. *Kusala dhamma* is a name for discernment, but usually we don't translate that way in Thai. We think of *kusala* as just another word for merit. Actually, *kusala* can be a noun, and it can also be an adjective. As a noun, it means the demeanor by which a person acts in good ways, in body, speech, and mind. As an adjective, it refers to this and that kind of act leading to this and that kind of purity. When we apply it to discernment, it means *kusalopāya*, a skillful strategy. When we do anything at all, we have to use our discernment to consider things from every angle before we act, so

that our actions will give complete results. This is called having a skillful strategy for giving rise to goodness within ourselves in full purity.

This is why the Buddha taught us to start out by using appropriate attention in considering things over and over, around and around many times. Only then—when things are really clear in the mind—should we act. It’s the nature of things that the more you walk back and forth on a path, the more smooth it gets worn. When the path gets worn really smooth, you can see the door at the far end. If you walk back and forth many times, the grass and weeds on the path all die. And knowledge arises: You learn which plants growing on the side of the path can be eaten and which ones can’t.

As the path gets worn more and more smooth, you gain all sorts of benefits. One, it doesn’t hurt your feet to walk on it. Two, you learn what’s growing along the side of the path, which plants can be eaten, and what uses there are for the plants that can’t. You might be able to make them into compost. As for the plants that can be eaten, if there’s more than enough for you to eat, you can take what’s left and sell it on the market. These are called side benefits. In addition, when you’re in a hurry, you can run easily along the path. If you need to rest, it doesn’t hurt to sit on it. If you’re sleepy, and the path is really smooth, you can lie right down on it. If a snake or an enemy crosses your path, you can run quickly in the other direction. So there are all sorts of good benefits. In the same way, when we plan to make merit or do anything skillfully, we should think things over, back and forth, many, many times before acting, and we’ll get good results. This is the first level of thinking, called *cintāmayapaññā*.

The next level goes deeper. It’s called directed thought (*vitakka*) and evaluation (*vicāra*). This level isn’t said to be a part of *cintāmayapaññā*, but it’s a similar sort of thing, only with a difference. That’s why it has to be given another name: *bhāvanā-maya-paññā*, the discernment that comes with meditation. When you meditate, you have to think. If you don’t think, you can’t meditate, because thinking forms a necessary part of meditation.

Take *jhāna*, for instance. Use your powers of directed thought to bring the mind to the object, and your powers of evaluation to be discriminating in your choice of an object. Examine the object of your meditation until you see that it’s just right for you. You can choose slow breathing, fast breathing, short breathing, long breathing, narrow breathing, broad breathing, hot, cool or warm breathing; a breath that goes only as far as the nose, a breath that goes only as far as the base of the throat, a breath that goes all the way down to the heart. When you’ve found an object that suits your taste, catch hold of it and make the mind one, focused on a single object. Once you’ve done this, evaluate your object. Direct your thoughts to making it stand out. Don’t let the mind leave the object. Don’t let the object leave the mind. Tell

yourself that it's like eating: Put the food in line with your mouth, put your mouth in line with the food. Don't miss. If you miss, and go sticking the food in your ear, under your chin, in your eye, or on your forehead, you'll never get anywhere in your eating.

So it is with your meditation. Sometimes the 'one' object of your mind takes a sudden sharp turn into the past, back hundreds of years. Sometimes it takes off into the future, and comes back with all sorts of things to clutter your mind. This is like taking your food, sticking it up over your head, and letting it fall down behind you—the dogs are sure to get it; or like bringing the food to your mouth and then tossing it out in front of you. When you find this happening, it's a sign that your mind hasn't been made snug with its object. Your powers of directed thought aren't firm enough. You have to bring the mind to the object and then keep after it to make sure it stays put. Like eating: Make sure the food is in line with the mouth and stick it right in. This is directed thought: The food is in line with the mouth, the mouth is in line with the food. You're sure it's food, and you know what kind it is—main course or dessert, coarse or refined.

Once you know what's what, and it's in your mouth, chew it right up. This is evaluation: examining, reviewing your meditation. Sometimes this comes under threshold concentration: examining a coarse object to make it more and more refined. If you find that the breath is long, examine long breathing. If it's short, examine short breathing. If it's slow, examine slow breathing—to see if the mind will stay with that kind of breathing, to see if that kind of breathing will stay with the mind, to see whether or not the breath is smooth and unhindered. This is evaluation.

When the mind gives rise to directed thought and evaluation, you have both concentration and discernment. Directed thought and singleness of preoccupation (*ekaggatārammaṇa*) fall under the heading of concentration; evaluation, under the heading of discernment. When you have both concentration and discernment, the mind is still and knowledge can arise. If there's too much evaluation, though, it can destroy your stillness of mind. If there's too much stillness, it can snuff out thought. You have to watch over the stillness of your mind to make sure you have things in the right proportions. If you don't have a sense of 'just right,' you're in for trouble. If the mind is too still, your progress will be slow. If you think too much, it'll run away with your concentration.

So observe things carefully. Again, it's like eating. If you go shoveling food into your mouth, you might end up choking to death. You have to ask yourself: Is it good for me? Can I handle it? Are my teeth strong enough? Some people have nothing but empty gums and yet they want to eat sugar cane: It's not normal. Some people, even though their teeth are aching and falling out, still want to eat crunchy foods. So it is with the mind: As soon as it's just a little bit still, we want to see this, know that—we want to take on more than we can handle. You first have to make sure that your

concentration is solidly based, that your discernment and concentration are properly balanced. This point is very important. Your powers of evaluation have to be ripe, your directed thought firm.

Say you have a water buffalo, tie it to a stake, and pound the stake deep into the ground. If your buffalo is strong, it just might walk or run away with the stake, and then it's all over the place. You have to know your buffalo's strength. If it's really strong, pound the stake so that it's firmly in the ground and keep watch over it. In other words, if you find that the obsessiveness of your thinking is getting out of hand, going beyond the bounds of mental stillness, fix the mind in place and make it extra still—but not so still that you lose track of things. If the mind is too quiet, it's like being in a daze. You don't know what's going on at all. Everything is dark, blotted out. Or else you have good and bad spells, sinking out of sight and then popping up again. This is concentration without directed thought or evaluation, with no sense of judgment: wrong concentration.

So you have to be observant. Use your judgment—but don't let the mind get carried away by its thoughts. Your thinking is something separate. The mind stays with the meditation object. Wherever your thoughts may go spinning, your mind is still firmly based—like holding onto a post and spinning around and around. You can keep on spinning, and yet it doesn't wear you out. But if you let go of the post and spin around three times, you get dizzy and—Bang!—fall flat on your face. So it is with the mind: If it stays with the singleness of its preoccupation, it can keep thinking and not get tired, not get harmed. Your thinking is *cintāmaya-paññā*; your stillness, *bhāvanā-maya-paññā*: They're right there together.

This is the strategy of skillfulness, discernment on the level of concentration practice. Thinking and stillness keep staying together like this. When we practice generosity, it comes under the level of appropriate attention; when we practice virtue, it comes under the level of appropriate attention; and when we practice concentration, we don't lose a beat—it comes under the same sort of principle, only more advanced: directed thought and evaluation. When you have directed thought and evaluation in charge of the mind, then the more you think, the more solid and sure the mind gets. The more you sit and meditate, the more you think. The mind becomes more and more firm until all the hindrances (*nīvaraṇa*) fall away. The mind no longer goes looking for concepts. Now it can give rise to knowledge.

The knowledge here isn't ordinary knowledge. It washes away your old knowledge. You don't want the knowledge that comes from ordinary thinking and reasoning: Let go of it. You don't want the knowledge that comes from directed thought and evaluation: Stop. Make the mind quiet. Still. When the mind is still and unhindered, this is the essence of all that's meritorious and skillful. When your mind is on this level, it isn't attached to any concepts at all. All the concepts you've known

—dealing with the world or the Dhamma, however many or few—are washed away. Only when they're washed away can new knowledge arise.

This is why we're taught not to hold onto concepts—all the labels and names we have for things. You have to let yourself be poor. It's when people are poor that they become ingenious and resourceful. If you don't let yourself be poor, you'll never gain discernment. In other words, you don't have to be afraid of being stupid or of missing out on things. You don't have to be afraid that you've hit a dead end. You don't want any of the insights you've gained from listening to others or from reading books, because they're concepts and therefore inconstant. You don't want any of the insights you've gained by reasoning and thinking, because they're concepts and therefore not-self. Let all these insights disappear, leaving just the mind, firmly intent, leaning neither to the left, toward self-affliction or being displeased; nor to the right, toward sensual indulgence or being pleased. Keep the mind still, quiet, neutral, impassive—set tall. And there you are: right concentration.

When right concentration arises in the mind, it has a shadow. When you can catch sight of the shadow appearing, that's *vipassanā*: insight meditation. *Vipassanā-ñāṇa* is the first branch of knowledge and skill in the Buddha's teaching. The second branch is *iddhividhī*, the power of mind over matter. The third is *manomayiddhi*, the power of mind-made images. The fourth is *dibba-cakkhu*, clairvoyance. The fifth is *dibba-sota*, clairaudience. The sixth is *cetopariya-ñāṇa*, the ability to read minds. The seventh is *pubbenivāsānussati-ñāṇa*, knowledge of previous lifetimes. And the eighth: *āsavakkhaya-ñāṇa*, knowledge of the ending of mental fermentations. All eight of these branches are forms of knowledge and skill that arise from concentration. People without concentration can't gain them: That's an absolute guarantee. No matter how smart or clever they may be, they can't gain these forms of knowledge. They have to fall under the power of ignorance.

These eight branches of knowledge come from right concentration. When they arise they're not called thoughts or ideas. They're called right views. What looks wrong to you is really wrong. What looks right is really right. If what looks right is really wrong, that's wrong view. If what looks wrong is really right, again—wrong view. With right view, though, right looks right and wrong looks wrong.

To put it in terms of cause and effect, you see the four noble truths. You see stress, and it really is stressful. You see the cause of stress arising, and that it's really causing stress. These are noble truths: absolutely, undeniably, indisputably true. You see that stress has a cause. Once the cause arises, there has to be stress. As for the way to the disbanding of stress, you see that the path you're following will, without a doubt, lead to nibbāna. Whether or not you go all the way, what you see is correct. This is right view. And as for the disbanding of stress, you see that there really is such a thing. You see that as long as you're on the path, stress does in fact fall away.

When you come to realize the truth of these things in your heart, that's *vipassanā-ñāṇa*.

To put it even more simply: You see that all things, inside as well as out, are undependable. The body is undependable, aging is undependable, death is undependable. They're slippery characters, constantly changing on you. To see this is to see inconstancy. Don't let yourself be pleased by inconstancy. Don't let yourself be upset. Keep the mind neutral, on an even keel. That's what's meant by *vipassanā*.

Sometimes inconstancy makes us happy, sometimes it makes us sad. Say we hear that a person we don't like is going to be demoted, or is sick or dying. It makes us gleeful, and we can't wait for him or her to die. His body is impermanent, his life is uncertain—it can change—but we're glad. That's a defilement. Say we hear that a son or daughter has become wealthy, influential, and famous, and we become happy. Again, our mind has strayed from the noble path. It's not firmly in right concentration. We have to make the mind neutral: not thrilled over things, not upset over things, not thrilled when our plans succeed, not upset when they don't. When we can make the mind neutral like this, that's the neutrality of right view. We see what's wrong, what's right, and try to steer the mind away from the wrong and toward the right. This is called right resolve, part of *vipassanā-ñāṇa*.

The same holds true with stress, whether it's our stress and pain, or somebody else's. Say we hear that an enemy is suffering. 'Glad to hear it,' we think. 'Hope they hurry up and die.' The heart has tilted. Say we hear that a friend has become wealthy, and we become happy; or a son or daughter is ill, and we become sad. Our mind has fallen in with suffering and stress. Why? Because we don't have any knowledge. We're unskilled. The mind isn't centered. In other words, it's not in right concentration. We have to look after the mind. Don't let it fall in with stress. Whatever suffers, let it suffer, but don't let the mind suffer with it. The people in the world may be pained, but the mind isn't pained along with them. Pain may arise in the body, but the mind isn't pained along with it. Let the body go ahead and suffer, but the mind doesn't suffer. Keep the mind neutral. Don't be pleased by pleasure, either—pleasure is a form of stress, you know. How so? It can change. It can rise and fall. It can be high and low. It can't last. That's stress. Pain is also stress: double stress. When you gain this sort of insight into stress—when you really see stress—*vipassanā* has arisen in the mind.

As for *anattā*, not-self: Once we've examined things and seen them for what they really are, we don't make claims, we don't display influence, we don't try to show that we have the right or the power to bring things that are not-self under our control. No matter how hard we try, we can't prevent birth, aging, illness, and death. If the body is going to be old, let it be old. If it's going to hurt, let it hurt. If it has to die, let it die. Don't be pleased by death, either your own or that of others. Don't be

upset by death, your own or that of others. Keep the mind neutral. Unruffled. Unfazed. This is *saṅkhārūpekkhā-ñāṇa*: letting *saṅkhāras*—all fabrications—follow their own inherent nature. The mind like this is in *vipassanā*.

This is the first branch of knowledge—*vipassanā*—in brief: You see that all things fashioned are inconstant, stressful, and not-self. You can disentangle them from your grasp. You can let go. This is where it gets good. How so? You don't have to wear yourself out, lugging *saṅkhāras* around.

To be attached means to carry a load, and there are five heaps (*khandhas*) we carry:

rūpūpādānakkhandho: physical phenomena are the first load;

vedanūpādānakkhandho: feelings that we're attached to are another;

saññūpādānakkhandho: the concepts and labels that we claim are ours are a pole for carrying a load on our shoulder;

saṅkhārūpādānakkhandho: the mental fabrications that we hang onto and think are ours;

viññāṇūpādānakkhandho: our attachment to sensory consciousness.

Go ahead: Carry them around. Hang one load from your left leg and one from your right. Put one on your left shoulder and one on your right. Put the last load on your head. And now: Carry them wherever you go—clumsy, encumbered, and comical.

bhārā have pañcakkhandhā

Go ahead and carry them. The five khandhas are a heavy load,

bhārahāro ca puggalo

and as individuals we burden ourselves with them.

bhārādānaṃ dukkhaṃ loke

Carry them everywhere you go,

and you waste your time suffering in the world.

The Buddha taught that whoever lacks discernment, whoever is unskilled, whoever doesn't practice concentration leading to *vipassanā-ñāṇa*, will have to be burdened with stress, will always be loaded down. It's pathetic. It's a shame. They'll never get away. When they're loaded down like this, it's really pathetic. Their legs are burdened, their shoulders burdened—and where are they going? Three steps forward and two steps back. Soon they'll get discouraged, and then after a while they'll pick themselves up and get going again.

Now, when we see inconstancy—that all fabrications, whether within us or

without, are undependable; when we see that they're stressful; when we see that they're not our self, that they simply whirl around in and of themselves: When we gain these insights, we can put down our burdens, i.e., let go of our attachments. We can put down the past—i.e., stop dwelling in it. We can let go of the future—i.e., stop yearning for it. We can let go of the present—i.e., stop claiming it as the self. Once these three big baskets have fallen from our shoulders, we can walk with a light step. We can even dance. We're beautiful. Wherever we go, people will be glad to know us. Why? Because we're not encumbered. Whatever we do, we can do with ease. We can walk, run, dance and sing—all with a light heart. We're Buddhism's beauty, a sight for sore eyes, graceful wherever we go. No longer burdened, no longer encumbered, we can be at our ease. This is *vipassanā-ñāṇa*: the first branch of knowledge.

So. Now that we've cleared away these splinters and thorns so that everything is level and smooth, we can relax. And now we're ready for the knowledge we can use as a weapon. What's the knowledge we use as a weapon? *Iddhividhī*. We can display powers in one way or another, and give rise to miraculous things by way of the body, by way of speech, or by way of the mind. We have powers we can use in doing the work of the religion. That's called *iddhividhī*. But in the Canon they describe it as different kinds of walking: walking through the water without getting wet, walking through fire without getting hot, staying out in the rain without getting chilled, staying out in the wind without getting cold, resilient enough to withstand wind, rain, and sun. If you're young, you can make yourself old; if old, you can make yourself young. If you're tall, you can make yourself short; if short, you can make yourself tall. You can change your body in all kinds of ways.

This is why the Buddha was able to teach all kinds of people. If he was teaching old people, he'd make his body look old. Old people talking with old people can have a good time because there's no distrust or suspicion. If he met up with pretty young women, he could make himself look young. He'd enjoy talking with them; they'd enjoy talking with him and not get bored. This is why the Dhamma he taught appealed to all classes of people. He could adapt his body to fit with whatever type of society he found himself in. For instance, if he met up with children, he'd talk about the affairs of children, act in a childlike way. If he met up with old people, he'd talk about the affairs of old people. If he met up with young men and women, he'd talk about the affairs of young men and women. They'd all enjoy listening to what he had to say, develop a sense of faith, become Buddhists, and even ordain. This is called *iddhividhī*.

Next is *manomayiddhi*, power in the area of the mind. The mind acquires power. What kind of power? You can go wherever you want. If you want to go sightseeing in hell, you can. If you want to get away from human beings, you can go

sightseeing in hell. It's nice and relaxing. You can play with the denizens of hell, fool around with the denizens of hell. Any of them who have only a little bad kamma can come up and chat with you, to send word back to their relatives. Once you get back from touring around hell you can tell the relatives to make merit in the dead person's name.

Or, if you want, you can travel in the world of common animals and chat with mynah birds, owls—any kind of bird—or with four-footed animals, two-footed animals. You can go into the forests, into the wilds, and converse with the animals there. It's a lot of fun, not like talking with people. Talking with people is hard; talking with animals is easy. You don't have to say a lot, simply think in the mind: Tell them stories, ask them questions, like, "Now that you're an animal, what do you eat? Do you get enough to stay full and content?" You find that you have a lot of companions there, people who used to be your friends and relatives.

Or, if you want, you can travel in the world of the hungry ghosts. The world of the hungry ghosts is even more fun. Hungry ghosts come in all different shapes and sizes—really entertaining, the hungry ghosts. Some of them have heads as big as large water jars, but their mouths are just like the eye of a needle: That's all, no bigger than the eye of a needle! Some of them have legs six yards long, but hands only half a foot. They're amazing to watch, just like a cartoon. Some of them have lower lips with no upper lips, some of them are missing their lips altogether, with their teeth exposed all the time. There are all kinds of hungry ghosts. Some of them have big, bulging eyes, the size of coconuts; others have fingernails as long as palm leaves. You really ought to see them. Some of them are so fat they can't move; others so thin that they're nothing but bones. And sometimes the different groups get into battles, biting each other, hitting each other. That's the hungry ghosts for you. Really entertaining.

This is called *manomayiddhi*. When the mind is firmly established, you can go see these things. Or you can go to the land of the nāgas, the different lands on the human level—sometimes, when you get tired of human beings, you can go visit the heavens: the heaven of the Four Great Kings, the heaven of the Guardians of the Hours, the Thirty-three gods, all the way up there to the Brahmā worlds. The mind can go without any problem. This is called *manomayiddhi*. It's a lot of fun. Your defilements are gone, your work is done, you've got enough food to eat and money to spend, so you can go traveling to see the sights and soak up the breezes. That's *manomayiddhi*.

Dibba-cakkhu: clairvoyance. You gain eyes on two levels. The outer level is called the *maṅsa-cakkhu*, the eye of the flesh, which enables you to look at human beings in the world, devas in the world. The eye of discernment allows you to examine the defilements of human beings: those with coarse defilements, those with

thick defilements, those with faith in the Buddha's teachings, those with none, those who have the potential to be taught, those with no potential at all. You can consider them with your internal discernment. This is called *paññā-cakkhu*, the eye of discernment. In this way you have eyes on two levels.

Most of us have eyes on only one level, the eye of the flesh, while the inner eye doesn't arise. And how could it arise? You don't wash the sleep out of your eyes. What are the bits of sleep in your eyes? Sensual desire, an enormous hunk. Ill will, another big hunk. Sloth and drowsiness, a hunk the size of a hammer head. Your mind calms down and begins to grow still, but this hunk of sleep in your eyes is so heavy it makes you nod. This is called sloth and drowsiness. All you can think about is lying down to sleep. Then there's restlessness and anxiety, another hunk of sleep; and uncertainty, still another. When these things get stuck in the heart, how can it possibly be bright? It's dark on all sides. Now, when you develop your meditation and bring the mind to stillness, that's called getting the sleep out of your eyes. Directed thought loosens it up, and evaluation rinses it out. Once your eyes gets rinsed and washed clean this way, they can see clearly. The eye of your mind becomes the eye of discernment. This is called *dibba-cakkhu*.

Dibba-sota: clairaudience. There are two levels of ears as well. The outer ears are the ones made of skin. The inner ear is the ear of the heart. The ear of the heart doesn't appear for the same sort of reason: It's full of earwax. You never clean it out. You don't build up any goodness in the area of the mind. The mind isn't centered in concentration. When it's not in concentration, and hears an attractive sound, it can't stay still. Your ears are full of wax. You hear people gossiping or cursing each other out, and you love to hear it. This is a humongous hunk of wax stuck in your ear. As for the Dhamma, you're not really interested in listening, which is why there's nothing but earwax: earwax stuck in your mind, earwax all over everything outside. This is why your powers of clairaudience don't arise.

Clairaudience is really refreshing. You don't have to waste your time listening. If you feel like listening, you can hear anything. What the hungry ghosts are talking about, what common animals are talking about, what the devas are talking about—how fantastic it is to be in heaven—you can hear it all, unless you don't want to listen. Like a radio: If it's turned on, you can hear it loud and clear. If it becomes a nuisance, you don't have to keep it on. If you have this skill, you can turn it on to listen for the fun of it; if you don't want to listen, you can turn it off in an instant. This is called clairaudience, one of the skills of concentration practice.

Another skill is *cetopariya-ñāṇa*, the ability to read minds, to see if people are thinking good thoughts or bad, high, low, crude, evil: You can use this insight to know. This is called *cetopariya-ñāṇa*, an important skill.

Then there's *pubbenivāsānussati-ñāṇa*, the ability to remember previous lives,

and *āsavakkhaya-ñāṇa*, the ability to clean out the mind, washing away all the ignorance, craving, and clinging inside it. You can keep ignorance from arising in the heart. You can keep craving from taking charge of the heart. You can make sure that there's no clinging or attachment. When you can let go of your defilements—*kāma-jaho*, when you're not stuck on sensual objects or sensual desires; *diṭṭhi-jaho*, when you're not stuck on views and opinions; *avijjā-jaho*, when you don't mistake ignorance for knowledge and can let it go without any attachment—when you don't latch onto evil, when you don't latch onto your own goodness, when you can spit out evil and goodness, without holding onto them as your own, letting them go in line with their nature: That's called *āsavakkhaya-ñāṇa*, the knowledge of the ending of the fermentations in the mind. This is the third noble truth: the truth of cessation, achieved through the practices that give rise to knowledge and skill.

These are the skills that arise from meditation practice. They're *uparima-vijjā*, higher learning in the area of the religion. When you've got them, you can be at your ease—at ease if you die, at ease if you don't. You don't have to build a rocket to go to Mars. You can live right here in the world, and nothing will be able to harm you. In other words, you know what things are dangerous, what things are harmful, and so you leave them alone and don't touch them. This way you can live in safety and peace. The heart can stay blooming and bright like this at all times.

This is why we should be earnest and strict with ourselves in the practice, so that we can achieve the aims we all want. Here I've explained the eight knowledges in brief. If I were to go into detail, there would be lots more to say. To boil it down: All these forms of knowledge come from stillness. If the mind isn't still, they don't arise. At best, if the mind isn't still, you can gain knowledge only from listening, reading, or thinking things over. But the person who can stop thinking, stop pondering, and yet still be intelligent: That's something really amazing, something that goes against the currents of the world. Normally, people in the world have to study and read, think and ponder, if they want to be intelligent. But with the Dhamma, you have to stop thinking, stop writing, stop memorizing, stop doing in order to gain the highest level of knowledge. This is something that goes against the currents of the world and that human beings find hard to do.

But when you become intent in the practice that gives rise to knowledge, you'll succeed in line with your aspirations.

Having talked on the theme of *vijjā-carāṇa-sampanno*, I'll end right here.

Consciousnesses

In all our activities, persistence and endurance are things we have to foster within ourselves at all times. There have been cases, both in the past and in the present, where people with little education—who couldn't even read or write—have thrown themselves into the effort of the practice and discover that they can read and even memorize whole passages. Some of them have even earned the right to sit for the government exams—this sort of thing has happened. So we should keep reminding ourselves that everything in the world comes from effort and persistence. No matter what kind of person you are—very smart or very stupid, with a poor education and poor social skills—as long as you have these qualities of persistence and endurance in your heart, there's hope for you. As for people who are very smart, sophisticated, and well-educated: If they lack effort and persistence, they won't be able to succeed in their aims, in terms either of the world or of the Dhamma. Especially for those of us who aim at the highest happiness, or nibbāna: Effort and persistence are the magnets that will pull us toward our goal.

Now, when effort and persistence are present within us, then endurance will have to be present as well. Why? When you put effort and persistence into something, there are bound to be obstacles that get in your way. If you're really persistent, those obstacles will have to disappear, which means that you've been using endurance as well. If you have effort but no endurance, you won't get anywhere. If you have persistence, that means that your effort has endurance, too.

So we should regard effort as coming first, and endurance second. Once these qualities are constantly working together within you, then no matter how deep or faraway your aims may be, the Buddha has forecast that you'll attain them in line with your hopes. This is why he said, as a way of ensuring that we'll make the proper effort, that *Viriyyena dukkhamacceti*: It's through effort and persistence that people gain release from the world and reach nibbāna. Effort and persistence are our roots, or the magnets that will pull us to nibbāna.

That's what the Buddha said. But our own wrong views, which come from the power of defilement, take issue with his teaching. In other words, they don't believe it. They believe themselves, by and large, and aren't willing to believe the teachings

of the wise. This is why we have to keep stumbling and crawling along in this world. We simply believe in ourselves, in our own views, but “ourselves” is made up of defilement. This defilement is the obstacle that keeps us from believing the Buddha when he tells us that it’s through effort and persistence that people will gain release from suffering and stress. We simply hear the words but don’t understand them. What we hear goes only as far as our ears and doesn’t enter into our hearts. And this means that we’re working at cross purposes. Even within a single you, you’re working at cross purposes. What you hear is one thing, what you think is something else, and they don’t go together. When this happens, you start having doubts. Uncertainty. Things aren’t clear to the heart. Your practice turns into nothing but ups and downs, right things and wrong.

This is because the heart of every person... Of course, there’s only one heart in every person, but how is it that the heart has so many issues? This is a really complicated question. Why? Because if we look only on the surface, we’ll say that each person has only one mind. That’s all we know. But if we look in another way, the texts tell us that there are so many mental consciousnesses that they can’t be counted. This makes us wonder: How can that be? And when we turn from the texts and really look at ourselves, we’ll see that the body of a human being doesn’t have only one consciousness. There are lots of consciousnesses in there. Your own real consciousness, you can hardly find at all.

You may have up to three kinds of consciousness inside your body. The first is your own consciousness, which entered your mother’s womb at the time of your conception, without any other consciousnesses mixing in with it. There were lots of other consciousnesses around it at the time, but they all died out before they could take birth. You can’t count how many there are at a time like that, but in the fight to take birth, only one of them has the merit to make it, and the rest all fall away in huge numbers by the wayside. So when we make it into a human womb at the time of conception, we can chalk it up to our merit that we’ve been able to establish a foothold for ourselves in the human world.

Once our consciousness gets established like this, it begins to develop. The body develops. As it develops, other consciousnesses start infiltrating without our realizing it. If you want to see a really clear example, look at the human body after it takes birth. Sometimes a worm two feet long can come out of your intestines. What does that come from, if not from a consciousness? Or how about germs? Some diseases are actually caused by little animals in your body that cause swellings and tumors. As traditional doctors used to say, there are eight families and twelve clans of disease-causing animals in our body. What do they come from? From consciousness, that’s what. If there were no consciousness, how could there be animals? Animals arise from consciousness. And some of them you can clearly see, as they come crawling in huge numbers out of wounds, out your ears and eyes, nose,

teeth, anus, whole swarms of them. So what are they? They're a form of consciousness.

This kind of consciousness you can see clearly, but there's another group of consciousnesses that are more insidious, that don't have a body you can see. Only if you meditate and gain psychic powers can you see them. That's the third kind of consciousness inhabiting your body.

So altogether there are three: Your own consciousness, and there's only one of that. And then all the many consciousnesses lurking in your body, so many that you can't say exactly how many there are. The ones with bodies you can see are more than many. And as for the ones with no bodies, but are living in your body, there's no telling how many there are.

Now, it's because there are so many of them, with so many agendas, that the Buddha tells us not to go joining in with them. They're not us, not ours, none of our business. Sometimes we sit around, with absolutely nothing wrong, and all of a sudden one thing starts leading to another inside the mind. We don't want it to happen, but the mind seems to take on a mind of its own. That's a clear case of these consciousnesses, these crazy consciousnesses, getting into the act, seeping into our own consciousness and making us fall in line with them. These consciousnesses that lurk in our bodies without any bodies of their own: They can get angry, too, you know. They can get greedy and deluded, they can feel love and hate, just like us. Once they start feeling things like this, and they're right next to us, our own consciousness follows along with them, without our even realizing it. This is why there are so many issues in the heart.

It's entirely possible, you know. Suppose, for instance, that two of your children are quarreling right in front of you. That's enough to put you in a bad mood yourself. Even though you didn't get involved in the quarrel along with them, there's a connection, and so you end up with a lot of hurt feelings, too. This is why we're taught, *Yam ve sevati tādiso*: You end up being like the people you hang around with.

So we're taught to analyze things. There are lots of minds in your mind. Some of them are animal minds. It's not your mind that gets worked up; their minds are the ones getting worked up, but they're right next to yours, and as a result you start tilting in their direction. This is why we're taught that they're *anattā*, not-self. Consciousness is not-self. So don't get involved with it. We have to use effort, persistence, endurance, to keep things under our thumb.

As soon as these things disappear, that's when the heart can be bright and at ease. Because actually, when things like this arise in the heart, it's not our doing. It's their doing. If it were really our own doing, then when things like this appear in the heart, we should feel happy and content. When they disappear, we should feel happy

and content. But actually, when things arise in the heart, there are only some cases where we're delighted about what's happening. There are other cases where, no, we're not happy at all. There's a conflict in the mind. Sometimes there are huge numbers of these other consciousnesses, and they have lots of agendas of their own. We get outnumbered and start falling in line with them. When this happens we do things wrong and say things wrong and end up sorry afterwards. This is because we act in line with them, and not in line with our own true heart.

So you have to keep this point in mind if you want to understand consciousness. The Buddha tells us in really simple terms, but we don't understand him. He says, "Consciousness isn't our self." Only four words, and yet we can't understand them. And how can we expect to understand them? Our hearts aren't established in concentration, so everything we hear gets all confused. All we can think is that consciousness is our mind. That's all we can think, so we start aligning ourselves with everything, taking sides: This is us. That's us. We start siding with everything, which is why we don't understand consciousness.

Now when we start considering things carefully to see what our own real consciousness is like, we'll check to see if there's anything in there that's honest and loyal and true to us. If there's something that you like to do—you realize it's proper, you know it's right—and you go ahead and do it to completion, then that's something you can trust. But there are other things that you don't really like—part of you wants to do them, another part doesn't—so when there's a split like this, you should realize that you've been associating with fools, with certain kinds of consciousnesses that have come to deceive you. That's when you have to resist, to persist, to pen that thinking in. In other words, you have to focus on contemplating that particular consciousness to see what kind of consciousness it is. Is it your own consciousness? Or is it another consciousness that has snuck in to trip up your consciousness so that you fall in line with it? If you fall in line with it and end up doing things that you later regret, that's called getting fooled by consciousness.

When the Buddha tells us that consciousness isn't our self, that it's *anattā*, we don't understand what he says. There's one sort of consciousness that's really ours. The consciousness that's really ours is loyal, honest, and true to us. Suppose you make up your mind that tomorrow you want to go to the monastery to hear a sermon. Now, going to the monastery to hear a sermon is something good that you like to do. You really benefit from it. You're really clear on this point. But by the time tomorrow comes, your mind has changed because—it's simply changed. When this happens, you should realize that your consciousness has gotten mixed up with some other kind of consciousness. That's how you have to look at things. Don't think that it's really your consciousness. The new thought that repeals your old thought isn't really you. It's cheating you. It's not really you. Normally, if something is really you, it's not going to cheat you. It has to be honest and loyal and devoted to you. Once

you make up your mind to do something good, you have to stick with it until you succeed and feel happy afterwards. That sort of thinking is your own real consciousness. It's honest. It doesn't deceive you.

Most people, though, deceive themselves. Actually, they don't deceive themselves. They're perfectly all right, but these other consciousnesses seep into them, so that they end up getting deceived. This is why the Buddha teaches us, *Asevanā ca bālānam*: Don't go associating with fools. If you hang around with that kind of consciousness often, you'll end up suffering. So—*paññānañca*—associate with wise people. Make your mind firmly settled and established. If you think of doing something good, make it good all the way until you succeed in line with your aims. That's you. Don't let any other consciousnesses in to meddle with your affairs. If you run across any thoughts that would make you abandon your efforts, realize that you've been associating with fools, associating with consciousnesses aside from yourself. That's how you should look at things.

Now, if we were to go into detail on all the consciousnesses living in our bodies, there would be lots to say. Basically, there are two kinds: those whose thoughts are in line with ours, and those whose thoughts are not. For example, when we want to do good, there are hungry ghosts and spirits that would like to do good, too, but they can't, because they don't have a body. So they take up residence in our body in order to do good along with us. But there are other spirits who want to destroy whatever good we're trying to do. They were probably our enemies in past lives. We probably oppressed them, imprisoned them, or had them put to death. We got in the way of the good they were trying to do, so they've got some old scores to settle. They want to block the path we're trying to practice so that we don't make any progress. They come whispering into our ears: "Stop. Stop. You're going to die. You're going to starve. It's going to rain too hard, the sun's too hot, it's too early, too late," they go on and on. These are the consciousnesses that come as our enemies. There are others that used to be our relatives and friends. They want to do good but they can't, so they take up residence in our body so that they can bow down to the Buddha and chant along with us.

Because of all this, there are times when our hearts are like monsters and ogres. We can't imagine why it's happening, and yet it's happening, even though we don't want it to. Then there are other times when our hearts are like devas—so sweet and good-tempered that other people can curse our mother's whole family and we won't get mad. Then there are other times when there's no call for anger and yet we manage to get angry in really nasty, ugly ways. That's the way it is with these consciousnesses: all very confused and confusing, and they come seeping into our bodies. That's how you should look at things.

There's yet another group of consciousnesses: the ones who have come to

collect old kamma debts. They're the germs that eat away at our flesh—at our nose, our ears—to ruin our looks. They eat away at our lower lip, exposing our teeth, making us embarrassed and ashamed. Sometimes they eat away at one of our ears, or eat away at our nose all the way up to the forehead. Sometimes they eat at our eyes, our hands, our feet. Sometimes they eat away at our whole body, making our skin diseased.

These are kamma debt collectors. In the past we made life miserable for them, so this time around they're ganging up to make us squirm. The one's that are really easy to see are the worms that help eat the food in our intestines. In the past we probably ate their flesh and skin, so this time around they're going to eat ours. They eat, eat, eat—eat everything. “Whatever you've got, you bastard, I'm going to eat it all.” That's what they say. How are we ever going to get rid of them? They eat our outsides where we can see them, so we chase them away and they go running inside, to eat in our stomach and intestines. That's when it really gets bad: We can't even see them, and they're even harder to get rid of.

So they keep making us squirm as they keep eating, eating away: eating in our intestines, eating in our stomach, eating our kidneys, our liver, our lungs, eating in our blood vessels, eating our body hairs, eating everything all over the place. They eat outside and turn into skin diseases. They eat inside as worms and germs. And they themselves get into fights—after all, there are lots of different gangs in there. Even just the worms have 108 clans. So when there are so many of them, they're bound to quarrel, creating a ruckus in our home. How can we ever hope to withstand them? Sometimes we fall in with them without realizing it. How can that happen? Because there are so many of them that we can't resist.

These living beings in our body: Sometimes they get angry and get into fights. Sometimes they run into one another on the street and start biting and hitting each other, so that we itch in front and itch in back—scritch scritch, scratch scratch: The worms have gotten into a gang war. They cruise around in our body the way we do outside. The blood vessels are like roads, so there are little animals cruising down the blood vessels. This one comes this way, that one comes that, they meet each other and start talking. Sometimes they have real conversations that know no end, so they spend the night there, eating right there and excreting right there until a swelling starts: That's a little shack for the beings, the consciousnesses in our body. This is how things keep happening.

Our body is like a world. Just as the world has oceans, mountains, trees, vines, land, so it is with the body. Each blood vessel is a road for living beings. They travel down our blood vessels, down our breath channels. Some vessels get closed off, like a dead end road. Others stay open. When they're open, the blood flows, the breath flows, like the water in rivers and streams. When they flow, boats can travel along them. When there are boats, there are beings in the boats. Sometimes the boats crash

into one another. That's why we have aches and pains in our legs and arms and along our breath channels.

So go ahead: keep rubbing them and massaging them—it's all an affair of the consciousnesses inhabiting our bodies. Some of them live in our eye sockets, some live in our earholes, some in our nostrils, some in our mouth, our throat, our gums. They're just like people, only we can't understand their language. They have jobs and careers, families and homes, and places to vacation all over our body.

These consciousnesses in our bodies sometimes get into battles and wars, just like red ants and black ants. Sometimes lizards and toads get into battles—I've seen it happen. It's the same in our body, so where are we going to go to escape from it all? The beings in our eyes lay claim to our eyes as their home. The ones in our ears claim our ears as their home. The ones in our blood vessels claim those as their home. Sometimes their claims overlap, so they get into feuds. As the texts say, there are feelings that arise from consciousness. This is why there are so many things that can happen to the body. Some kinds of consciousness give rise to disease, some are just waiting their chance. For instance, some kinds of consciousness without bodies hang around our blood vessels waiting for wounds and boils to develop. That's their chance to take on bodies as worms and germs. As for the ones who don't yet have bodies, they travel around as chills and thrills and itches and aches all over our body. It's all an affair of consciousnesses.

In short, there are three classes in all—three clans, and all of them great big ones. The first are the living beings with bodies that live in our body. Then there are the consciousnesses that don't have bodies of their own, but inhabit our body. Then there's our own consciousness. So all in all there are three. These three types of consciousness get all mixed up together, so we don't know which kinds of consciousness belong to animals with bodies, which kinds belong to beings that don't yet have bodies, and which kind of consciousness is our own. We don't know. When we don't know this, how can we know the five aggregates? "*Viññāṇakkhandho*" that we chant every morning—how can we know it? All we know is "consciousness, consciousness," but our own consciousness is so slack and limp that it's like a rope dragging on the ground. It's the same with the phrase, "Consciousness is not-self." All we know is the words they say.

Only when we develop discernment from concentrating the mind will we be able to understand consciousness. That's when we'll be able to understand the eighteen properties, starting with: "*Cakkhu-dhātu, rūpa-dhātu, cakkhu-viññāṇa-dhātu*"—eye property, form property, eye-consciousness property. To understand these three things you need the kind of knowledge that comes from concentration. For example, how many kinds of consciousness are there in our eye? When a form appears to the eye and there's consciousness of the form—is it really our

consciousness, or is it the consciousness of some other being without a body that's getting into the act? Or is it the consciousness of a being with a body getting in our way, making us doubtful and unsure? The three kinds of consciousness that arise at the eye, that see forms: how many different ways do they react? And are those reactions really a result of our own consciousness, or of the consciousness of beings with bodies inhabiting our body? Or are they the result of consciousnesses without bodies. We don't know. We haven't the slightest idea. When we don't know even this much, how are we going to know, "*Cakkhu-dhātu, rūpa-dhātu, cakkhu-viññāṇa-dhātu*"? There's no way. We have no insight, no knowledge, no discernment at all.

"*Sota-dhātu*": our ear, which is the basis for ear-consciousness to arise. Which kind of ear-consciousness arises first? Do we know? No, not at all. Is it our own consciousness that goes out to listen to sounds? Is it the consciousness of some little animal lurking in our ears? Or is it the consciousness of some being that doesn't even have a body? Or is it really our own consciousness? Examine things carefully so that you know this before anything else. You can tell from the results: There are some kinds of sounds that you like to hear, but you know that they're not right, and yet you still like to listen to them. You should realize when this happens that it's not your consciousness that's listening, because it's not loyal to you. There are other kinds of sounds that are good and right, but you don't like them. That's another case when it's not your consciousness. Something else has probably infiltrated and gotten in the way.

You have to watch out for this carefully, because there are a lot of different groups of consciousness with their own agendas. Sometimes you listen to other people speaking. What they say is true and right, but you don't like it. So you go assuming that this business of liking and disliking is yours. You never stop to think that consciousness is not-self. The fact that you don't stop to think is why your ears are so deaf. You're not listening. Some hungry ghost is listening in your stead, without your even realizing it. So how are you going to remember anything? Your mind isn't here with the body in the present, so it's not listening. Hungry ghosts are listening, dead spirits are listening, angry demons are in the way, so as a result you yourself don't know, don't understand, what's being said. Ghosts and demons are doing all the listening and thinking, but you assume it's all you. This is why the Buddha said that ignorance blinds our eyes and deafens our ears. It's all an affair of consciousnesses.

"*Cakkhu-dhātu, rūpa-dhātu, cakkhu-viññāṇa-dhātu*": There are these three things. The instant the eye sees a form, what consciousness goes out to look? Have you ever stopped to take notice? No. Never. So you don't know whether it's really your own consciousness or the consciousness of an animal lurking in your eye, whether it's an animal with a body or one without a body. You don't even know

whether these things really exist. When you don't know this, what can you hope to know? "*Sota-dhātu, sadda-dhātu, sota-viññāṇa-dhātu*": You don't know this one either.

And so on down the list—"*Ghāna-dhātu*": The nose is where smells are known and nose-consciousness arises. Sometimes our consciousness likes certain kinds of smells, smells that are proper in line with the Dhamma. So we search out and find those smells to make merit. Other times we give up. We like the smells, but we don't follow through. We don't carry through with our own thoughts. Then there are certain kinds of smells that we don't like, but we still go after them. Some kinds we like, but we don't follow through. There are all kinds of issues surrounding smells.

Smells appear in our nose, and consciousness appears in our nose as well. Who knows how many hundreds of kinds of consciousness are living in there? Sometimes they know things before we do. They send us all kinds of false reports to deceive us. They whisper to us, keeping us misinformed so that we believe them. As a result, we close our eyes and follow along with them, like a bear getting honey from a bee's nest. It just closes its eyes and keeps slurping away, slurping away at the honey. It can't open its eyes because the bees are going to sting out its eye sockets. The same with us: When consciousness comes whispering, "Go. Go," we go along with it, thinking that we're the ones who feel the need to go. Actually, we don't know what it is that comes slipping in to pull us around, like a medium possessed by a spirit.

Jivhā-dhātu: the tongue. The tongue is where tastes arise. Tastes come and make contact at the tongue and an awareness arises, called consciousness. But the consciousness that arises: Exactly which consciousness arises first? There are living beings that reside in our taste buds, and they have consciousness too, you know. They may know even more than we do. For example, say that there's food that we know is bad for us to eat, but there's the desire to eat it. Why is there the desire? Sometimes we don't want to eat it, but the consciousness of some living being wants to eat it. If we eat it, we know it'll make us sick, but there's still the desire to eat it. This is called getting fooled by flavors. Getting fooled by consciousness. There are three sorts of consciousness, as we've already mentioned, so which consciousness is getting in the act? Is it our consciousness or not? We've never stopped to check. Is it the kind of consciousness that doesn't yet have a body? Or is it the kind that already has a body appearing in our mouth? We don't know.

When we don't know, that's why everything we say comes out all screwy and wrong. These spirits are the ones that make us speak, speaking in all kinds of ways that get us in trouble. Actually, we don't want to say those things but we go ahead and say them. That's a sign that we've been associating with fools, with the consciousness of angry demons, without our even realizing it. It's only afterwards, when we end up suffering, that we realize what's happened. This is why we keep

losing out to them. We don't know consciousness in the five aggregates. We keep chanting, "*Viññāṇam anattā, anattā, -tā, -tā,*" every day, but don't know a thing. This is what the Buddha called *avijjā*, or unawareness.

Kāya-dhātu: The same holds true with the body. The body is where tactile sensations are felt. Tactile sensations make contact and we can know them all: cold, hot, soft, hard. We know. This knowledge of tactile sensations is called consciousness. But whose consciousness it is, we've never made a survey. So we think that we're the ones who are cold, we're the ones who are hot, and yet it's not us at all. Like a person possessed by a spirit. What happens when a person is possessed by a spirit? Suppose there's someone who has never drunk liquor. When a spirit possesses him, he drinks two or three glasses—really enjoying it—but when the spirit leaves, the person who has never drunk liquor is dead drunk. Why? Because there was a consciousness from outside possessing him. He—the real him—never drank liquor, but he drank when an outside spirit possessed him.

The same holds true with our mind. When these consciousnesses start getting obstreperous, we start doing things even though we don't want to do them. Some forms of consciousness like the cold, some like heat. Just like the animals in the world: Some like hot weather, some like cold weather, some like to eat hard things, some like to eat soft things. Worms and caterpillars, for instance, like to eat hard things. It's the same with the living beings in our bodies: Some like to eat hard things, so they nibble at our bones—or at our flesh until it sloughs off in pieces. Some drink the liquid parts. Some like hot things, some like cold things. So when it gets cold, we feel that we're really cold, but we've never stopped to think about what's made us cold. When it gets hot, we don't know what's made us hot. We just think that it's us: This is us, that's us. When it was that we became a spirit-consciousness along with them, we never noticed.

This is why the Buddha said that we have no discernment. We fall for these forms of consciousness, forgetting his teaching that consciousness is not-self. Actually, there's only one of us, and it's not all complicated like this.

As for our mind—*mano-dhātu*—the same holds true. It's been possessed by spirits so that it suffers from all sorts of symptoms. The ideas that get thought up in the mind, the ideas that cause thoughts in the mind: They come from a cause. Sometimes the cause may be the shock waves from other consciousnesses bumping into us. The thoughts of living beings with bodies may be directed at us. The consciousness of beings without bodies may have some unfinished business involving us, and they may cause our own minds to fall in with them. When this happens, you should know: "Oh. There's been an infiltration." The thing that has infiltrated is the mood of another living being. It may be the mood of an animal. The mood of a deva. The mood of an angry demon. We have to decode them so that we'll

know.

When we can know in this way, then there aren't all that many issues in our mind. There's only one mind. There's only one consciousness, not a whole lot of them. When one is one, it should stay as one. The problem is that one turns into two and then three and then so on without end. This is what blocks our senses.

Unawareness blocks our eyes, so that we don't know the consciousnesses that have built their homes in our eyeballs. Unawareness blocks our ears: the consciousnesses of all the animals that have come and built their homes filling up our earholes. Unawareness blocks our nose: the consciousnesses of all the animals that have come and built their homes in our nostrils. It blocks our tongue: the consciousnesses of all the animals that have come and built their homes and cities in our tongue. It blocks our body: the consciousnesses of all the animals that have come and built their homes in every pore. As for our own single consciousness, it's no match for them. This is why the effort of our meditation is so limp and lax: We don't understand what these things are doing to us. They close off our eyes, ears, nose, tongue, body, and mind so that we can't see our way out. As a result, the qualities we're trying to develop just don't grow.

Now, when we can wipe out the homes of unawareness, that's when we'll understand what's going on:

*aneka-jāti saṃsāraṃ sandhāvissaṃ anibbisaṃ
gaha-kāraṃ gavesanto....*

Through the round of many births
I wandered without rest,
seeking the builder of the house....

When we contemplate to the point where we understand these things, we'll come to see the endless affairs of all the living beings that have taken up residence in our home. *Aneka-jāti saṃsāraṃ....* They've come to quarrel and squabble and create a lot of trouble. They like to pull our mind into all kinds of harm.

When we contemplate so as to see things in this way, disenchantment arises. *Cakkhusmiṃ-pi nibbindati.* We feel disenchantment for the eye. *Rūpesu-pi nibbindati.* Disenchantment for forms. *Cakkhu-viññāṇe-pi nibbindati.* Disenchantment for consciousness. We really get tired of it. It's a genuine nuisance to the heart. *Nibbindaṃ virajjati, virāgā vimuccati.* We spit them out. The eye spits out forms. It spits out consciousness. It spits them out, because it's had enough.

Sotasmiṃ-pi nibbindati. We feel disenchantment for the ear. *Saddesu-pi nibbindati.* Disenchantment for sounds. *Sota-viññāṇe-pi nibbindati.* Disenchantment for consciousness. *Virāgā vimuccati.* We spit them all out. When the eye spits out

form, forms don't get stuck in the eye, so the eye can penetrate and see for miles. When sounds get spit out, our ears can penetrate. We can hear what the devas are chatting about. When the nose spits out aromas, the entire world smells sweet. Our goodness, when we let go of it, smells sweet in every direction. The tongue spits out flavors, it doesn't swallow them; it spits out consciousness. The body spits out tactile sensations. Heat doesn't get stuck in the heart. Cold doesn't get stuck in the heart. Hard, soft, whatever, in the body, doesn't get stuck, doesn't seep in. Everything gets spit out, all the way to mental consciousness. The mind lets go of its goodness. It doesn't hold onto the view or conceit that its goodness belongs to it. It spits out evil, unskillful states, so that evil can't leak in to get it soaked. It spits out all the various things it knows, such as, "That's the consciousness of living beings with bodies.... That's the consciousness of living beings without bodies.... That's really my consciousness." All of this gets spit out. That's what's called *viññānasmim-pi nibbindati*: Disenchantment with consciousness, disenchantment for mental objects.

Virāgā vimuccati. Everything gets spit out; nothing gets swallowed, so nothing gets stuck in the throat. The eye doesn't swallow forms, the ear doesn't swallow sounds, the nose doesn't swallow smells, the tongue doesn't swallow flavors, the body doesn't swallow tactile sensations, the mind doesn't swallow ideas. *Vimuccati*: Release. There's no more turmoil or entanglement. That's when you're said to be in the presence of nibbāna. *Vimuttasmim vimuttamiti ñāṇam hoti, khīṇā jāti, vusitaṃ brahma-cariyam*—"In release, there is the knowledge, 'Released.' Birth is ended, the holy life has been fulfilled." When we can practice in this way we'll know clearly what's the consciousness of animals, what's our consciousness, and we can let go of them all. That's when we'll know that we've gained release from all three sorts of consciousness.

The consciousness of living beings with bodies isn't our consciousness. The consciousness of living beings without bodies isn't our consciousness. Our consciousness, which is aware of these things, isn't us. These things get let go, in line with their nature. That's when we can be said to know the five aggregates and all six sense media. We gain release from the world and can open our eyes. Our eyes will be able to see far, as when we slide away the walls on our home and can see for hundreds of yards. When our eyes aren't stuck on forms, we can gain clairvoyant powers and see far. When our ears aren't stuck on sounds, we can hear distant sounds. When our nose isn't stuck on smells, we can sniff the smell of the devas, instead of irritating our nose with the smell of human beings. When flavors don't get stuck on the tongue, we can taste heavenly medicine and food. When the mind isn't stuck on tactile sensations, we can live in comfort. Wherever we sit, we can be at our ease: at ease when it's cold, at ease when it's hot, at ease in a soft seat, at ease in a hard seat. Even if the sun burns us up, we can be at our ease. The body can fall apart,

and we can be at our ease. This is called spitting out tactile sensations. As for the heart, it spits out ideas. It's a heart released: released from the five aggregates, released from the three sorts of consciousness. They can't ever fool it again. The heart is released from stress and suffering, and will reach the highest, most ultimate happiness: nibbāna.

Here I've been talking on the topic of consciousness. Take it to heart and train yourself to give rise to knowledge within. That's when you can be said to know the worlds. The consciousnesses that have bodies inhabit the worlds of sensuality, from the levels of hell on up to heaven. The consciousnesses with no bodies inhabit the world of the formless Brahmās. Our own consciousness is what will take us to nibbāna.

When you know these three kinds of consciousness you can be said to be *vijjā-carāṇa-sampanno*: consummate in knowledge and conduct. *Sugato*: You'll go well and come well and wherever you stay, you'll stay well. All the beings of the world can then get some relief. In what way? We hand everything over to them. Any animals who want to eat away in our body can go ahead and do so. We're no longer possessive. Whatever they want, whatever they like to eat, they can go ahead and have it. We don't give a damn. That's how we really feel. We're not attached. If they want to eat our intestines, they can go ahead. If they want to eat our excrement, they can have it. If they want to eat our blood, they can eat all they like. We're not possessive. Whatever any type of consciousness wants, they're welcome to it. We give them their independence, so they can govern themselves, without our trying to snatch anything away from them. As a result, they gain a share of our goodness. The same for the bodiless consciousnesses in our body: They gain their independence. And we gain our independence, too. Everybody gets to live in his or her own house, eat his or her own food, sleep in his or her own bed. Everyone lives separately, so everyone can be at his or her own ease.

This is called "*bhagavā*": The eye gets separated from forms, forms get separated from the eye, and consciousness gets separated from self.

The ear gets separated from sounds, sounds get separated from the ear, and consciousness gets separated from self.

The nose gets separated from smells, smells get separated from the nose, and consciousness gets separated from self.

The tongue gets separated from flavors, flavors get separated from the tongue, and consciousness gets separated from self.

The body gets separated from tactile sensations, tactile sensations get separated from the body, and consciousness gets separated from the body.

The mind gets separated from ideas, ideas get separated from the mind, and consciousness gets separated from the mind.

There's no sense that this is our self or that's our self. This is called, "*Sabbe dhammā anattā*," all phenomena are not-self. We don't claim rights over anything at all. Whoever can do this will gain release from the world, from the cycle of death and rebirth. This is āsavakkhaya-ñāṇa—the knowledge of the ending of mental fermentation—arising in the heart.

So now that you've listened to this, you should take it to ponder and contemplate so as to gain a clear understanding within yourself. That way you'll be on the path to release from stress and suffering, using persistence and effort at all times to cleanse your own consciousness so as to know it clearly. That's what will lead you to purity.

So, for today's discussion of consciousnesses, I'll ask to stop here.

Glossary

I. Terms

The definitions given here are based on the meanings these words have in Ajaan Lee's writings and sermons. Terms marked with a single asterisk () are taken from the standard chant of the qualities of the Buddha; those with a double asterisk (**), from the chant of the qualities of the Dhamma.*

akāliko:** Timeless; unconditioned by time or season.

***apāya*:** State of deprivation; the four lower levels of existence—rebirth in hell, as a hungry ghost, as an angry demon, or as a common animal. None of these states are permanent.

***arahant*:** A 'Worthy One,' a person whose heart is freed from the fermentations (*āsava*) of sensuality, states of being, views, and ignorance, and who is thus not destined for further rebirth. An epithet for the Buddha and the highest level of his noble disciples.

***avijjā*:** Unawareness; ignorance; counterfeit awareness.

bhagavā*: Blessed. This word is also related to the verb for 'divide' and 'separate,' and so is sometimes interpreted in that light as well.

***bhāvanā-maya-paññā*:** Discernment achieved by developing the mind through meditation.

***brahmā*:** Inhabitant of the higher, non-sensual levels of heaven.

***bodhisattva*:** A being firmly on the path to becoming a Buddha.

buddho*: Awake.

***chabbañña-rāsi*:** Six-colored radiance or aura. Mentioned usually as an attribute of the Buddha.

***chalang'upekkhā*:** Six-factored equanimity, i.e., maintaining equanimity toward events known through any of the six senses—sight, hearing, smell, taste, touch, and ideation.

deva: Inhabitant of any of the heavens of sensual pleasure.

dhamma: Event; phenomenon; the way things are in and of themselves; their inherent qualities; the basic principles that underlie their behavior. Also, principles of behavior that human beings ought to follow so as to fit in with the right natural order of things; qualities of mind they should develop so as to realize the inherent quality of the mind in and of itself. By extension, ‘dhamma’ is used also to refer to any doctrine that teaches such things. Thus the Dhamma of the Buddha refers both to his teachings and to the direct experience of the quality—nibbāna—at which those teachings are aimed. In contexts where the term is used in a neutral sense in these sermons, it has been left uncapitalized. Where used in a positive sense, it has been capitalized.

dhamma-vicaya-sambojjhaṅga: Analysis of phenomena, qualities, principles, etc. One of the factors for awakening, the others being mindfulness, persistence, rapture, serenity, concentration, and equanimity.

dhātu: Element; property; the elementary properties that make up the inner sense of the body and mind: earth (solidity), water (liquidity), fire (heat), wind (energy or motion), space, and consciousness. The breath is regarded as an aspect of the wind property, and all feelings of energy in the body are classed as breath sensations. According to Thai physiology, diseases come from the aggravation or imbalance of any of the first four of these properties. Wellbeing is defined as a state in which none of these properties is dominant: All are quiet, unaroused, balanced, and still.

ekayāna-magga: A unified path; a direct path. An epithet for the practice of being mindful of the four frames of reference: body, feelings, mind, and mental qualities in and of themselves.

gotarabhū-ñāṇa: ‘Change of lineage knowledge’: The glimpse of nibbāna that changes one from an ordinary run-of-the-mill person to a noble one.

indrīya: Mental faculty, or dominant factor in the mind. There are five faculties to be developed in the practice: conviction, persistence, mindfulness, concentration, and discernment.

jhāna: Absorption in a physical sensation (*rūpa jhāna*) or in a mental notion (*arūpa jhāna*). *Vitakka* (directed thought), *vicāra* (evaluation), and *pīti* (rapture) are three of the five factors forming the first level of rūpa jhāna, the other two being *sukha* (pleasure) and *ekaggatārammaṇa* (singleness of preoccupation).

kamma: Intentional act that results in states of being and birth.

khandha: Aggregate; heap; component parts of sensory perception: *rūpa* (physical sensations, sense data); *vedanā* (feelings of pleasure, pain, or neither pleasure nor pain); *saññā* (labels, concepts); *saṅkhāra* (mental fabrications, anything

created by the mind); and *viññāṇa* (consciousness).

lokavidū*: Expert with regard to the cosmos.

magga: The path to the cessation of suffering and stress. The four transcendent paths—or rather, one path with four levels of refinement—are the path to stream entry (entering the stream to nibbāna, which ensures that one will be reborn at most only seven more times), the path to once-returning, the path to non-returning, and the path to arahantship. *Phala*—fruition—refers to the mental state immediately following the attainment of any of these paths.

mahābhūta-rūpa: The four great physical properties—earth, water, fire, and wind (see ‘*dhātu*’).

māra: The personification of death, temptation, and any force that obstructs the practice of the path to Liberation.

nāga: A type of serpent reputed to have miraculous powers.

nibbāna (nirvāṇa): Liberation; the unbinding of the mind from greed, anger, and delusion, from physical sensations and mental acts. As this term is used to refer also to the extinguishing of fire, it carries connotations of stilling, cooling, and peace. (According to the physics taught at the time of the Buddha, the property of fire in a latent state exists to a greater or lesser extent in all objects. When activated, it seizes and sticks to its fuel. As long as it remains latent or is extinguished, it is ‘unbound.’)

nīvaraṇa: Hindrance to concentration—sensual desire, ill will, sloth & drowsiness, restlessness & anxiety, and uncertainty.

opanayiko**: Referring inwardly; to be brought inward.

paccattam**: Personal; individual.

puñña: Inner worth; merit; the inner sense of wellbeing that comes from having acted rightly or well, and that enables one to continue acting well.

sādhu: Excellent; well-done. Often used as a term of approval when someone has done something meritorious.

sambhavesin: (A being) searching for a place to take birth.

sandiṭṭhiko**: Self-evident; visible here and now.

saṅgha: The community of the Buddha’s followers. On the conventional level, this refers to the Bhikkhu Saṅgha, or Buddhist monkhood. On the ideal level, it refers to those of the Buddha’s followers, whether lay or ordained, who have practiced to the point of gaining at least ‘stream-entry,’ the first of the transcendent qualities culminating in nibbāna.

saikhāra: Fabrication—the forces and factors that fabricate things, the process of fabrication, and the fabricated things that result; all processes or things conditioned, compounded, or concocted by nature, whether on the physical or the

mental level.

sugato*: Going (or gone) to a good destination.

uposatha: Observance day, corresponding to the phases of the moon, on which Buddhist lay people gather to listen to the Dhamma and to observe special precepts. The eight uposatha precepts are to refrain from taking life; from stealing; from sexual intercourse; from telling lies; from taking intoxicants; from eating food after noon until the following dawn; from watching dancing, singing, instrumental music, and other shows, and from using garlands, perfumes, cosmetics and jewelry; and from using high and luxurious beds and seats.

vicāra: Evaluation (see ‘jhāna’).

vijjā: Awareness, science, cognitive skill.

vijjā-carāṇa-sampanno*: Consummate in knowledge and conduct; accomplished in the conduct leading to awareness or cognitive skill.

vipassanā: Clear, intuitive insight into physical and mental phenomena as they arise and disappear, seeing them for what they actually are—in and of themselves—in terms of stress, its origin, its disbanding, and the way to its disbanding.

vitakka: Directed thought (see ‘jhāna’).

II. Quotations

aniccā vata saṅkhārā, uppāda-vaya-dhammino, uppajjitvā nirujjhanti: Fabrications are inconstant, subject to arising and passing away. Arising, they disband. (From stanzas uttered on the occasion of the Buddha’s passing into total nibbāna.)

asevanā ca bālānaṃ, paṇḍitānañca sevanā: Non-association with fools, and association with the wise. (From a discourse listing factors that augur well for one’s wellbeing.)

attā hi attano nātho: One’s self is one’s own mainstay.

aṭṭhaṃ nānvāgameyya, nappaṭikankhe anāgataṃ... paccuppannañca yo dhammaṃ, tatha tatha vipassati: He would not pursue the past or yearn for the future... and whatever phenomenon is present, he clearly sees it right there, right there. (From stanzas describing a person who spends his day auspiciously in terms of the practice.)

āyudo balado dhīro’ti: The enlightened person who gives life and strength.... (From stanzas extolling the benefits—to the donor—of a donation of food.)

ekāyano ayaṃ maggo sattānaṃ visuddhiyā: This is a direct path for the purification of beings. (See ‘*ekāyana-magga.*’)

kammassako’mhi: I am the owner of actions.

mano-pubbaṅgamā dhammā, mano-setṭhā mano-mayā: Phenomena are preceded by the mind, are excelled by the mind, are made from the mind.

namo tassa bhagavato arahato sammā-sambuddhassa: Homage to the Blessed One, Worthy and Rightly Self-awakened.

* * *

If anything in this translation is inaccurate or misleading, I ask forgiveness of the author and reader for having unwittingly stood in their way. As for whatever may be accurate, I hope the reader will make the best use of it, translating it a few steps further, into the heart, so as to attain the truth to which it points.

The translator

*sabbe sattā sadā hontu
averā sukha-jīvino
kataṃ puñña-phalaṃ mayhaṃ
sabbe bhāgī bhavantu te*

May all beings always live happily,
free from animosity.

May all share in the blessings
springing from the good I have done.

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