



THE HAPPINESS OF A
BEAUTIFUL MIND

Dīpaṅkara Therī



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燃灯禅师

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Abbess Dīpaṅkara Theri

**Namo Tassa
Bhagavato,
Arahato,
Sammā-
Sambuddhassa**

**Homage to Him,
the Blessed,
the Worthy,
the Perfectly
Self-Enlightened One.**

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Note

by Editors

This book is a collection of a series of dhammatalks by our meditation teacher, Venerable Sayalay Dīpaṅkara.

Over the years as we collected her Dhamma Teachings through audio recording, Sayalay has rarely allowed distribution of her voice recordings much less her image in the public domain.

Her humility in her teachings and spoken English, have been the main reasons for 'not sharing' although any student of hers know in their hearts, she gave her fullest in every talk and retreat.

In handling these talks, we try at our best to do a word-for-word transcription first. Sayalay's use of simple English relates the profound teachings effectively. It is this very style we hope we may retain, as well as the dhamma.

Most of the Pāli terms are not capitalized by its grammatical rule and have specific conjugation in its sentence use. We wish to maintain its integrity and succinct characteristic in its written expression. It is advisable for readers not to develop attachment to its English translations.

We hope all Buddhists may find this a breathing-work of dhamma by the author—inspiring, compassionate, beautiful, and deeply personal.

~ The Editors

Acknowledgements

We are sincerely grateful and appreciative of the following persons and group of persons from various parts of the world, who have helped in all possible ways. Thank you.

Editors, Transcribers & Contributors,
Audio Team, photographers, retreat organizers, kappiya;
All seen and unseen beings who have
protected, supported and assisted the works in ways unknown.

From all of her students:

Wishing Sayalay Dīpaṅkara a Happy 50th Birthday (2014) and Great Health. May she continue to spread the Dhamma!

About the Author

Dīpaṅkara Therī was born in Myanmar 9 May 1964. It was also Vesak Day in Myanmar. At a very young age, every time whenever there were members of the Saṅgha passing near, she would be filled with reverence and faith. At age 25, she was ordained, abandoning her University degree to seek higher Dhamma knowledge with Pa Auk Sayadaw.

As an ordained Theravāda nun in Myanmar, Dīpaṅkara Therī remains a Ten Preceptor. Her mission was to share the Dhamma through teaching meditation. She travelled out of her country in 1995, teaching in Singapore, Malaysia, Indonesia, Thailand, Sri Lanka, Australia, Germany, England, United States, Canada, Taiwan, Hong Kong, Japan, Korea and run long term retreats in her motherland, Myanmar. Thus began her journey to ‘mend broken pots’ - the minds of sentient beings.

Therī travelled widely and walked lands of varying cultures to spread the Dhamma. Therī persevered in spreading the teachings for those who have the utmost sincerity to the practice, With her compassion and sensitivity towards the lay devotees, her student number grew. Now, many of her students from different parts of the

world invite her to their homes and their countries to give meditation guidance.

She generously extends her good conditions to other practitioners by conceptualizing, designing, and overseeing the construction of what is now the Brahma Vihārī Meditation Centre at Maymyo, Myanmar. Meditators benefited from her deeper intentions and abided unknowingly in the conditions, true to the Visuddhimagga and the Tipiṭaka.

In devoting her energy in sharing the Dhamma worldwide, students are able to stay within Brahma Vihārī for longer retreats through acts of dāna. The rest of the year, Therī travels to the people who wish to learn, leaving little time for herself for self-practice and rest.

Therī teaches the forty kammaṭṭhāna leading to samādhi and vipassanā practice, and many other qualities a Buddhist needs to know and embody...

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Chapter 1

Faith I



Sayalay explained the importance of faith as the leader of all wholesome qualities of the mind, and as an important foundation for the practice. She admonished the students not to lose faith and maintain diligence in the practice. Sayalay related the incident on how she and her students meditated through the night under the *bodhi* tree at *Bodhgayā*. Finally, Sayalay explained the process of absorption based on *ānāpānasati*.

Faith on attending retreat

Faith is very important for all the meditators, and it is also very important for realising the teaching of The Buddha. *saddhā* is very, very important and is a *dhamma* object too. Without *saddhā*, you will not come for the meditation retreat. After contemplating with *saddhā* and wisdom, you will find out the reason, and want to go for the retreat.

What is the purpose of going to a retreat? It is because we want our wisdom and insight knowledge to grow as this wisdom will help

us clear our defilements. That's the reason why we want to practise meditation.

When we are practising meditation, as we know, we are learning the *Dhamma*. *Dhamma* is the guidance and the way of practice on how to clear our defilements.

Then after gaining an understanding from the practice, we will have penetrating insight. *vipassanā* meditation is the practice to penetrate within ourselves.

For wisdom to grow, we need to combine both *samatha* (concentration) and *vipassanā* (insight) practice. After wisdom has grown, we can clear all the defilements, then we can attain *Nibbāna*. It can happen very fast. So during this short *Dhamma* talk, you can also enter *Nibbāna*, if your wisdom is mature.

saddhā is very important. Why is it important? Without *saddhā*, we don't want to learn the *Dhamma*. We don't want to do wholesome things. We always like to follow different kinds of desire. We like to follow mainly greed, this desire can really attack us, as you may realize when you're meditating.

Desire

After trying to concentrate on the breathing for about ten to twenty minutes, or after a few breaths, the mind doesn't want to stick on the meditation object. What does the mind want to stick on? It wants to think about something, about tomorrow, about what is for breakfast tomorrow.

This is desire. The desire comes from within you. You don't want to concentrate on the breath because the breath is too simple, you don't like it. The breath-object is very simple, in-breath and out-breath only.

Because it is too simple, your mind doesn't want to stick on it. The mind wants to complicate things and think about other things.

Do you know what we will cook tomorrow? Don't know? Can you be sure your guess is correct? Since you cannot be sure if your guess is correct or not, it is better not to waste your time. Let it be.

Never mind what we will offer tomorrow, just eat. Don't think about what you want to eat tomorrow. This is to help you overcome your desire. This is only an example. There are many other desires, not only ones about food.

There are different kinds of wandering thoughts related to desire, wanting to get something, wanting to enjoy something and wanting to be comfortable.

Now you may be thinking that this place is not so good for sleeping. Next time when you go back home, you will relax and stay in your house comfortably. And you may not want to come back to *Brahma Vihārī* again. Many different kinds of thoughts can be experienced in different people with different desires.

There is no need to check your mind. We know your thoughts just by looking at your outward expression based on our experience. (*Audience laughs*) I have been teaching meditation for twenty years! I am not so stupid as to scold nowadays, so I just take care of my mind. Everybody needs to take care of their own mind.

It's very difficult for me to control your mind, I can just remind you only. If you really want to practise the *Dhamma*, you need to live a simple life. You can't compare here with your house or the comfortable conditions anywhere else. Even if you may feel suffering due to the food, you need to be patient.

Patience is very important. If you know how to be patient and humble, everything is ok for you. You can take it, you can forgive, and you can accept it. You don't feel that everything is negative. That's the reason we need to be patient. Patience is for the *Dhamma*. That's how we contemplate, to take care of our mind.

Nurturing Faith

At the time of The Buddha, The Buddha also emphasized to the renounced people the need to live a simple life, and not to live in luxury all the time.

We cannot expect everything to be perfect. If everything is agreeable for you, you don't know what is suffering.

I also want you to learn a little bit about suffering too. When you cannot get what you want, this is also suffering.

Though you want to have comfortable feelings, you can't get them, this is suffering too. That is the nature of life.

We need to learn to accept it. Practising *Dhamma* is not easy. If you don't know suffering, you don't know what the *Dhamma* is.

So don't be scared of suffering. Please accept it with patience. If you have patience, no matter how much suffering arises, you will be ok and ready to accept it.

Don't be scared of suffering. We need to have a lot of *saddhā*, a lot of faith in The Buddha.

We need to know the qualities of the *Buddha, Dhamma, Saṅgha*.

And also we need to know and believe strongly in the teaching of the wisdom about the past, present and future, i.e. Dependent Origination.

Then only slowly your *saddhā* will be strong, only then will you be happy to practise. You don't feel the suffering. Of course I know you might be very tired, as you have to sit from morning until evening, especially early in the morning and in the evening 7.30pm session. Many people became very tired but if these two sessions become holidays, you cannot improve your meditation anymore.

Although you may be in pain and suffer physically, if your mind has *saddhā*, and is happy to practise, the body will slowly adjust with your practice.

You want to practise for the *Dhamma*. So for the *Dhamma*, make this desire to practise strong in your mind. You should think, I want to practise, even if it's painful, I will try my best in every sitting. I will try to practise to get *Dhamma*. I want to know what *jhāna* is. I want to know what insight knowledge is. This kind of desire is very important.

That's the reason *saddhā* acts as a push for meditators, so that in the end they can be successful.

saddhā is Our Best Friend

In the retreat, we all have mainly good friends, we can say they are our *Dhamma* friends. You may have *Dhamma* friends, different kinds of friends, also you may have a lot of childhood friends, although they are not your family, some will be very good to you. Because of that, you think they're good friends.

Sometimes when they give you a lot of problems, you think they are bad friends. Is it true?

For our mind, the most important friend is *saddhā*. *saddhā* is the leader.

saddhā is the Leader of Our Mind

We have different kinds of mind, i.e. good and bad thoughts. Good mind can produce wholesome *kamma*, i.e. *kusala kamma* and bad mind can produce *akusala kamma*, i.e. bad *kamma*. We believe in that. So in all the *kusala* mind states, i.e. wholesome mental states. *saddhā* is the leader of the mind, the General's mind. Because of this *saddhā*, we can do a lot of wholesome things.

For example, because you have *saddhā* for the *Dhamma*, you like to do *dāna*, you believe that if you do *dāna*, next time you will have good results of *kamma*. You can get a good and comfortable life because of *dāna* in the previous or present life.

And secondly, sometimes you always get sick physically. That result may have arisen because in the past life, you might not have kept the precepts very well.

That's the reason if you want to have a healthy life, you need to keep the five precepts or eight precepts properly. Those who have kept good precepts, they will have healthy life.

And for the mind, it is almost always in an unwholesome, delusional state. Delusion or an unclear mind is like a lot of dust in our mind, so we want to clear them up.

We need to make our mind clear by practising *samatha* i.e. concentration. That's the reason we concentrate on the meditation object, until we get *samādhi* (concentration).

Purification of the Mind

When we get concentration in the mind, it can clear up our delusion so that the mind becomes brighter and clearer.

After our mind becomes clear, we can start to practise *vipassanā*.

The practice of *vipassanā* needs concentration to penetrate within in order to develop the insight i.e. *vipassanā* knowledge which causes wisdom to arise. The Four Foundations of Mindfulness or *dhamma* objects are very important in the development of penetrative insight.

All the *Dhamma* practice is mainly supported by *saddhā*. Without *saddhā*, it is not easy to perceive these four kinds of *dhamma* (the Four Foundations of Mindfulness) in our practice.

Because of *saddhā*, you get right understanding and wisdom.

With *saddhā*, *mettā* and compassion will arise in you. Also because of that, you will get *pīti* and *passaddhi*. All the good things will subsequently happen. That's the reason in the beginning, *saddhā* in *Buddha*, *Dhamma*, *Saṅgha* is very important.

It is very important to train our mind to keep the precepts. And wanting to practise meditation is also very important.

That's the reason you come here every time, every year, being driven by this *saddhā*. Also you need to have *saddhā* all the way, until the last day of retreat, not only the first day.

At first you may think, I will try in this retreat but then the next day, you start to relax, relax, relax, until all *saddhā* drops. All faith has dropped.

At least, please do not disturb your roommate. You need self-control. If it's not important, don't talk. If it's very, very important, just write it down, and give it to him. He will read it. If we can stay here quietly for one hour, it is so peaceful. Our mind is so happy to stay quietly. Really, that peacefulness comes from our heart. A quiet mind can help a lot in your concentration.

Respectful

When you go to the pagoda, you have to pay respect to The Buddha, to The Buddha statue. Did you know?

I want to think about the qualities of The Buddha there. Every step you go, contemplate with "*Itipi so bhagavā arahañ.....*" until you walk to the pagoda. How good!

If you don't want to contemplate on the qualities of The Buddha, you don't have to. Instead, if you are tired, think about the in-and-out breathing.

Breathing will be very clear, because we have to climb up the mountain. On the hill, your breathing will be very clear, good for concentrating on your breath-object!

In-breath and out-breath automatically will be clear. The sound also comes out more clearly. So think about your meditation object. This way of walking meditation is very good there.

So don't talk, don't go together with another person. If you go together, you will start to talk, saying, "How are you? Are you ok?" etc.. It's not important. What people think doesn't matter. You just take care of your own mind. Don't waste your time with this.

Just concentrate on the meditation object of in-breath and out-breath. It's so simple, knowing in-and-out breath only.

Within the first two weeks, if you can get *jhāna*, practising *vipassanā*, *nāma rūpa* is so easy, and your meditation progresses very quickly. If only at the last week of retreat, you get *nimitta*, or *nimitta* is stable, then after that you have to go home.

Overcoming Physical Pain

In the first week and second week, you have to put in a lot of effort. Suffering, never mind, pain, never mind—you must think, I will try my best.

It's the same for me, due to my knee pain. I have to go for an operation. The doctor came here specially from Malaysia before retreat starts.

He told me, "*Sayalay*, you have to do operation, you have to come back." "Right now I don't have time, I'm busy now ok (*Sayalay laughs*), I'm busy now, I don't want to do, ok, ok, next time when I have time, I will come back with you."

We just want to do for the *Dhamma* every moment. After retreat we will then go for a check-up and see the specialist. In this way, we give our time for this retreat.

I want to be here. I don't want to go away from this retreat. That is because I have the duty to teach here. That's the reason I'm staying here.

So within these two months or one and a half month's time, I really want all of you to get some experience about *jhāna*.

If you can attain *jhāna*, I will be very happy, if you cannot, I also have to be very happy. (*Audience laughs*) Anyway, I will accept everything, but if you can be successful, it is very good. This is what I wish to explain.

Although we also have a lot of pain, we're ok, we don't care about the pain. What we need to do, we'll do it. We don't complain so much about pain or whatever.

I just want all of you not to be so lazy. Laziness makes you always feel sleepy at meditation. If you're really sick physically and you really cannot take it, you are allowed to rest. You know yourselves, but if you're really still ok, better practise and put in more effort.

Faith in yourself

Faith is a kind of belief. You need to believe in yourselves. You need to believe that that you have very good *pāramī*. You should not think you don't have enough *pāramī*, and that's the reason you cannot get concentration. That thinking is not good for your practice, you know.

Everybody needs to believe that they have good *pāramī*. Also you need to think, "If I try, I surely will be successful in attaining *jhāna* within a short time. That kind of encouragement is very important. We call this a kind of *saddhā*, faith in yourself.

You should think, if you have awareness on the breathing about twenty minutes or thirty minutes, it is certain *nimitta* will appear. Really, I guarantee, after twenty minutes, if you really can maintain your mindfulness, surely *nimitta* will appear.

Concentration And Mindfulness

If it doesn't appear, is because your concentration and mindfulness are not strong enough. To have concentration and mindfulness, you need to remember what the object is: My breathing is my meditation

object. This are concentration and mindfulness.

Effort

Another important factor in meditation is effort. How much effort must you have? On this meditation object, in-breath and out-breath, remember that you need to know this continuously. You need to have awareness on this object of the breathing. Push your mind to this object.

Behind your mindfulness, you need effort as support for the mindfulness. Only then the mindfulness can last a long time. Knowing the object only, the mind is focused and doesn't want to move anywhere.

All the time, you can stick on this object because of effort. If you don't have effort, or not enough effort, the mind also doesn't want to remember this object again and again.

So that's why if you want to think of something, but you cannot remember, you have to put in effort, to think again and again, pushing your mind to remember. Only then you can recall what you want to know.

When you forget about your object, concentration is too far from you. All happens sequentially.

sati, vīriya and saddhā

sati or mindfulness, *vīriya* or effort, and *saddhā* or *faith*, push your mind again and again to the object. These three factors are very important for your concentration and *vipassanā* practice.

So we have to practice these basics. Whether we can get *jhāna* or not doesn't matter. Definitely we have to keep trying together, every day, every hour, every minute.

Then if your mindfulness and effort is good, within a short time, you

can get *jhāna* and happiness. You know this, right?

If you're lazy, or not happy, or *saddhā* is not so strong, *jhāna* will also be far from you. *jhāna* also doesn't like to stay with you. And also happiness will not be with you.

Happiness

The happiness can come from a lot of objects. Sometimes, when you like something, when you look at the flower, if you like this object, you will also get happiness.

When you do a good thing, you are happy, you will also get happiness. Sometimes when doing a good thing, you're not joyful, you also cannot get happiness.

Sometimes, coming for meditation sitting early in the morning is good for your *kamma*, but sometimes you are not so happy. You want to sleep continuously because the weather is cold. You came because of the rule, not because of your *saddhā*. Although you are doing good things, because *saddhā* is not with you, that's the reason you are not happy about coming up here for the sitting.

saddhā at Bodhgayā

At the end of last year, I went to India with some devotees from Indonesia and Hongkong, so about eighty people went together to *Bodhgayā*. On the last day of the journey, we were in *Bodhgayā*.

Then on the last night, more than twenty people from our group told me, "Sayalay, tonight we want to meditate the whole night under the *bodhi* tree". And then they asked me, "Do you want to join us?"

I was very happy to hear that. I really wanted to join them, but my legs were very, very painful that night, because of the long journey on the bus.

In the beginning I was uncertain whether I should stay with them or not. That is because we were told that if we were out after nine o'clock,

we cannot go back to the hotel because the gate will be closed.

So after the cut-off time, we would have to stay under the *bodhi* tree the whole night, whether or not we can take it.

The weather was also very cold in December in India. So more than twenty of us were under the tree. After chanting and preaching *Dhamma* talk, I felt that since they really wanted to practise for the *Dhamma*, why cannot I support them?

9:30pm

Nevermind, I will support them. I have the *saddhā*. So I told them I will stay with all of them. They were very happy. After 9.30pm, I was going around under the *bodhi* tree, and around *Bodhgayā*, and then I saw many people, not only our group.

Every corner is all full of tents. Visitors each had their own tents, and so many people wanted to meditate under the *bodhi* tree, because it is a holy place. I was so full of admiration for them.

So everybody was so happy, so active and there was a lot of joy in my mind. This is the special place where The Buddha was enlightened. People really wanted to practise the *Dhamma* there. It gave me a lot of happiness.

So I went around the *bodhi* tree area. In the beginning so many people were meditating. After awhile, I went back to my place, and I also meditated.

11:00pm

Then at 11 o'clock I walked around the *bodhi* tree again. I started to hear many people '*croc croc croc*' snoring. The noise was so loud it can be heard in every corner. It was very loud. I think our group was a bit scared of me. They were all still sitting inside. I went to look at everybody.

I don't know if they really can concentrate or not, but they sat very straight. I was so happy with this feeling. Other groups all fell asleep very quickly and kept snoring.

12:30am

Then at 12.30am, I walked around again and some from our group were falling asleep. Some were still meditating, so some people really did meditate the whole night.

Also for me, I didn't lie down. I just contemplated after 12.30am. I was standing under the *bodhi* tree and looking at the *bodhi* tree. It gave me a lot of happiness, a lot of joyful feeling. There was a kind of feeling that everything came back to me.

So, because of *saddhā*, and the desire to practise the *Dhamma*, I could feel that everybody was so happy at 9:00 pm. I don't know if they were really meditating or not at that time, but I could see that because they wanted to practise the *Dhamma*, they wanted to sit under the *bodhi* tree that night. That gave them a lot of happiness.

Some were still meditating after midnight, after 12:00am. The place was totally quiet, although there was the sound of snoring. You could still feel the energy in the quiet environment.

And at the *bodhi* tree area, if you were really concentrating, you could feel how quiet and how peaceful it was at the holy place. Then after 12.30am I walked around, and then meditated again.

The weather was cold, and because my tent was very low, I had to bend my body. I could not sit straight. My back was very painful after 12.30am.

4:00am

My back was especially painful after 1:00am and 2:00am, I did not move. I was thinking if I move or go out, they might lose *saddhā*, or

not want to meditate.

If I meditate, they might want to continuously practise. That's the reason I encouraged myself, although it was very, very painful. I was trying to be happy with that pain. I wanted to support the meditators. So this also gave me a lot of happiness.

Early in the morning, everybody woke up so fresh and so happy at 4:00am. However, I don't know if they attained *jhāna*.

Everybody was so happy, so relaxed, I could feel it by looking at their faces. Wow! Everybody had so much confidence. They felt that they got something. It was that kind of feeling.

The meditators knew that it was not easy to be enlightened at the moment or within a short time. But at least they had some feeling of happiness. It was because of *saddhā*, faith, a lot of faith for the holy place.

The meditators also contemplated that they have very good *pāramī* to arrive at this place. That is a kind of *saddhā*. And also we had been meditating.

Whether the meditators attained *jhāna* or not doesn't matter. They had been putting a lot of effort for a few sittings. Because of this effort, they contemplated and felt happy.

So early in the morning, I could see that everybody had that feeling that they got something from that night. It was not due to *jhāna*, but it was still a kind of happiness. They got some wholesome *kamma*, wholesome feeling from their practice.

In this way, we can see, because of you trying to mindfully remember about *Dhamma* in the holy place, and because of putting in a lot of effort, and also because of meditating on the three characteristics, the meditators got a lot of happiness, a lot of tranquillity, peacefulness in the mind. They had a lot of self-control, not sleeping even though they wanted to. They had a lot of happiness even though they did not get *jhāna*.

So we need to encourage ourselves like this. And we need to constantly recall how everybody was very happy for the whole night sitting.

I also told them, to try to remember this throughout your life. This object is the most important thing to remember. You may reflect, “Oh, in my life, I have done the whole night of meditation under the *bodhi* tree.” Is this good or not?

You know, this memory is very good to explain to your grandchildren. You can say, “Oh, I really meditated with Sayalay, the whole night under the *bodhi* tree.”

Before you die, try to remember this again. You will go directly to heaven after you die. It is so good. Now, you also come to *Brahma Vihārī* meditation centre.

Brahma Vihārī

There is a reason why we named this place *Brahma Vihārī*. It is because we really like to practise *mettā*, *karuṇā*, *muditā*, and *upekkhā* (loving-kindness, compassion, unselfish joy, and equanimity) for other people when their meditation is good. We want to be happy when others’ meditation is good.

When we have equanimity, we are able to accept suffering despite the intensity. In this way, we practise. And that’s the reason why we gave this place that name. And also it is because we try to be kind to each other with happiness.

So, when you come here, you practise in this way, with mindfulness, effort and *saddhā*. Surely, you will get concentration within a short time.

Even if you cannot get concentration, you will have a lot of happiness. This is to support your life. The things you are doing now are very important. If you can recall them before you die, you will also go to heaven directly. There is no need to worry.

Now if you die, it is also safe. You can go to heaven but of course, you cannot go to *Nibbāna* yet. But going to go to the heaven is quite safe for you.

What does concentration mean? You already know it is keeping the mind on the in-breath and out-breath. So if your mind is happy, easily, you will like to focus on the breathing. Observe the in-breath and out-breath constantly and repeatedly.

Continuously and repeatedly, we need to place the awareness on the breath. We need to keep the mind on the in-breaths and out-breaths, one round, counting from one to ten. And then, you need to repeat another round, counting from one to ten. In this way, we practise meditation on the breath.

Sometimes, after two rounds of counting one to ten, you are tired and want to rest for a while. Is it because you are tired of breathing?

In breathing meditation, we want to know the in-breaths and out-breaths. After two to three rounds of counting in-breaths and out-breaths, you feel tired. I don't know why you are tired with only knowing the in-breaths and out-breaths.

Just watching and thinking about the in-breaths and out-breaths is so simple and yet, you also feel tired and bored. You feel bored because the breath-object is not so good.

The breath-object is not good and you are not happy with it. You find it a boring object, but you must use it to contemplate. The breath is an important object. Although you are not happy with the object, you need to try to observe it and to be happy with this object. Then, you continue for five or six rounds. Slowly you will become interested. Then you will feel comfortable.

After you are comfortable with the breath, you will slowly like it. You'll be happy to observe these in-breaths and out-breaths. You won't feel it is suffering to know the breath.

Sometimes, after twenty times or twenty rounds of counting the

breath, you feel it is suffering knowing the breath. You don't want to think about the breathing.

That's the reason the mind doesn't want to stay with the object. It is suffering. The mind searches for the place for the happy feeling. That's the reason the wandering thoughts come.

Wandering Thoughts

The wandering thoughts do not automatically come in. It is because you want the wandering thoughts. You want to go somewhere, and the mind wants to stick on the attractive objects. That's the reason after connecting with these thoughts, the wandering images will appear.

The wandering thoughts are due to your inner desires. You want to be with these attractive objects—food, or whatever, or anything. All the desires are from inside you. It is not that the wandering thoughts automatically come in.

Students say, "I don't want to have the wandering thoughts, *Sayalay*. I want to concentrate on the breath, but the wandering thoughts automatically come in." "How do the thoughts automatically come in?" I don't know. Do you know?

This reporting is not correct. I don't want to make you feel shameful, so I just keep quiet. If I say, this is your desire, you might not be happy with me.

Sometimes, it is not easy to be a meditation teacher. If I'm too direct, you are not happy. You want to listen to nice words. Is it true? You want to hear, "Oh, you are very, very good." If it is not good, I have to say that it is not good. I don't want to say that you are good all the time.

If I think it is not right, I don't want to say that it is not good. I will be quiet. I will not say that you're good.

That's the reason. All the different kinds of wandering thoughts are due to your desires. It is because you want to contact attractive objects.

Once your mind doesn't want to contact those objects, those thoughts will not come in. That's the reason.

We need to focus more on the breath. Try to be interested and happy with the breath. So we can do that for twenty minutes on the breath. If you are really willing to do it, surely, you will feel comfortable and you'll get subtle breath. And when you concentrate on the subtle breath, it's so peaceful.

Quiet down and think about breathing. Immediately, you'll get *nimitta* also. Well, it is not for this thing. If you cannot get *nimitta*, it doesn't matter.

Just try to learn how to be relaxed with the breathing, how to be happy with the breathing every time. If you don't want to concentrate during eating time, never mind. After eating, try to feel the breath a little bit.

And before lying down on the bed, be aware of the breath. We have one and a half hours to sleep on the bed. Also, think about the breath before you go to sleep: "Oh, how is my breathing?"

Concentrate on the Breath

Peacefully note in-and-out breaths and relax. Slowly, slowly, you need to train to be happy. Once you don't feel happy on the breathing, it is very difficult to get concentration.

So, don't let go of the breath. Train slowly, day by day, every moment, every session, each and every minute.

ānāpānasati

Put the pleasant feeling on the breathing. Only then, you'll like it. This feeling of liking it will make you concentrate. So if you feel comfortable concentrating on the object, then slowly, the mind gets happy with this object. The mind gets brighter in our mind.

The mind becomes very bright with concentration. After the mind becomes bright, you will feel a kind of bright light appearing, from the mind or outside of your body, or in front of your body, or on the face.

Actually, the bright light is not from the outside, not from an external window, etc. Don't be confused by those things. All of the light comes from the concentrated mind, from our heart-base.

So, the happy and concentrated mind will produce the bright light. Different colours will appear. That's the first step of *nimitta*, the first sign of concentration.

So now, many meditators have this pleasant feeling. This is a very good sign. Because you feel comfortable, your concentration will improve. That's the reason you see the light.

And then, you know the rest already. You have listened to talks about *jhāna* many times already about what absorption is. I'm also bored talking about this. So, you know that concentration improves because the *nimitta* appears in front of you.

When any colour appears, you don't concentrate on the colour. That's the first thing. You just concentrate continuously on the breathing. Don't let go of the original object of the breath.

Stick continuously to the breathing. Then slowly, slowly, in the beginning, the colour will come and go. It doesn't matter. Just keep concentrating on the breath. Sometimes, the breath can stop for a while. It doesn't matter. Keep on concentrating on the breath.

Then slowly, slowly, the colour will change to white. When it changes to the white colour, it is the second level of *nimitta*.

Even when the colour changes to white, you still need to place the awareness on the breath. Don't let go of the original object. At this time, you should not use energy on the breathing.

Sometimes, you want to make the breath clear. You are worried about losing the breath. At this time, the breath is very subtle. Because

you don't want to lose your concentration on the breath, you may use a lot of effort to breathe.

You want to make the breath very clear. Because of this, you push too hard and this can cause the movement of the breath to be very fast.

Because the breath movements become fast, the heartbeats and heart palpitations also become very fast. You can feel the connection of the movement of the breath and the beating of the heart. So easily, you will get tired, nervous and frustrated.

That's the reason, when this happens, you need to relax and breathe. You can adjust the breathing. We purposely make it slower and breathe in and out very softly. So, when you breathe in this way, that is, when you breathe slowly, the breath will become soft and subtle again.

Pacing Heartbeat

The heartbeat can also be slowed down. And also, you'll feel more peaceful. So we can adjust in this way. Even when the breathing is fast, make it slow. Sometimes, when the breathing is too slow, the breath will disappear. You need to breathe again. Slowly, you breathe again.

When you breathe, the subtle breath will appear again. Then concentrate again. After a while, the mind becomes peaceful. Then slowly, the *nimitta* becomes brighter and transparent, clearer and clearer. In the end, you need to have the clear *nimitta*.

The third level of *nimitta* is the clear *nimitta*, a clear light. The clear light is like a crystal ball, like a clear, bright star. If your *nimitta* can be like the crystal ball or like the transparent diamond, then that is the best *nimitta*.

If you cannot get the *nimitta* like the crystal ball or the transparent diamond, you need to practise until the *nimitta* is like a clear bright star. Only then, the *nimitta* will slowly come and stop. We need to concentrate on the breath until this clear light is stable. It needs to be stable for at least five or ten minutes.

Only then, the mind will slowly focus on the *nimitta*, the clear light. If you absorb or concentrate too early on the *nimitta* when it just comes and stops, it will slowly spread to the whole body.

After spreading to the whole body, you will feel comfortable in body and mind. But in the end, there is no longer an object. You don't feel the *nimitta* in front of you.

That's the reason that your absorption cannot last a long time. And that is not the true *ānāpānā-jhāna*. This happens because your light is spread to the whole body. You feel comfortable with the body. Your mind is so happy and peaceful with the body.

We need to remember that the body-object is not the *ānāpāna* object. That's the reason why even though the body is comfortable and the mind is happy, we still need to stick to the meditation object of the *nimitta*. The *nimitta* cannot disappear or spread.

Look at the nimitta When It Is Clear

Also, don't penetrate inside the *nimitta*. When you go inside the *nimitta*, the *nimitta* will also spread. Slowly, it can disappear and your mind is inside the feeling of the spreading of the *nimitta*. This is also not correct.

The feeling is very comfortable, very peaceful and boundless. But it is not yet the *ānāpāna* object.

That's the reason why we should not go inside. The first step is to just relax and watch the *nimitta*. Watch slowly, like you are gazing at the full moon in the night. Your mind is so happy and so relaxed watching the moon.

It's the same for *nimitta*. Relax and watch the *nimitta* slowly, with happiness. Then you look at it again. At the beginning, it's a little bit unstable. It doesn't matter. Keep on thinking about this object. Oh, this is *nimitta, nimitta*.

And then, continuously, the awareness for your mind is to know the object, i.e. *nimitta nimitta*. Then slowly, you feel happy and mind stick to the *nimitta*, that is called *jhāna*. Absorption starts! The mind becomes happy, and the body becomes lighter and lighter.

In the end, you don't feel your hand, your body. Your body form is lost. There are only the mind, the happiness-mind and *nimitta* only. If you continue in this way for one or two hours, this is what we call absorption, first *jhāna*.

First *jhāna* means, *vitakka* (applying thought), *vicāra* (sustained thought), *pīti* (joy), *sukha* (happiness) and *ekaggatā* (one-pointedness of the mind). Five *jhāna* factors arise during the concentration of the mind on the *nimitta*.

Absorption

The arising of these *jhāna* factors, is what we call absorption. It can be said that during the time of the first *jhāna*, feeling also arises. This is what we call first *jhāna*.

If you can enter the first *jhāna*, it's very good. After you got the experience of the first *jhāna*, you will know, how peaceful your concentrated mind is. At the same time, because you're doing absorption on the wholesome object, every moment, every thought process can produce wholesome *kamma*, *kusala kamma*.

Don't think, "Why do I have to stay with this object for one hour or two hours? I am wasting my time." Don't think in this way. Some people have that kind of thought.

Many people question staying with the *nimitta* object. Only concentrating on the *nimitta*, seems a waste of time. Some people feel that way.

It is not because we just want to force you to practise in this way. When you concentrate on the *nimitta*, you will know. The mind is so happy, so alert and it doesn't have any *akusala*, unwholesome thoughts.

Unwholesome and wholesome thoughts cannot happen at the same time. So when thinking about *dhamma* object, this is *dhamma* object also. Because you are contemplating on the *nimitta* object and because of the concentrating and penetrating mind, you don't have unwholesome thoughts.

Every thought process is producing wholesome *kamma*. In one minute, you are producing a lot of wholesome *kamma*. And at the same time, if you have happiness, then your *kamma* is higher than normal *kusala kamma*.

Among the mental components of consciousness, there is intention. We call this intention, *cetanā*. For good things, the intention must be with happiness, only then, your producing *kamma* becomes stronger and stronger.

So that's the reason it is important to concentrate on the *nimitta*. When you are entering *jhāna* time, you can feel the mind is so quiet, so happy, so relaxed, without tension. At that time *kusala kamma* is produced.

After emerging from the absorption, you can feel the mind is so powerful. It is very alert and very bright. Whatever you want to concentrate on or penetrate into, you can easily penetrate and understand.

Sometimes before you penetrate, the insight is already there. You want to know something. After emerging from the *jhāna*, you concentrate. You think about that, and you directly find the answer in your mind. There is no need to use psychic power.

Automatically, in your mind, you know what you need to do. And the guidance is there. After practising *jhāna* many times, automatically in your mind, you will be guided and know this is wholesome or unwholesome.

That is produced by the *Dhamma*. So, it is very, very important for us to get concentration and wisdom for our *kamma* and for our way to

the *Nibbāna*. Although you're tired, please be patient, and put in more effort until you get *jhāna*. Also, don't talk too much. When you talk, you cannot get *jhāna*. Remember that.

Question & Answer

.....
* "To whom do Buddhists bow to and why? When should we do it?"
.....

I would like to make it clear that we are now talking about Buddhism. There are different religions which each have their different beliefs, different gods and different ways of showing respect. In Buddhism, the first thing we need to know is The Buddha, the second is the *Dhamma* and the third is the *Saṅgha*. It is very, very important as Buddhists to understand the *Buddha*, the *Dhamma* and the *Saṅgha*.

Life of Buddha

As for The Buddha, we know about Him as it has been clearly recorded in history that He existed more than 2500 years ago. He was born in the northern part of India. He was married, had a family life and at the age of twenty-nine, He renounced and went into the *Uruvelā* forest where He meditated for six years. Later, at the age of thirty-five, He attained the states of *arahatta magga* and *phala*. From that day on, we called Him The Buddha. Before He arrived at that attainment, we could not call Him The Buddha. He was then only known as the '*bodhisatta*' in lay life. After the attainment of the states of the *arahatta magga* and *phala*, we could address him as The Buddha.

Why is it that we can call him 'The Buddha'? This is because He is the knower, the owner of the *Dhamma*. He knew the Four Noble Truths and He also knew how to teach other people. He knew not just these Four Noble Truths, but He knew a lot of *Dhamma*. But He chose to teach the Four Noble Truths. Why? This is because only those who

practise the Four Noble Truths are able to reach *Nibbāna*. This is the Way to *Nibbāna*! He found this out for Himself and for this reason we call Him The Buddha, the owner of the *Dhamma*. The *Dhamma* originated from The Buddha.

Not an Image Worship

So just now when we worshipped The Buddha, we worshipped The Buddha image because the real Buddha is no longer alive, He has already entered into *Nibbāna*. So when we bow down, though we are bowing to The Buddha statue, we think that it is like the real Buddha. We are bowing to the qualities of The Buddha.

Just now we chanted the nine qualities of The Buddha starting from ‘*Itipi so bhagavā arahañ*’ Do you remember? Do not forget! These are the qualities of The Buddha. When you chant, you need to know what you are chanting—these are the qualities of The Buddha. So when we worship The Buddha statue, we contemplate on these qualities, we pay attention to the qualities of The Buddha.

There is another reason why we worship The Buddha. During The Buddha’s time, beings also respected and bowed down to The Buddha. Why is that so? That is because they recollected the qualities of The Buddha, and they respected the *Dhamma* that He had. In The Buddha’s mind, there was a lot of *Dhamma*. So to His mind we offer this respect, we worship the *Dhamma* that is there. At the same time, we worship both the qualities of The Buddha and the *Dhamma*.

Now when we bow down to The Buddha statue, do not think, “Why are we bowing down to The Buddha statue? It seems meaningless.” Do not think like this. Just think that it is like the real Buddha, just think about the qualities of The Buddha and the qualities of the *Dhamma*. Not only that, after He became enlightened, He started to teach the *Dhamma* in the *Migadāya* forest to the five *bhikkhū*. At that time, He taught the *Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta*. This *Sutta* mainly emphasises the Four Noble Truths. Many Buddhists know about the Four Noble Truths.

Four Noble Truths

They are the Truth of Suffering, the Origin of Suffering, the Cessation of Suffering and The Way Leading to the Cessation of Suffering. These are the Four Noble Truths.

Whoever wants to attain to *Nibbāna*, whoever wants to practise up till *Sotāpanna*, *Sakadāgāmī*, *Anāgāmī* and *Arahant*, must have the four *magga* and *phala*, the four Paths and Fruitions. For these people, it is necessary to know the Four Noble Truths right in the very beginning. Without practising the Four Noble Truths, it is not possible to attain *Nibbāna*. So we need to know these.

There are many people who think that after listening to a short *Dhamma* talk, some people are able to attain to *arahant*. Then many people start to get confused. They think, “If that is so, why do we have to follow the Four Noble Truths which is so long a journey?” Some people might even be confused, thinking, “Why do we have to even go on this journey?” There is no need to be confused. After listening to the talk, did anything happen to you? Nothing happened! So if nothing happened, we still need to practise.

It is a long, long journey. Do not bargain, alright? We still need to follow the instructions of The Buddha. What are the Four Noble Truths? The First Truth is the Truth of Suffering, namely, the five aggregates of *nāma* and *rūpa*. What is *nāma* and what is *rūpa*? Do you know? This is very important.

Then the Second Truth is the Origin of Suffering. Why do we get suffering of the body and mind?

We get suffering because we have previously done good *kamma* and bad *kamma*. So we need to find out what kinds of good *kamma* and bad *kamma* we have done. We need to know. That is why we have to look at our past lives, to know about Dependent Origination. That is the reason.

Dhamma

The *Dhamma* is not easy. The *Dhamma* is very profound. After The Buddha's passing away, we mainly emphasise the *Dhamma*. We need to worship the *Dhamma*. And who are the ones carrying on the *Dhamma*?

Nowadays, there are monks of *Theravāda*, *Mahāyāna*, Tibetan, Japanese Zen traditions, all different branches of Buddhism. You might know that there are many branches of Buddhism. Anyway, we respect one another.

All the monks and nuns study about Buddhism, they also study the *Dhamma*, the way as taught by The Buddha.

There are three baskets of the *Dhamma* that we call the *Tipiṭaka*. We call the discourses, We call the discourses, 'suttāni' (see *sutta*). We need to know many *suttāni*. We call them 'suttāni' and not 'sutras' [*sanskrit word], you know? We need to study the discourses and also the rules of discipline for the monks and nuns which we call the 'vinaya'.

There is also the *Abhidhamma*, penetrating within our bodies and knowing what is really inside. The study and penetration of what is inside is what we call 'Abhidhamma'. The knowing of *Abhidhamma* is *vipassanā* knowledge. Its study can produce *vipassanā* knowledge. These are what we call the *Dhamma*.

So we respect them because they are the practice of *Dhamma* and the practice of meditation. That is why we worship the monks and nuns, why we worship the *Saṅgha*.

Ariya Saṅgha

During the time of The Buddha, the *Ariya Saṅgha* was emphasized. The *Ariya Saṅgha* means those who have already practised until they have reached some level of attainment, until they are enlightened.

These include the *Sotāpanna* (Stream-Winner), the *Sakadāgāmi* (Once-Returner), *Anāgāmi* (Non-Returner) and the *Arahant*. So the enlightened *Saṅgha* is the meaning of *Ariya Saṅgha*.

Other members of the *Saṅgha* are like the ordinary members of a society while the *Ariya Saṅgha* is the committee. The qualities of the *Ariya Saṅgha* are just like we chanted earlier.

Do you remember? We chanted ‘*Itipi so bhagavā arahaṇ*’; after the qualities of The Buddha, those of the *Dhamma* and then those of the *Saṅgha* are recited. Those qualities of the *Saṅgha* refer to the *Ariya Saṅgha*. So there are different types of *Saṅgha* as well. If the renounced person is not enlightened, he does not have the qualities of the *Saṅgha*. That is why meditation is very important.

As Buddhists, we need to bow down respectfully to The Buddha image, thinking that it is like the real Buddha. We also need to respect the *Dhamma*. Although there is no real person around to represent it, you can still see the *Tipiṭaka*, The Buddha’s teachings and the books that record these teachings.

When we were young, we bowed down to the books. People might think that we were crazy, bowing down to the books. But that is because of the *Dhamma*, you know. The *Dhamma* is in the books. So we bow down respectfully. In this way, we show respect to the *Dhamma*.

We also respect the *Saṅgha*. When we see monks and nuns, regardless of whether they keep the precepts well, we just bow respectfully. That might give us wholesome *kamma* too. This is why Buddhists bow down as they do.

Chapter 2

Faith II



Sayalay spoke about the importance of *saddhā* – Faith as one of the five ‘leaders’ of all things wholesome. She used the analogy of human beings’ need to associate with one another in the society through loving-kindness, and likened mental states to friends, ‘good’ and ‘bad’ friends. Among these ‘friends’, Faith, Effort, Mindfulness, Concentration and Wisdom are like ‘leaders’ among the ‘good’. She encouraged meditators not to lose faith and give in to their habitual tendencies towards defilements.

The English translation of the Pāli word, *saddhā*, is faith. Especially for all Buddhists, we know that *saddhā* is important, that is, *saddhā* for our leader The Buddha, His teaching of the *Dhamma*, and also those who have been taking care of the *Dhamma*. We call them the *Saṅgha*.

Buddha, *Dhamma*, *Saṅgha* are very important to us. Those who believe in the *Buddha*, *Dhamma*, *Saṅgha* can really be called Buddhists. Everybody comes here because of *saddhā* for the *Dhamma*, mainly for the *Dhamma*.

And also you have the belief that if you go to this retreat, at the end

of the retreat you may have some kind of benefit. What kind of benefit will you receive?

Homage

Firstly, one will get a lot of good *kamma* from this retreat. We believe that if we want to do good things, from that we will get a lot of benefit, the results of wholesome *kamma*. We want to accumulate good *kamma* in this retreat.

That's the reason each day that we have been practising early in the morning. We always come here and pay respect to The Buddha.

Looking at The Buddha image brings us a lot of happiness, a lot of joyful feeling, as does offering The Buddha some water, flowers and also the lighting of candles.

From this offering we will have a beautiful mind, happiness-mind, and we will accumulate wholesome *kamma*. Even the way we offer or bow to The Buddha has an effect on our mind. In bowing, we pay respect to The Buddha, and are accumulating wholesome *kamma*. This is the first step.

We not only bow down, but at the same time we practise reflection on the qualities of The Buddha, *Buddhānusatti*. This is why you bow, or pay homage three times. Does everybody bow once or three times? (*Audience: Three times*) You must bow three times, one time is not enough, ok. You need to bow three times and bowing half-way is not good enough.

We bow three times paying homage to The Buddha, recalling the qualities of The Buddha; then we pay homage to the *Dhamma*, the Teachings of The Buddha, and then we pay homage to the *Saṅgha*, recalling the qualities of the *Saṅgha*.

The qualities of the *Saṅgha* refer to the qualities of the enlightened *Saṅgha*. Nowadays it's difficult to find enlightened *Saṅgha* members,

and so we pay homage to all *Saṅgha* members whether enlightened or not because they have a lot of *saddhā* for the practice.

For monks and nuns, life is not easy. For this they have *saddhā* and they practise renunciation.

Then after homage to The Buddha what do you do? What kind of practice do you do in your mind first?

mettā

The first meditation practice is sending *mettā*, loving-kindness, sending *mettā* to yourself. You should spend at least 5 minutes sending *mettā*.

Some people may be very stingy sending *mettā* to somebody; they don't like to send *mettā*. Why is that? Do they worry that their *mettā* will be lost? The more you give *mettā* the more you generate; you can gain a lot of merits, a lot of *mettā*, for yourself also. So send *mettā* to yourself.

Send to all the *Dhamma* friends, *Dhamma* brothers and sisters in this hall. Is that good or not good? (*Audience: Good*)

Yes, we are all relatives coming here together, so far from different places, from different countries coming here in the village full of faith; we come here and stay together, we practise together and this is because of past *kamma*. We believe in *kamma*.

So all this good *kamma* accumulates when we are together doing good things. Everybody, each and every day, is meditating. We also pay respect to The Buddha each day. We send out loving-kindness each day. This good *kamma* accumulates.

If you are not good, you might not like to do good things. This is simple. Is it true? (*Audience: Yes*) So you are very good.

Dhamma Friends are Very Important

Anybody who lives in this universe who wants to be alone is going to find that very difficult, especially in human society.

We really need society, we really need to stay together with many other people, at least we need our family.

We need to stay with our parents, brothers, sisters, so that there is unity. You can see that you can receive a lot of *mettā* from your parents, you can also receive this *mettā* from your brothers and sisters.

Because of family *mettā* you feel safe. I just try to teach about the past or current family, not the future. I may talk about the future later, ok? You have parents, brothers, and sisters before you marry. Before you marry you can receive *mettā* from your parents. They really take care of you and you also receive care from your brothers and sisters.

Sometimes of course we may have some kind of an argument. That kind of argument is so simple. We can forgive immediately afterwards so we don't keep the bad feeling or hatred for the family member in our heart until we die. Is it true? 99% of you are OK with this, but not everybody. Some people keep the hatred inside until they die, even towards brothers and sisters.

But most people are open to receive *mettā* from their parents or brothers and sisters. They feel very safe.

Depression

If anything happens, people can speak to their parents, they can explain to their brothers and sisters, they can discuss with each other; they can share their feelings, their unhappy feelings.

That's the reason they feel relief. Such conversations release the suffering in their heart. If you always keep it inside your heart, it is not so good for your health.

And then you don't feel freedom. You are scared and have no confidence in yourself. That's the reason you need someone who can support and listen to you, who can encourage you. If they are happy to support you, you feel that can trust them.

Good friends, good brothers and sisters are very important for our life, for a healthy life. If all the emotions, happy or unhappy feelings are always kept inside yourself and you don't trust anybody, that's the reason in the end slowly, slowly you get depression.

Nowadays in many different countries depression is widespread. So many countries have this problem because of the stressful work or jobs people must do. And also sometimes people don't like to speak to others. Mainly they don't have the feeling of loving-kindness in their heart to share with others. That is because they don't trust anybody.

So if you always want to be alone, then slowly, slowly you don't have confidence in yourself, you don't like to associate with anybody. That's the start or the sign of psychological depression.

Depression is sometimes dangerous for you. That's the reason you need to have a relationship filled with loving-kindness with your family and friends. That's the reason you need to practise loving-kindness meditation towards family and friends.

From your heart you can radiate friendship to everybody with *mettā* feeling. You can share this with everybody. You will see and think: "Oh, I like sharing my feeling. I want them to be free from danger, free from mental suffering; I want them to get good results."

This is your relationship with *mettā*, with *mettā* feeling, as well as how you can communicate this silently with each other. You can communicate it by the mind. If you really send *mettā* from your heart, then people can receive it from you.

Early in the morning, if you are always coming in with anger because you have not had enough sleep, and you make a lot of noise as you come in the room, and you also sit down noisily, your mind is full of many things. And you make a lot of noise. That person doesn't have

mettā.

So if someone comes in noisily, you should know that person never practises loving-kindness because they don't have kindness for others. The best kindness toward meditators, the best way of sending *mettā* is to think, "I cannot disturb them; I must go in there very quietly; I don't want to disturb anyone." That is *mettā*. And with *mettā* you are also happy and peaceful and other people can also practise peacefully.

So don't be scared. We really need to train in this way in *mettā*.

Those who think joyfully of others' benefits, this is very good, and who are appreciative of others' benefits this is *muditā*.

Sometimes we have negative feelings, positive feelings, good feelings and unhappy feelings. We have many different ways of feeling. The feeling of equanimity generally comes later on. Mostly we have *sukha* and *dukkha*, happiness and unhappiness.

These two feelings are always arising, but they cannot arise together at the same time.

If a lot of unhappy feelings arise in your mind, wholesome mental states might not arise. But if a lot of *saddhā* arises and a lot of *mettā* and good things happen, unwholesome mental states might not arise easily. This is because the two are opposites.

We really need to take care of our mind, and not allow unwholesome mental states to come in again, not allow them to enter our mind. We need to protect our mind with "good friends" like *saddhā*. We need the "good friends" who come when we are doing good things.

saddhā is the leader, or most important. We need to have *saddhā* for doing good things.

saddhā and sati

There are four kinds of leaders. The first one is *saddhā*, or faith. The second one is *sati* or mindfulness. Because of *saddhā* you will

do everything mindfully. The third one is concentration. After you get mindfulness, you will concentrate on what you are doing. Fourth, when you concentrate on your object mindfully, in the end you will have wisdom. Because of these four “leaders”, all the “follower good friends” will approach you.

What kind of good friends are these? They are *mettā*, *karuṇā*, *muditā*, *pīti*, *sukha*. All the good and pleasant mental states will follow these leaders.

The person who has *saddhā*, this person easily practises *mettā* and *karuṇā*.

Those who don't have a good base of *saddhā* don't like to do *mettā*. The feeling in their heart will always be violent, always thinking negative thoughts about everybody. Look at someone with unpleasant or angry mind. The unpleasant mental state is *akusala* mind.

Also you can see that while you may have a lot of friends, even old school friends, they cannot stay with you forever until you die. Either they die first or you die.

Sometimes people say to each other, “Oh, I love you so much I want to be with you.” But how long can these words last?

No one can guarantee...they will last only for a moment. After a while they will disappear, *anicca*, *anicca*.

Wives and husbands might tell each other that they want to be together forever, not only this life but after they die. The next rebirth or next life they also want to be together.

You are afraid in this way...this lifetime you have a happy life. Your wife is very beautiful. Your husband is handsome. You hope that next life you will be together. What will you think about this after you are seventy?

When your wife dies, you look at her corpse two weeks after she's dead. You will have remorse that you have made the wrong decision about wanting to be together in the future. After she dies, look how

your wife is changing.

Since we were young we like to learn the *Dhamma* and we meditate. And after meditation we see ourselves as thirty-two parts of the body, thirty-two parts that are so ugly. We look at the thirty-two parts, for example, at the skeleton. That's the reason we are scared to love anybody. We have confidence that we should not love as one day that being will be a skeleton.

Just now I encouraged all of you to have good friends to do good things with them, joining them with a good heart. We need to understand a good relationship, but that relationship is not for attachment. We need to use wisdom. We don't love blindly in friendships, ok?

If you fall in love in your friendship because you have so much attachment to each other, this is dangerous. One day you'll have to separate from your beloved and there'll be a lot of pain, a lot of sorrow and lamentation. So we want to cultivate friendship without the bad intention. Bad intention means attachment, which will create unwholesome *kamma*.

Pure love is very important. Pure intention towards each other is very important.

That's the reason it's very important for us to observe the mind, to know what kind of mind is arising. We really need to take care of this because the mind has different kinds of understanding, different kinds of mind. We call these different kinds of mind, *citta* and *cetasika*.

From *citta* and *cetasika* different kinds of mind arise connected with greed, anger, or with jealousy, or related with the good mental states. So many different kinds of mind can arise in our heart.

We want to make good friends with *saddhā*, to nourish the good mind. We want to radiate friendship to others, but we do not want to develop friendship with unwholesome mental states or unwholesome *kamma*. We can love everybody with good mind and good intention,

but not with attachment.

When you have attachment you suffer. You don't want to accept separation from loved ones because you love them so much. That's the reason we need to understand the truth that everybody you love, including your friends, one day will die. You will have to be separated from them. If we can accept that, when we really do separate from them, we don't have much pain in our heart. We don't have a broken heart.

Actually you will feel OK, knowing that this is nature. That is because you always contemplate, "One day we have to separate, one day we have to let go". So we don't get hurt in our heart when we contemplate in this way.

Not only will you be separated when you're dying, but before this also as everybody has their own mind. When they feel happy they will be with you a long time and accompany you. When they are not happy, even if you want them to stay with you, they will go away, go somewhere else. This is true even for family members. This is *anicca* also, because everybody has their own mind, everybody loves themselves more than others.

What do you think? Does your husband love you even more than himself?

Everybody loves themselves more than anybody else. That's the truth. Sometimes if your husband feels happy, he will accompany you, he will fulfil your wishes, but you are second. You are number two, he is number one.

And the opposite is true...she is number one in her mind. If she is happy, she will cook for her husband nicely. If she is not happy, she doesn't want to cook; you'll have to go out to eat.

In this way, everybody has their own mind. You can't control other people's minds and emotions. Unless you are very, very nice to them, only then will they be nice back to you. If you do something wrong,

they will react badly to you. This is common knowledge.

So we can see from our experience in relationships that there is a lot of impermanence. There is impermanence also in relation to material things. Maybe you love your car very much and always want it with you. This is just an example. Many men have an attachment to a good car. Many ladies want a beautiful house. So everybody has their own desires and attachments to things. You start out very much liking these things. After a few years, your mind changes. So, then you want a new model car or a new house design. Even a shirt...today you feel very beautiful when you wear this shirt. Tomorrow, what happens? You want another shirt. So all material desires are changing.

With material things if you really love them, they can stay with you for however long you want to keep them, possibly until you die. But when you die, you cannot bring them with you.

With people, although you might want to keep a person, if their mind is not happy, they will run away. So let us check. What is really forever for you? (*Audience: kamma*)

Because of *kamma* what we do is important. Everybody wants to be forever young, but being forever young is not a good thing to become attached to.

What you can follow forever is only the *Dhamma*, and *kamma*. Because you love the *Dhamma* you are making good *kamma*. So this good *kamma* follows us after we die. *kamma* is really a good friend.

Not only this life is relevant to *kamma*. If you practise the *Dhamma* in this life meditating on *nāma rūpa* until you become a *sotāpanna* or practise *ānāpānasati* until *jhāna*, then in the next life you will go either to the human or *devā* realms.

How much you have practised in your past life will impact how easily your meditation object can arise in your mind. It will impact how easily you can practise and reach states of attainment in this life.

Only the *Dhamma* is forever beside you. It will go with you always.

So your best friend is the *Dhamma*.

You cannot go back home after this retreat. If you go back home, the *Dhamma* will not follow you. Only your family will follow you. So after the retreat I will see how many people want to stay here.

For this *Dhamma*, we really need *saddhā*. *saddhā* is very important. Without *saddhā*, the *Dhamma* does not easily grow in our heart.

Based on *saddhā*, you will think: “I want to try, I want to try. I want to do good things. I want to practise the *Dhamma*.” This kind of basis for the mind is very important, even for The Buddha.

Buddhahood

There are three types of *Buddhā*. First type of Fully Enlightened One (*Buddho*) is based on *vīriya* or effort. This kind of *Buddho* takes a very, very long time to fulfil His *pāramī*. The second type of *Buddho* is based on *saddhā*. The third type of *Buddho* is the wisdom type of *Buddho*.

The wisdom *Buddho* is like Gotama Buddha, the previous *Buddho*, our historical Buddha. He had only four *asaṅkheyya* and one hundred thousand aeons to fulfil His *pāramī*. The *saddhā* *Buddho* took double this amount of time to fulfil His *pāramī*. And the *vīriya* *Buddho* took more than sixteen *asaṅkheyya* to fulfil the *pāramī*. So it was very difficult for each *Buddho*. To be a Fully Enlightened One (*Buddho*) is not an easy thing. Without *saddhā* it is very difficult to fulfill the *pāramī*. *pāramī* are very, very difficult to practise.

pāramī

For those who have *saddhā*, their mind is clear and bright. For those who don't have *saddhā* mind, their mind is always unhappy and unclear with a lot of dust, like a lot of rubbish in the water and this is very difficult to penetrate into. So that's the reason the water needs to

be clear.

When the mind is clear like clear water, we can really penetrate into it. We can do what we want to do with happiness.

So the main basis all meditators need is *saddhā*; you should not lose your *saddhā* in the practice. This is needed for the fulfilment of *pāramī*. Even The Buddha needed *saddhā* to fulfil His *pāramī*.

Once you lose your *saddhā* all the unwholesome mental states arise. All that is unwholesome will come into your mind.

There are different types of unwholesome thoughts and mental states. Sometimes you don't want to concentrate on the breathing. Sometimes you don't want to pay attention to your meditation object. The mind wants to go away, wants to think about bad things.

Desire comes into the mind because you have lost *saddhā*, lost faith in the practice. So don't lose your *saddhā* or faith in the practice. Carry on.

The mind is very powerful. What you want to do, you can do it. But you don't want to control your mind.

The commander needs a lot of energy and a lot of effort and a lot of mindfulness. If the commander is lazy and not mindful, the fighting or war will start in the mind. What will happen? The lazy commander will die first.

The lion always seek out where the arrow originated, who shot him. He doesn't just look at the arrow. So he will look at who is shooting the arrow and then he will catch him.

That's the reason we need to train as meditators. You are really the commander who must take care and protect your mind so it will be strong with a lot of mindfulness. You need to guard against any unwholesome thoughts entering your mind. If you are not mindful you will be 'attacked' directly in different ways. So that's the reason we have to take care of our mind very carefully each and every moment.

Don't let any unwholesome thoughts come in. Don't let your *saddhā* fall down or be lost. We must encourage ourselves again and again. You need to think, "Today I cannot, but tomorrow I will try again. I will never give up. If I try, one day, I'll be successful. One day I'll get a good result." Only these kinds of people will be successful in their lives.

Don't give in to your mind so easily. We always want to relax our mind. We always want to be free. We don't want to focus on anything.

Your mind is not used to focusing on one object. Even focusing on the *ānāpāna* object or any meditation object for ten minutes may seem tiring to you.

Actually meditation is the simplest work. You just sit! But you need to fight with your mind. You cannot give up easily.

That's the reason I want to encourage all of you to prepare to be commanders in *Brahma Vihārī*. You need to take care and train like an army. You need to be very strong, everybody working hard, every time trying to sit longer, trying to spend a long time sitting.

Long Life versus Short Life

So you don't want to get up from sitting even though you may die, never mind.

If you die, never mind, *Sayalay* will give you a tree. When you die, I will give you a tree with your name on it where you are buried. (*Audience laughs*) Good if you die here—it's safe for you.

Many people don't like to listen to talk about when they die as they're afraid of death and dying. They just want to hear: "Oh, I want you to have a long and happy life." Are you angry with me? (*Audience: No*)

I wish that you have a long life, but during this life you need to do beneficial things. You need to do more good things.

If you have a long life and you never practise meditation, never keep the precepts, it wastes the opportunity of being born a human being. If you are out everyday drinking beer, everyday gambling, this is not good. It is dangerous, even though you may have a long life. In this case, the longer you live the more you accumulate *akusala kamma*.

You need wisdom. You need to do a lot of good things in this long lifetime. That's the reason everyday please try to make more *saddhā* in your mind. Practise more *mettā*, loving-kindness, to others too. The more you practise, the more you get the peaceful states in your mind.

We need to put this into practice. Sometimes it's just theoretical. Each morning and evening chanting the loving-kindness, *Mettā Sutta*, do you feel anything special in your heart? Is there any special feeling during the loving-kindness, *Mettā Sutta*, or are you just chanting?

Sending mettā

During chanting time, think about the *devā* and try to feel in your mind and from your heart that you're chanting *mettā* to the *devā*... to all the *devā* and the deities and all the human beings, all the lower beings. That intention is important.

Having that intention while chanting is very good, it benefits you, it benefits everybody. So practice is very important.

Everyday try to build *saddhā* with loving kindness-meditation. Please try again and again and don't give up easily on your practice until you get the *jhāna* and until you get deep concentration and *vipassanā* knowledge.

After seeing *nāma* and *rūpa* you can see all about your past lives. Those who have *saddhā* will believe in past lives which are very important for us.

Also the present is very important for the future life. Because of this belief in past lives, we will make more good *kamma* in the present. The past is already past.

After knowing about the past we can learn a lot about good or bad things, in other words *kamma*. This is the benefit in seeing many past lifetimes.

The present is also very important for the future life. After we learn this, we will be mindful in the present for the benefit of the future.

If we never learn this, we never see from our past lives what kind of good or bad *kamma* we have done. We never learn how this has shaped us from life to life, for many lives.

After we understand this, we are scared to do unwholesome things, unwholesome *kamma* because we don't want to repeat that kind of bad life. We don't want the bad life, the animal life or lower life. That's the reason we want to be careful with the practice and do the daily practice in the present for our welfare in the future lives.

In this lifetime if we can become *arahantā*, then there's no need to worry about the future. Then we are safe.

If it's not certain that we are *arahantā* or if it is not easy to practise in this lifetime, we still need to take care of our *kamma*. We still need to make a lot of good *kamma* for the future rebirths, future lives.

Everybody wants to go to the good life. Who wants an animal life?

If we want a good future life we need to take care of our mind. We need to do good things or good *kamma*, and we should not generate bad thoughts, bad *kamma*. You all know this already, theoretically, but practically it is very difficult to practise.

Commitment

If we want beneficial outcomes from the practice, we must train with mindfulness and wisdom. For this mindfulness and wisdom, *saddhā* is very important. Once *saddhā* drops away, wisdom will drop away also. Mindfulness will also drop away. That's the reason we need to have *saddhā* as the foundation of our practice.

Of course in the beginning coming here on retreat we all have very strong intention. Each one of us thinks, “I really want *Dhamma* and I’ll practise until whatever level.”

Yet after two weeks on retreat, there’s a lot of talk, a lot of gossiping, creating a lot of problems for yourselves and others. You’re not happy on the retreat. You feel the retreat is suffering.

Who causes the suffering? You! You yourself make yourself unhappy.

I am one hundred percent committed to you; I have a very strong intention to support your practice, not ninety-nine percent. Everyday I have good intention for all of you to achieve good results.

I also want all of you to have good health. That’s the reason we are very careful everyday. We are concerned about all of you actually. I am concerned that you might get diarrhoea or some other illness; so everyday we need to be careful.

If you are sick, it’s not easy to practise. The food you eat is important and therefore we don’t give you leftover food from the day before. We try to keep our kitchen very clean because I don’t want any of you to get diarrhoea. You can only meditate properly when you are in good health.

We are supporting all of you with one hundred percent *mettā*, fully *mettā*. So if you aren’t happy, it is your own problem, not my problem.

If you say, “Sayalay, this is not good. I’m too tired. *Brahma Vihārī* is not a good place for me. Everything is not good.” This is all your own *kamma*. So be careful.

Don’t go making unwholesome *kamma*. You need to respect what people have done for you.

If you know how to respect each other, then the whole world will be happy and peaceful. If you don’t know how to contemplate all the good that people have done for you, and if you don’t have gratitude for

their goodness, then everywhere you go you will get trouble, not only in *Brahma Vihārī*.

Wherever you go you will get problems. Even if you go to heaven you will also get problems. Don't think heaven is peaceful.

In the heavenly realm, there is also a lot of jealousy because one *devo* has five hundred deities, or many wives. As many ladies like to practise meditation and like to offer *dāna*, when they die they end up as heavenly deities.

There is also a lot of jealousy. So heaven is not necessarily safe. It's important to cultivate a peaceful heart wherever we are.

Every minute is important for us, important for everybody. If you are now happy and young, you may not appreciate time. But when you get old and approach the death moment, you'll know how important time is.

When you are getting old, and aging and sickness appear, unhappy thoughts may arise. That's the reason when we have a happy life, a happy time, we need to practise more and not waste our time.

Even one minute is important, if you live respectfully in that one minute, that's helping create a safe future. If you don't have respect in one minute, you also won't have respect in one hour. Then in one day you won't care about bad thoughts or doing bad things, which is creating bad *kamma*.

Once you're reborn in a bad life, it's not easy to come back to a human life again. So, all of you need to have wisdom in this life.

You also have a lot of *Dhamma* knowledge. This is encouraged because I don't want to waste your time. This is the main purpose in being here. I don't want you to lose your *saddhā* for the practice.

Many people think, "Oh, never mind, I don't think I'll be successful in reaching the *jhāna* in this retreat". They also think they can't be *arahantā* in this lifetime. That kind of mind is really not good for our practice.

If this mind arises, you've got depression already. If you've got depression, you don't have confidence in yourself. You don't want to make an effort. You don't practise continuously. You want to give up easily.

That's not too good. So let go, let go of *akusala*, unwholesome thinking. But don't let go of your practice, don't let go of doing wholesome things. You always need to encourage yourself, always need to be ready to fight to do good things.

It's the same for me also—I never give up easily. I always like to do as much as I can for the people, I'll try my best. One day I want to practise until I'm an *arahant* in this lifetime.

I'll never give up this idea until I die. So we are waiting for the chance to arise for us to practise. That's the reason we built this meditation hall.

When the time is ripe, we will practise, we will die peacefully. If you want to join us, come back, come back and practise—you are very welcome! We will help each other practise together, we will share the practice together.

Now, I prepare myself to die, I'm ready to die. But before I die, we will practise more everyday, never giving up in every moment to fight with unwholesome speech, actions and thoughts.

Come on, try to fight. Here, we're busy with wholesome intention for the people.

Question & Answer

.....
* "Can beings in the *devaloka* (*devā* realm) practise meditation?"
.....

Of course they do and they do it very well and very often! Many people have this misunderstanding that in the *devaloka*, there is only sensual desire. They believe that there, they just enjoy life with their

many wives and there is just enjoyment on the sensual plane. That is what people believe. That is also why they are afraid to go to the *devā* realm. They think that there is only enjoyment there, and after that life, they still have to come back again.

Actually, there are also some *devā* teaching the *Dhamma* too. And also in the present lifetime, you can make a determination like this, “Oh, in my next life, I want to be reborn in heaven. I want to be a meditator *devo* (male god) or a meditator deity (female god).” If you really want to go to heaven, pray in this way. Pray that you go not for enjoyment, but for the meditation practice.

Enjoyment is not good; it is a waste of time. How long can you stay there? After your time is finished, you have to go again. If you have too much attachment, you can die easily. After death, you can go to hell too. So it is not really safe. But if you go to heaven and you can meditate there, then that is the best. There are also meditation teachers and some *devā* and deities who meditate too.

There are also meditators in the *devaloka*. Sometimes during The Buddha’s time when He gave *Dhamma* talks like the *Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta* or the *Mahāsatipaṭṭhāna Sutta*, many *devā* came down from heaven to listen. After listening to the *Dhamma* talk, only very few *human* beings were enlightened. But there were billions of *devā* and *brahmā* who became *Arahant*, *Anāgāmī*, *Sakadāgāmī*, and *Sotāpanna*. There were so many of them! After listening, they became enlightened and went back to heaven. When they got back to heaven, they did not like to enjoy themselves.

They just wanted to meditate there. They have a good environment; there is no need to use air-conditioning! This meditation hall with air-conditioning is like our heaven, isn’t it? We have to thank *Bhante Zhenyi* (Bekok Temple Abbot) who kindly lent this place to us!

The environment in heaven is only for people who have enough good *kamma*. Only such individuals can stay in heaven. Whoever does a lot of bad things, breaking the precepts and doing a lot of bad *kamma*

in this life may want to go there, but such persons cannot get there. Is this true?

Those who can stay in heaven have to keep the five precepts at least. They must keep the five precepts, do *dāna* and practise meditation. Only with the support of good *kamma* can they stay there. So if you want to go to heaven, prepare now! Make more good *kamma*! Maybe you say you want to go there but you do not do good things. Instead you are always doing bad things; then you cannot go. So this is important if you want to be a meditator in heaven.



Chapter 3

Loving-kindness



Here, Sayalay emphasized the importance of the practice of loving-kindness, both to oneself and others, as a crucial support for the practice of *sīla*, *samādhi* and *paññā*. She gave examples of how loving-kindness supports oneself to practise peacefully in a meditation retreat, and how it can be used as a basis for *samatha* and *vipassanā*. She also explained the importance of balancing loving-kindness with equanimity, especially in our daily lives.

Today I would like to explain what is *mettā* or loving-kindness. Many have heard this talk before but we have new meditators today. It is also good to practise again and again.

Loving-kindness meditation is very important. The Buddha taught many different kinds of meditation objects for concentration.

sīla, samādhi and paññā

In the *Buddhasāsana* the practice of *sīla*, *samādhi* and *paññā* are very important. *bhikkhu*, *bhikkhunī* and *sayalay* continue to this day and they have their own precepts to keep by the teachings of The Buddha.

Keeping precepts is also very important for lay people. We keep eight precepts here. Keeping the eight precepts is very important. However, if you have any physical or medical problem you can take the five precepts instead of the eight precepts. At the least, as meditators we need to keep five precepts.

Knowing the meaning of the precepts is very important. The first precept which we must try to keep, is to abstain from killing, even insects and all living beings.

The second precept is to abstain from stealing. The third precept is to abstain from sexual misconduct and the fourth precept is to abstain from telling lies. The fifth precept is to abstain from drinking alcohol which is an intoxicant.

In this meditation retreat smoking is also disallowed. These five precepts are very important.

The sixth precept is to abstain from solid food, fruits included, after the noon hour. We can drink fruit juice or certain kinds of herbal drinks, milk is not used in the making of drinks like milo or coffee. These are made daily and in accordance with the method as laid down by The Buddha. Dinner is also not served. Sorry about that but I want you to keep this precept. If you are ill or unwell you may drink milk or take food as medicine.

The seventh precept is to abstain from listening to music and singing. Do not follow the loud music coming in from the village. And if you are unable to concentrate do not start to sing in your head, because it is not good for your precepts. We also need to abstain from adorning the body.

The eighth precept is to abstain from sleeping on high and luxurious beds. Beds for sleeping should not be more than twenty-seven inches high; in The Buddha's time a cotton mattress is considered too comfortable and too soft. Here at the *vihāra* we use a simple mattress.

The practice of *mettā* or loving-kindness is the ninth precept.

Everyday when you practise loving-kindness meditation, when you send *mettā* to yourself or to all beings you are practising the ninth precept.

mettā before samatha and vipassanā

The Buddha taught loving-kindness meditation for the practice of concentration and also for the practice of *vipassanā*, all these practices are in the framework of *sīla*, *samādhi* and *paññā*.

It is not easy to keep the five precepts without *mettā* and compassion to all beings. Without *mettā* to yourself, it is also very difficult to keep the precepts.

When you are kind to yourself and know how to take care and love yourself, you will also take care of your *kamma*.

If you love yourself, then you want to practise, you want to train your mind to be good. It is simple, very simple yet complicated. As it is important to practise *sīla*, *mettā* is also very important.

You may already know that there are forty meditation objects in the practice for concentration or *samādhi*.

The practice of the four *brahma vihāra* refers to the practice of *mettā*, *karuṇā*, *muditā* and *upekkhā*, i.e. loving-kindness, compassion, appreciative joy and equanimity.

In the practice of loving-kindness, The Buddha taught us, as a first step to send *mettā* to the four types of persons. The first type of person we send *mettā* to is ourselves. We need to practise until peaceful feeling arises, until we get *mettā* feeling in our heart, from our mind, from our intention. This is very important. This is the reason why we need to take care of ourselves.

The second type of person we send *mettā* to at the beginning, is to someone of the same gender whom we respect. We think of the person—and then send *mettā* to the person. This second type of person

can also refer to a few persons or a group of people we really respect.

The third type of person is the neutral person. These are persons that are neither our friends nor our enemies. The fourth type of person is the enemy. Or we may call them unfriendly persons.

So, beginning the practice with ourselves, we send *mettā* to ourselves as a protection. It is very important, as we need to have a peaceful mind and a healthy body.

How then do we give ourselves this peaceful mind, free from mental suffering, free from danger?

We need to understand the meaning of the words and the intention, not just ‘going through the ritual’ of chanting, “May I be free from danger...may I be free from danger...” Repeating the words alone will not give you the feeling of peace, the freedom from mental suffering or from danger. You need a contemplative mind, to be able to feel the peace and freedom from mental suffering.

Happy or Unhappy

From the time we are delivered from our mother’s womb, life is either happy or unhappy. We call the unhappy time ‘suffering’, do we call the happy time ‘suffering’? Do we think we are suffering when we are happy? Do we think this way? When life is good and comfortable, we forget about suffering.

But The Buddha taught otherwise. Rebirth means either human birth, or existence in some other realm. With life comes rebirth, ageing and death. This we call life. We go from one lifetime to another.

Rebirth, ageing and death—all are suffering. Being happy or not happy is later. Suffering is when you have body and mind.

Sometimes you feel happy, other times unhappy. When you are unhappy, you contemplate there is so much pain in your body and mind. When you feel life is suffering, you want to be free from

suffering. When times are good, you are happy, you will forget about yourself and about your life, and think that ‘everything is ok’.

That is why The Buddha taught that even when there is happiness, you need to practise *vipassanā*. You need to contemplate that happiness is also impermanent, that it cannot last.

Happiness after a while will also disappear. Happiness forever is very difficult to find. So, whether happy or unhappy, but mostly during time of suffering, we want to be free from suffering.

We do not want a difficult suffering body or a suffering mind. We want to be free from mental and physical suffering. We want to be happy, to have a good life, to be free from danger. This is the reason we need to take care of our mind. With understanding and intention, we want to protect ourselves.

The intention to take care, to want to be free from danger, we call that the sending of *mettā*. The intention to send *mettā*, it is done not only when you are sitting, not only during meditation, and not only in the hall. Where else do you go to practise? The answer is everywhere. Everywhere—in the room, in the meditation hall, the walking paths, inside and outside the compound, dining hall—you practise *mettā*. Everywhere you go it is better to have a contemplating mind.

Except if you are contemplating on the breath, otherwise try to do *mettā*. If you know how to contemplate, you can also join the practice of *mettā* and breathing together.

Is it not good and safe if you can do that? Isn't it good to be free from danger and mental suffering? But it is important that we have pure intention.

Pure Intention

We ourselves need to take care of ourselves and be peaceful all the time. Then we consider, “How about my friends, those whom I respect and all other meditators? They too may be suffering, sometimes physically, sometimes mentally. So, I also want them to be free from suffering, physically and mentally.”

That intention we call *mettā*. Whoever you look at, “Oh, I want to send *mettā*, I want the person to be peaceful, to be happy. I want everyone in this room to be happy.” Is such intention good?

With such good intention would you still have enemies? We do not want enemies, only friends—good friends, good brothers and sisters. The energy is very good, very peaceful. Everyone has happy feeling.

With this understanding and good intention, you will want to treat everyone like how you will treat yourself. You feel for them, you want to do things for them and you want to associate with them.

You will ask yourself, how would the other person feel if I were to think about the person like this? How about the way I speak? Am I speaking suitably?

How about the way I act, am I acting suitably? How does the other person feel? This is all very important not just saying may the other person be free from danger. When you want to make people happy, when you try to cause good understanding and good feeling then you are really helping people.

People feel happy when you help them. When everyone in one compound or in a room is happy with their environment then only will they live happily with one another.

mettā, is when someone is happy because of you, then you are really sending *mettā*, to the person. *mettā*, is not just chanting *Karaṇīya Mettā Sutta*.

It is not enough to know the theory. We need to put the theory into practice. Only then will we get beneficial results.

Causes and effects will happen naturally. Also, no one is perfect, we are all following The Buddha's teaching, practising the *Dhamma*, trying our best to be good in our daily lives. We are training and training ourselves to be good not to be bad.

kamma Follows You

It is good *kamma* when you train to be good and bad *kamma* when you train to be bad. Bad *kamma* will lead you to a bad place.

A bad place means a place of suffering, good *kamma* will lead to heaven and enjoyment. Whether you go to a good or bad place depends on your *kamma*. Remember that *kamma* is made by your intention, your mind and your attitude.

khanti means patience and *mettā* is based on *khanti*. A person without patience has a lot of anger which makes it difficult to cultivate *mettā*. *mettā* and anger are opposites.

It is very difficult to attain a peaceful mind when there are constant feelings of unhappiness, anger and dissatisfaction. When you are angry, do you feel peaceful? Have you experienced this before? Do you have angry feeling? Are you happy when you are angry? So, what happens when you are angry?

Violence may arise. The heart palpitates very fast. The face becomes red and black, the mind becomes agitated which in turn affects the thinking process. The angry energy is no good for you and others. People who associate with you will be scared by your anger and run away. So be very careful.

The Buddha always encourages the practice of '*appamādena sampādetha*'. That means you have to be mindful. Without mindfulness, we get attacked by unwholesome thoughts and the five hindrances.

Patience

You should try to forgive small mistakes, cultivate patience because when there is patience you do not get angry easily and there is no feeling of suffering.

Patience is very important. Have patience with yourself and with others, for example, your roommates. When you see someone doing wrong, try to forgive. No one is perfect, we are all trying.

Do not look at others' mistakes all the time. We are living together, people from different families, different backgrounds, different characters, all coming together.

Unless we forgive and are patient with one another, we will encounter many problems. Teaching is not tiring, but solving problems is very tiring.

Can you forgive each other and love each other like friends, like a brother or sister? Look out for one another. Share *mettā* with each other. I want to take care of all of you. I try to make sure you get good food even though we only serve vegetarian meals here, but we try our best.

This is our intention. I try my best to be good all the time. The workers here are also taught to try to be good, they will have good *kamma* because the students are meditating and practising the *Dhamma*.

There is good energy in the kitchen. The kitchen workers are united, happy. There is no feeling of unhappiness or unease or tiredness.

No one complains because there is *mettā* in our hearts towards all of you. We have been cleaning and mopping, again and again, days before your arrival. We want your accommodations to be clean and dust-free, and we want your stay to be happy and peaceful. We are very happy to welcome all of you.

This is *mettā*. Cleaning up for your roommate is also *mettā*. So is tidying the garden, sweeping the road and the floor.

When you clean the room, sweep the floor and tidy up the garden, it is with your good intention that people who use these places would then feel peaceful and happy.

People can feel the good energy and happy feeling because of *mettā*. So do not get upset when you do gardening or sweeping the floor.

Certain meditators who are used to having things done for them at home may feel upset because they have to do everything for themselves here like sweeping and washing their own plates after a meal. If you do not want to wash then do not eat because then there is no plate to wash.

A student may say, “I have to wash my plate. I have to wash my clothes, gardening. I have to do it all.” You may not be happy with me. If you are ‘not unhappy’ with me then you have a lot of *mettā*.

Yes, we try our best to send *mettā* to all students. During interview a few days ago, a student told me directly that of the many meditation centres she had been to, this was the worst. All the others were very good.

She complained about the centre and the long-term resident students. She felt the latter were rather egoistic. My reply was this centre and many things here are not perfect.

For me the centre is ok. I try my best to take care of all the students. The centre cannot be likened to a hotel. All of us here are still practising. We are not *arahant*, so mistakes can be expected.

I also cannot take care of other people’s minds all the time. Everyday I try my best to be mindful, very mindful, but sometimes the students are not mindful. If a student is not good, who will people blame?

People will come to me and tell me directly this centre is not good and ask why the people who live here are like this or like that.

So, what can I say other than to practise patience and to forgive? I forgive everyone. Whoever is happy and wants to stay can stay. If one is unhappy and wants to go home, please leave. Since I have tried my best, this is the only way.

If I want to, I can make it luxurious for all student meditators here, but I do not want to do that because we have to concentrate on the *Dhamma*.

Everyone in the kitchen has been taking care of everyone. We are not perfect cooks. We never attended cooking courses. But when we came here, we had to learn how to cook.

I only started to learn how to cook after my ordination. I have been travelling and teaching meditation the whole year and did not do any cooking anywhere.

When I am back here, I start to learn how to cook all over again. We tried our best to take care of everyone. If student meditators still want to complain there is nothing I can do except to forgive them. I have tried my best. I cannot take care of other people's minds.

I just want everybody to be happy. If you are not happy, you can go back today. My answer is if you want to be happy and want to stay, you can stay.

I practise a lot of *mettā* and compassion for people. I am happy for anyone who can make progress and who is happy.

I do not have a jealous mind, I am very happy if a student can be better than I am. I share whatever knowledge I have, I do not hold back knowledge.

I want to teach whatever I can understand. I am happy when a student can be better than me, why should I be jealous? Life is so short, we stay for only a short time and then take our leave and go our way.

I do not get angry or unhappy when people blame me or scold me, truly. I practise equanimity, *upekkhā*.

When I started teaching twenty years ago, I had a lot of attachment to the students. I wanted them to get good results, to be perfect. When they cannot get good results, I scolded them.

I pushed them a lot. When the students took me to the airport, I cried and the students also cried. There was a lot of suffering.

With understanding of suffering, I learned to let go, to practise equanimity. When people said the centre is good or bad, my mind accepts and lets go.

I just want to share with you the way it is. I need to stress that our intention is really pure. Our intention is to practise and support the *Dhamma* and for you to stay here peacefully.

Daily we have been trying with pure intention, so do not be mistaken about our intention, as it may be harmful for you. We know for ourselves our pure intention. We are not scared that people will blame us.

I know what I am doing and why I have to do it. It is not important whether I am respected or not, because I do not take it to heart. I want to explain so that people do not create bad *kamma* for themselves because of me.

I have explained my position. We do everything with a very pure heart. So anyone who is not happy and who wishes to leave, may do so anytime. If there is no one around, I can meditate by myself. The centre is big and comfortable.

I can walk around, meditate and be happy. I am not upset nor do I have any bad feeling. I am happy to welcome you and should you choose to leave, I am happy too.

Now you know the reason why we need to take care of our mind. I try not to be an enemy of anyone. So whether I am blamed or scolded, it is all right.

Blame

If two persons have *mettā* for each other, or there is *mettā* with one another, there are no angry thoughts and everything feels ok. You will also not blame others easily.

Try to understand one another. Only then will you feel peace. I see suffering in all of you sometimes, is it because you cannot let go of your self-importance?

When you are full of yourself, you may think you have wealth, you have such and such. It is because of your 'haves' that you have problems. Without so many 'haves' you are free.

Teacher vs Teaching

Do you know why I do not want to be a teacher? Or do you know why I do not like to be a teacher?

I want to share the *Dhamma*, I do not want to think of myself as a teacher. The reason is that I do not want to get too much ego, behaving like a teacher. Teachers have certain ways about them.

They think everyone is their student. And they want everybody to become their students. That is the problem.

They even try to treat their husbands like their students. There are many teachers here. They can tell me if what I said is correct. That is why I do not want to be a teacher.

It is suffering. You cannot imagine how much I have suffered. I will die if I am placed in a room with another teacher.

When I see two people fighting, I just smile. That is because they are like young children fighting with one another over something they want and cannot get.

I do not feel anything. The smile is in my heart. Such people will stop fighting when they are tired or when the time is right. How long

can they fight—whole life, every twenty-four hours? So just watch. Mostly, I just want you to watch yourself.

mettā is very beautiful. For meditators to have beautiful intention towards one another, they must want to care for each other, to offer help when it is needed. This is beautiful mind which we call *mettā* and also good *kamma*.

With so much *mettā* and no anger you can easily concentrate on your meditation object as soon as you sit down to meditate. *mettā* brings happiness to your meditation.

When you are not happy, you can be sitting for one whole hour, forty minutes, fifty minutes and not be aware of your breath. You are so angry in your mind and complain and complain that you cannot even find your meditation object.

So, take care of your mind. We send *mettā* to the four types of people until all, like you, also equally send *mettā*. We can practise 528 types of *mettā* towards different kinds of people.

You can send *mettā* to all beings, different kinds of beings. There are different kinds of beings such as *devā*, humans, animals, etc..

Before you start to practise *ānāpānasati*, you could say with intention, I would like to send *mettā* to all who live in this universe. I want everybody to be peaceful, to be free from danger not only in my centre, but everywhere.

You can send *mettā* to anyone, anywhere in the world. You can send *mettā* to far distances. If your *mettā* is powerful, it can be received and can even be felt.

Whoever is receiving your *mettā* can see your image at the time you are sending *mettā*. For this reason radiating *mettā* is very powerful.

We can apply *vipassanā* based on loving-kindness meditation. We can practise loving-kindness until third *jhāna* and contemplate with *vipassanā* on each type of beings. With *jhāna*, we can then contemplate on that person deeply.

At the beginning you want the person to be free from danger. At the same time you also contemplate the *Dhamma* that one day this person will age, get sick and will die.

Although we want the person to be happy and peaceful, we also have to think of the nature of this life, that it is also impermanent. Sometimes *mettā* can cause a lot of attachment.

mettā with vipassanā

After sending *mettā* to this person, use *vipassanā* knowledge to understand so as not to become attached. Should anything happen, you can easily let go.

The Buddha explained that *mettā*, compassion and equanimity need to be balanced. Sometimes, parents have great love towards their children. Is that pure love? Pure love has no attachment. If there is attachment, it is greed. It is then not pure love. Parents' love for their children—is that pure love or not?

Parents have good intention. They worry about their children with too much attachment. Their children have to be perfect compared with other children. There is too much attachment. Parents think only of their own children.

Too much worry is not so good. You can become so attached even to the extent of sacrificing your life for your children.

This is very strong attachment and it is dangerous. Pure *mettā* cannot be mixed with attachment. This care with *mettā* is encouraged by The Buddha.

Sometimes we need to contemplate and understand that no matter how much we love our husband, our children, one day we all have to separate. It is very important to understand this.

You want your children to get good results at examinations. You become unhappy when your children did not get the results you

wanted. You become angry with your children. This is not good for you. You need to contemplate about *kamma* also.

You cannot push too hard all the time, always wanting perfection. You need to contemplate about the nature of *kamma* and the impermanent nature of what is happening.

You can then accept any condition, including the suffering and pain caused by your children. In this way we need to practise equanimity and not be attached to anybody.

Then only will you feel more peaceful and not harm yourself because of attachment. If you are attached to your family, when the time comes for separation, you have a lot of suffering and unhappiness.

When your family members become sick, you feel a pain in your heart, because you do not want to be separated from your family. You have to understand that not wanting to be separated because of attachment is suffering. From *mettā* we can continue with *vipassanā*, letting go of attachment.

With the foundation of concentration, *samatha* and *vipassanā*, joining together, you will see and act truthfully.

Because your *vipassanā* is based on *mettā*, the resultant is wisdom. You will know how to let go of things. As your *vipassanā* arises because of *mettā*, you may be able to see the truth of things in this relationship. Do you understand?

Being truthful will give you good *kamma*. Because of your intention to send *mettā*, that energy will ensure you do not have any enemy wherever you go. People will also trust you.

Who will trust you when you do not have *mettā* and are always creating a lot of problems? People will also not trust what you say or what you do. Truthfulness comes from your *mettā*.

People will like you as soon as they look at you or make contact with you. Whether they are near or far away, wherever you go because you

have been sending *mettā*, people will be kind to you. That is because you have been communicating and contacting each other with *mettā*. When you meet each other for the first time, the other person feels good, feels happy to communicate with you.

Whether you have good or bad feeling, it can be easily felt by the other person. So even meeting for the first time, you can easily communicate with the person. One can see this through that person's action and speech.

From then on you can communicate. People meeting you for the first time, they feel good, they like you and want to help you.

If your speech and action are not so good, also people will not like it, this might be your own *kamma*.

In the past you have been talking and acting in the same way. It is not easy to change. You have become used to acting in a certain way. Those actions will always stay with you.

Life after life, when people look at your behaviour, they might not be happy. Then you ask why people do not like you? We need to contemplate ourselves. I had been asked by people why others do not like them.

We cannot always blame others for not liking us. We have to take care of our mind, we need to check ourselves. When people blame me over something, I check myself. Is it my action or is it my speech that is not right?

When you realise the reason why people blame or criticise you, then you need to change for the good. We cannot tell people to change. We need to take care of our mind and slowly we try to change ourselves.

This is also meditation. The Buddha also taught.

In the *Maṅgala Sutta*, The Buddha explained how to live, how to take care of our mind, how to behave, all very important for meditators.

The main thing is we need to keep our mind balanced. Whether people and things are good or not good, we need to be stable. We should not get emotional easily. This is important.

Life is not permanent, it is always impermanent. Feelings are also impermanent. Nature or the environment is also impermanent.

I have been teaching for many years. We meet different people in different countries, but wherever we go, all the organizers have been helpful.

In Taiwan I taught for more than ten years in a very famous centre, a place with very disciplined teachers and students. I met many organizers, many Shifu, we did not have any problems and they took very good care of me.

Although we come from different cultures, different religions, we are happy to support one another, taking care of each other like we are brothers and sisters. Everywhere we go whether it is Taiwan or Hong Kong, this is what happens.

International Students

It is the same in Japan. The Japanese are very different from any other people. They are very loyal.

They have invited me to teach for more than ten years now. They will not invite any other teacher, even when I tell them to do so. Sometimes when I am unwell, they will say that they will wait, they want to practise with me.

I have not seen any other country like that. In Malaysia, sometimes when I say I cannot come and tell them to invite some other teacher, they will do so.

But the Japanese are really very different. They took great care of me, and they are very sincere. They are also very careful, they do not simply accept a teacher without repeated observations.

For three years they attended my retreats with other groups. They came to listen and to observe. After that they decided to invite me and they have stuck with me ever since. They said they will practise until they die and they will always invite me. I told them they can invite, but I cannot always go.

Thus is the relationship the Japanese have with me. They are very supportive. So, because of their faith and truthfulness I have to support them even when I am very tired.

It is not because I want their praise, but because I can see they have very sincere hearts. They told me that at the time of the earthquake. They were in danger and they called on me to protect them.

I said I do not have the power to protect the whole country. But I was very touched when they told me that all in their group were free from danger.

They really have respect for me. They are also sincere in their hearts and in their practice. I try to be their equal. I try not to become proud.

In all the many different countries people are so nice and so kind. In order to know one another we need to associate with each other time and time again.

Then only you will understand each other better. It is not enough to just associate once. In order to really understand each other you need to see each other many times and over a period of years.

So, that is the reason I am very happy to travel and meet up with many very good people. I do not see any bad people anywhere.

Even in a Muslim country like Indonesia people are respectful, very good and kind. I feel very happy everywhere I go. People asked me, "Why am I not tired? Why don't I take a rest?" You know, resting here is more tiring.

When I stay here I am very busy. I go everywhere. I am very happy. When I stayed in Germany, many people from Italy came to visit me

just to cook Italian food for me. I really appreciated that they purposely came to another country to cook.

I lived in an apartment and they were all in the kitchen busy cooking. I could feel the happiness in their hearts, they were very happy to serve. I also liked their food very much.

Everywhere I go I try to love the local food. Every New Year I stayed in Japan so I ate their traditional food which I also love. They were so happy I ate together with them.

In this way I learn that anywhere I go I need to respect the people's culture. I need to respect their practice, for example, *Mahāyāna* Buddhism. Then only my mind is peaceful and the people do not have negative feelings about me.

It is not correct that everyone has to take care of me or follow my ideas, just because I am the teacher. Although I am a teacher, I need to be humble. I have to go down to their level or even lower, only then there is no problem.

I feel it is very tiring if I were to say that everyone has to take care of me, to listen to me. This is not my way. I only want to teach what The Buddha taught.

I only take care of The Buddha's teaching. I never think that everyone must respect me or do what I am doing. But you must understand that I will protect the *Dhamma* very strictly.

I can be easy-going. I don't think highly about myself. However I am very strict where the *Dhamma* is concerned. If you are not following The Buddha's Teachings I will ask you to leave the centre immediately, whoever you may be.

Some people are confused about me. They asked why Sayalay has different characters? I just try my best to support your practice.

I hope you can understand. I have my principles when it comes to The Buddha, the *Dhamma* and the training. When you do, we will have good relationship for a long time to come.

It is because of my respect for the *Dhamma* that I offer my whole life to serve the people. It is because of the *Dhamma*.

Whatever you do or say belongs to you. Your mind, your speech, your actions—all belong to you only. I do not want you to get bad *kamma*, I want to protect you.

Support Practice

We will hold May retreat in Japan but they said there was a prediction that a strong earthquake may take place at the area where we usually hold retreats. They asked if I am scared to go to Japan, whether I still wanted to come to Japan? So I asked them back whether they still wanted the retreat at the same place. They replied that they were waiting, if I go the retreat is on.

I told them I will be there, that we will die together. I will definitely come and not run away from that earthquake.

So if I am still alive next year, if our *kamma* is still there, then I will come here again. Otherwise there will be no more retreat next year. Although it is dangerous in Japan I will still go there.

Many years ago at the time of the SARS outbreak, there were very few people at the airport. Singapore airport was very quiet; I was the only person walking around.

But I did not care, I went to Japan. In Japan, nobody wants to go out, they were all very scared. But I carried on with the meditation retreat. Why do we need to be scared? If it is your *kamma* to die, even if you stay at home, you will also die.

They were very happy I was going to come in spite of the danger. At the beginning, they did not want to gather, over one hundred people in one room. But because they were interested and wanted to listen to the *Dhamma* they forgot about SARS.

They felt very happy because of my presence and support at this

dangerous time. I told them it is quite alright if the earthquake comes because we will die together and die happy as we will be practising meditation.

I am not scared to die at any place. I told them not to bring my corpse back to Myanmar, not to bring back anything, neither ashes nor bones. They can be thrown anywhere.

Attachment

This is freedom, is it good or not good? I have no attachment to house or centre. My students know I have stayed here over six years. Once the retreat finishes either today or tomorrow, I will leave this place. I told them the centre does not belong to me but it belongs to all of you. I am only providing monetary support. Whoever stays behind will have to look after the centre. I trust them because they are very good, I do not call back.

Although I am not here, they take care of this place. We trust each other in this way. So everywhere I go I am peaceful. Anywhere we die also, we are happy and peaceful.

So do not have too much attachment. I want to offer my life in this way. I explain all this to you because I also want you to be like this.

When you are at a meditation retreat and die at the retreat, you must die happy. There is no need to worry if you die at *Brahma Vihārī*. I will give you a place to stay. We have planted many trees. At least you will get one tree.

We will put your name under the tree. Is it good to die here? If you always think of home, wanting to go home, that is attachment. Do you understand?

This attachment will not help you in your meditation, it will disturb your meditation object and your progress. Everywhere is your home, do not look back.

When you look back that is attachment. You love your own place, your property. And when you stay here, you think of your bank account, your business. There are too many things in your mind and that is the reason you cannot concentrate.

Keep your mind on meditation and nothing else, make your mind empty. Take care of your mind and practise continuously. *sādhu!* *sādhu!* *sādhu!*

One last point, I want all of you to be happy; do not be unhappy and uncomfortable with one another. Be friends. Be like a family, and everyone is a brother or sister.

Forget about what happened yesterday, let it go. Tomorrow we all are good friends and like sisters. Can you let go? Can you let go of the unwholesome?

Let go of all the unwholesome feelings, dislikes, and unhappiness. Do not keep anger inside your heart. Forgive and be happy. We all are like sisters.

Today you quarrel. Tomorrow must try to make up. The same is true for husbands and wives; otherwise they may end up divorced. For here, there must be friendship. It is best to have a good relationship. Even if you do not want to, try for my sake. Try to be nice, it is better to be nice.

Question & Answer

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* “How does the meditator train in his loving-kindness skill to the extent that the recipient of the loving-kindness act is able to receive the kind act?”
.....

The other day, we already explained that *mettā* (loving-kindness) has its power. Only just now, we chanted loving-kindness, we chanted the *Karaṇīya Metta Sutta*. How did you feel after chanting it? Did

you feel tired or did you feel peaceful, light and joyful? What kind of feeling did you get? You do not know? You must feel something.

Sending mettā in jhāna

This is different from the way The Buddha practised. When He sent *mettā*, He entered the *jhāna*. You can enter up till the third *jhāna* and send *mettā*. At that time, the mind is very strong. Also, *mettā* has power. So if you can practise *mettā* up till the third *jhāna*, it is very powerful. That is why we encourage you to just send out thoughts of *mettā*, “May all beings be free from dangers, may all beings be free from mental suffering...” Of course you have good intentions when doing that. You also get *kusala kamma* from that, so it is not wasted effort. Through the kind of chanting we had just now, there is also a lot of wholesome *kamma*, but the power, the quality of *mettā* is different. It is best if we can practise up till we get *jhāna* concentration. In order to enter *jhāna*, we need to take the image of the person as object, make it stable in our mind and then send *mettā* from our heart to that person.

The Buddha’s mettā

When you are sending out *mettā*, it is not like the case of The Buddha who is powerful. He would just shine His light onto that person. As soon as that light comes to that person’s body, he automatically feels the mind cooling down. There is no need for The Buddha to send *mettā*. He only needed to send the light and that person would feel the mind cooling down, and becoming calm, quiet and tranquil.

When The Buddha sent *mettā* to you, you could get concentration immediately. The *mettā* that Buddha has, that *mettā* can make you feel very peaceful and very quiet. That is why when The Buddha wanted to give a *Dhamma* talk to someone, He did not teach *ānāpānasati* or entering up to the fourth *jhāna*. After sending *mettā* to that person, He explained about *nāma rūpa* arising and passing away. It can be

just a short *Dhamma* talk. But after that, the person could become enlightened. He could become an *arahant* because The Buddha helped him to get concentration.

That is why when The Buddha sent *mettā* even animals could receive the *mettā* sent by His power, the *mettā* power. Do you believe it? Try it tomorrow! Send to me and I will see if I can receive it!

mettā Practice

When you are sending, you really need your intention to be pure and from your heart. You need to send it happily. Without happiness, the *mettā* cannot really be felt. You must truly feel in your heart, the *mettā* feeling. You must really have the intention that you want your children to be free from dangers. It must come from the heart, you know. It does not come through speech, but from the heart, that you really want them to be free from dangers.

From your heart, you need to create this feeling and send it slowly. Only in this way, can the feeling arise and you will feel happiness too. You need to send *mettā* in this way, in order for others to receive it.

And also if the recipient has good concentration, it would be easier to receive the *mettā* too.

What happens if someone sends *mettā* to you and you are sleepy at that time? If you are sleepy, can you receive it? Yes? No? Try it out tonight! I will send *mettā* to you. See if you can receive it! If somebody is sending *mettā* to you while you are meditating or when you have good concentration, you can receive it easily.

There are some *brahmā* who like to send *mettā* and they are always in *mettā jhāna*. They are always sending down *mettā* to the whole universe. So if you live in this universe and you have concentration power, you can receive their *mettā*.

In this way, it is possible to receive their *mettā*. This of course, also depends on the individual's qualities.

Chapter 4

Generosity & Gratitude



Sayalay explained the importance of the practice of the ten *pāramī*, and how to practise them. She highlighted the practice of generosity and the importance of gratitude for others' offerings. She told the story of the *Mahātissa* who sacrificed a lot in order to practise generosity and how this had supported a *bhikkhu* in attaining to *arahatta*. Sayalay also shared about her own past practice of *dāna pāramī*.

So the retreat will be ending soon. I hope that all of you have been happy here. Do not worry about the result. Try to be happy with what you have done in this retreat.

In that time you have accumulated so many different kinds of merits. We ask that all the merits we have accumulated be for good *kamma*.

The first thing is that we can get benefit in this life with a lot of good *kamma* from this retreat. And so we must be happy. When there is suffering, we also make ourselves happy.

Even The Buddha practised in *Uruvelā* Forest in India for six years. You have not yet even practised for six months. Isn't that right?

Even after six years of practice, he hadn't become an *arahant*. So,

we are ok, don't worry about the results. Don't get upset. "Oh, other people get *jhāna*, why I can't?" Don't be like that, don't give yourself pressure, relax and take it easy.

The Buddha practised for many past lives, many aeons. He also practised the ten *pāramī*, which are as follows:

1. *dāna* or generosity
2. *sīla* or morality
3. *nekkhamma* or renunciation
4. *paññā* or wisdom
5. *virīya* or effort
6. *sacca* or truthfulness
7. *mettā* or loving-kindness
8. *adhiṭṭhāna* or determination
9. *khanti* or patience
10. *upekkhā* or equanimity

The Buddha practised all *pāramī* and more, not only those ten. Each of those ten *pāramī* has three levels of practice, not just ordinary kinds of practice.

To become a Fully Enlightened One (*Buddho*) is not easy. Every *Buddho* needs to practise a long time. There are many long life journeys. *Buddhā* are not like ordinary people. They need to try very hard to practise the ten *pāramī*.

And then, as far as The Buddha's history is concerned, it is not only the ten *pāramī* that are developed. There are also the three levels of attainment.

The three levels are: the basic practice, the middle way of practice and the highest practice.

dāna

Even in the practice of *dāna*, there are three kinds of practices. So we multiply the the ten *pāramī* by three times. Then we have thirty ways of practising the *pāramī*. Let's take the example of *dāna*—generosity. When we practise *dāna*, it is acceptable to do just the first level of *dāna*.

Now you all have practised *dāna*; many people can do that. Your property or whatever you can give to poor people, or to the monastery or to family members. So you give away many things. What belongs to you is whatever you have. You can give it to others; this is what we call *dāna*—generosity.

So generosity is the opposite of stinginess. When we really can let go of our attachment to our things, to what we own, to what we have, then we are practising *dāna*. We do not just cling to things for ourselves.

We would like to share our things with somebody who really needs them. This is the way to generosity, to giving to the others, this is *dāna*.

So this kind of *dāna* is something that everybody can do. Many people can do it.

Many of you people who come here have given *dāna* for the food and the monastery, and for the nuns. You have done different kinds of *dāna*. That is the first level of *dāna*.

The second level of *dāna* is if someone asks you for your organs. This means your eyes or any part of your body like your kidney or whatever. So if someone really needs it, they will say, “Oh, please offer me your eyes; I need them now.” Now, is that ok?

“I need your kidney; can you offer your kidney?”

“I need, I want you to offer your wife, or your husband, and your children.”

This is the second level only. So the second level of *dāna* is giving away parts of your body and other precious part of you.

When people ask you, you must do it immediately. You cannot say that after I die you can take all the parts from my body. It is not that kind of *dāna*. Immediately you must give. That is the second level.

The *bodhisatta* practised also in this way. All through the *bodhisatta's* lifetime he did *dāna* as is recorded in many of the *suttāni*. If someone asked him to give his wife, he agreed. It was not because he didn't love her, he did.

So do you want to offer *dāna* of your most beloved one or the ones you really love? Then you need to give them away. That is the best *dāna*.

Sometimes people offer many things and may think, for example, in this way: "I like this very much. I love it. I will keep it. I don't like this one. This is not good quality. I don't like it." So they offer what is not so good and their *dāna* is not so good. You know, your favourite, what you really like. If you can let go of it, that is the highest *dāna*, so that's second level.

Why can't you offer your wife? Why can't you offer your wife or your husband? Is it because of attachment or because nobody will cook for you? You need to be clear about this, you know. Don't trust what they say.

So anyway, sometimes you need to think, who really gives you trouble. Is it your enemy or your lover? Who really gives you trouble? Suffering—who gives you the most suffering?

Your beloved gives you the most suffering. That is because you love that person too much. You worry so much. The worry gives you a lot of suffering.

So the closest one, your beloved spouse or whatever you love, will give you a lot of worry. You will receive a lot of suffering from that person.

Many people think that it is the enemy that makes them suffer. They think the enemy makes a lot of problems, a lot of suffering. That's not really true. The enemy is the one you can let go of sometimes. You can easily cut enemies off from your circle. But your beloved you cannot easily cut off.

And so when your beloved does something, you will get a lot of pain and suffer so much. So, we understand about that. That's the reason we try not to love too many people. We are scared of suffering.

Next is the third level of *dāna*. If someone asks you to offer your life, then you can accept death. You will offer your life for the benefit of the people. In this way, we have three types of *dāna*.

sīla

There are three types of practices. Virtue too is practice. First of all, there is *sīla*, keeping the precepts. They are all the same. So, normal people will keep eight precepts.

Sometimes, in the evening you might get pain in your stomach. You may think, "Ah... I have to take care of my stomach. I have to take care of my body. If not it will get worse." So what happens? You keep five precepts. If you can keep them, then already that is very good. Keeping of the five precepts is better than nothing.

Higher levels are to keep them very well. Whether you are sick or you die, you just keep them. This is the way of the highest practice.

So, there are all kinds of practice on three different levels. Effort is the same. And renunciation also is the same.

Renunciation

Renunciation—for one month or one and a half months, I will renounce worldly concerns. I will go to *Brahma Vihārī* and practise meditation. These are the thoughts of a meditator.

You all have renounced although you have not shaved your heads, nor did you change your clothes. But you have come away from your home. You don't have family now. You came here alone to practise the *Dhamma*. You have renounced your family.

This is also renunciation. It is the first step. The first level of renunciation, because you still need to go home. That is the basis of renunciation.

The second level is like us. We renounce for a month, or one and a half months, or for one year, or two years. This kind of renunciation is of the second level. We have to decide, or have decided for three years, during three years' time we don't want to disrobe.

We think, "I will try, even if I am sick or whatever happens, it doesn't matter. I will try my best to practise." That kind of determination is a bit higher than the determination to be a meditator for one and half months.

Then, another type of renunciation is practised by those who have ordained. They have renounced and have let go of everything. They have no family, no property. They come into the monastery for the practice, and they practise until they die. So until we die we don't want to disrobe. There is that kind of strong determination.

Any kind of problem that arises, any kind of difficulty, it doesn't matter. We will accept it. We will try our best to overcome it.

In this way, the one who practises that way, practises the highest renunciation. So who wants to practise the highest renunciation? Nobody wants to? You only have time for one and half months of renunciation. You are busy. You all are busy, busy. Is that true?

'Perfections' is the meaning of the word '*pāramī*'. In many of your past lives, you might have practised the ten *pāramī*, the ten perfections.

I don't know how many lifetimes you have practised *dāna*.

I don't know how many times you have kept the eight precepts, or ten precepts or different kinds of rules that are kept in *bhikkhu* life.

Everybody has their own practice and their own *kamma* in these ten *pāramī*. So I don't know how many types of *pāramī* you have practised, or particularly what your practices in the past may have been.

So all the *kamma* in the present moment, you want to check that *kamma*. Sometime you can see different levels of *kamma*—causes and effects.

Some people in this lifetime, can be very rich, can be very beautiful, can be very wise, and they can be healthy. These are different kinds of *kamma* and we really believe in *kamma*.

So those who have all the good conditions and bad conditions are receiving the fruits of their *kamma*. We all believe that all conditions belong to our own *kamma*.

Whatever we have done in the past, good or bad, is *kamma* only.

So if we are getting very sick, sick, always sick, it is because we have done bad *kamma* in the past. And when we are healthy, it is because we have done a lot of *mettā* and loving-kindness practice and compassion. We have felt compassion for others in the past life. That's the reason in this lifetime you may have a healthy life and a good life. If your past *kamma* is good, you may have a long life too.

That's the reason that some want to keep a lot of precepts in this lifetime; keeping eight precepts is not difficult for them. They think it's very easy to keep the precepts.

And then for the nuns also, there are so many different kinds of precepts. They like to keep them, they are happy to keep them.

That is because in their past lives they had that kind of practice. They are familiar with it. They don't feel any suffering in keeping that kind of practice.

Wisdom

This kind of situation is true for those who have wisdom. Such people can practise very quickly and understand very quickly, within a short time. So when *Sayalay* explains *nāma rūpa*, after listening, what happens? After listening they can enter *sotāpanna* attainment immediately, not because of me but because of their *pāramī*.

In the past life you might have meditated with The Buddha or a disciple of The Buddha. You might have learnt a lot. You might have meditated in your past life.

That's the reason that in this lifetime when you listen to a *Dhamma* talk, about meditation, you feel it is very familiar. From the very beginning it seems right or good for you.

If you were not successful in the past, now when you listen, carefully listen and memorize everything. Keep it in your mind and then recall it after that practice.

And if you can be successful just by coming to practise, that is the second level of wisdom.

If when listening to the *Dhamma*, you enter the *ariya* attainments, that is the best.

And then if you listen and don't know anything and you don't want to memorize and you don't want to practise, then, in the end, the result is zero. This is dangerous.

So there are different kinds of *kamma* with different people. People do good and bad *kamma*, you know.

Anyway we still learn and try. Sometimes because the *kamma* is not yet mature, we struggle. When the time is right and the *pāramī* are mature, we can be successful within a short time.

So we cannot say who really doesn't have *pāramī*, who doesn't have wisdom; we cannot truly say this to anybody. Sometimes we need to wait for the right time to arise.

When the time is right—next year when you come, maybe your time will be right. Maybe your *pāramī* will have grown.

So within one week, you can be an *arahant* too. We can't tell.

Ripening of kamma Without Expectation

So some people kill a lot, like *Aṅgulimāla*. He did a lot of killing, and so he broke the first precept a lot. When he met The Buddha, within a short time, he kept the precepts. Within a short time he was transformed.

So he must have been listening carefully to *Dhamma* talks from The Buddha. At the end of a single day he became an *arahant*.

Time also is very important. Don't think that because you are not progressing in meditation that you don't have *pāramī*.

Don't blame yourself. Do you understand? Because your time is not yet right, that's the reason. When the time is right, you will go faster than others. You can encourage yourself to do better like this. [Audience: Laughter]

We also know that the making of good *kamma* is important in our life. So we come here, do *dāna*, keep the precepts, practise meditation.

Whatever we do, we want to make it perfect. That's the reason we've been practising properly, everyday keeping noble silence respectfully.

You keep the precepts and respectfully you have done *dāna*, a lot of generosity for the meditators. So when doing *dāna*, you may think that some people need to benefit from that *dāna*. Do you have any intention, when you do *dāna*? Anyway whether you have intention or not doesn't matter.

The Buddha has explained to us that those who have done a lot of *dāna* and generosity in the past, will be reborn in heaven in the next life.

You can be born in good conditions and maybe you can be rich. Maybe you will be reborn in a rich family. Then you will be rich also. So this is cause and effect.

Also many meditators come in and do *dāna* for many other meditators. The best way is to support those who practise the *Dhamma*, that is the highest merit. And the benefit from supporting meditators is a higher merit than to offer to ordinary people.

Of course you can give *dāna* to ordinary people and also poor people. Because of your intention, your good *cetanā*, those acts will give wholesome *kamma* results also.

But giving to meditators and the *ariya puggala*, enlightened people is different. It is more powerful *kamma* than giving to ordinary people.

If you can offer to enlightened beings or *ariya puggala*, it is the highest merit. So the second level is for those who are trying to reach enlightenment.

You have all been trying to attain enlightenment. So if you can offer to all the meditators, it is really good. Even though when you are offering, you don't have any expectations of the kind of results you want or the kind of benefits you want, the results will come automatically. Your *kamma* is a very high level of practice because you have pure intentions during offering time.

In *Dhamma* terms, we don't have expectations of what we want. The Buddha also encouraged us in this way: just give, just give without expectation.

Although you don't have expectations, the result of the *kamma* will come to you. It is the law of cause and effect. Don't think that you offer and after that you need to pray for what you want. Then only after you pray can you get what you want. Don't think that way.

Nowadays many people have that idea, "When I offer something quickly, I must pray for what I want, non-stop." That may also be good, but too much is not good.

Expectation is not so good. So when we do something that benefits the meditators, they still need to respect it. It is very heavy duty when we eat other people's *dāna*. It is very, very heavy. Also such *dāna* is very expensive when offered everyday.

If you don't know how to contemplate other people's *dāna*, and you don't know how to respect it, and you don't want to meditate after eating the *dāna*, it is very dangerous. It is your duty as meditation students to be respectful of others' generosity both for your welfare and the welfare of others.

In many *suttāni*, The Buddha has been teaching us this. We have to be very careful with *dāna*.

At the time of The Buddha there is one story I would like to share with you. It is related to *dāna*.

Mahātissa's dāna

It is about *Mahātissa*. You might know it because it is very famous too. In one of his past lives he was a labourer. He had a wife and one daughter too.

So although they were poor, they always gave *dāna*. Every two weeks, for the new moon and the full moon they liked to offer *dāna*.

So whatever they had they would give everyday to whoever came in front of their house, any monks or *sāmaṇerā*. They gave to those who went for *piṇḍapāta*, alms food.

The husband and the wife always prepared the food and they always liked to give *dāna*. Because they didn't have any money the food they gave wasn't so good.

Whenever they gave *dāna* to many of the young *sāmaṇerā*, they realized that the *sāmaṇerā* were not happy. They were not happy because the food was not of good quality. It was not good, and so the *sāmaṇerā* could not eat it. So they were not happy.

So what happened? Each time they offered the food, it was thrown away in front of them.

And although it was thrown away, they didn't feel upset. They contemplated, "Oh yes... because we cannot offer good food to them, they don't like it."

"Maybe they are not happy with the food and that's the reason they throw it away. Ok, next time we must offer the best food. That's the reason we need to earn more money."

So they tried to think in a positive way, not a negative way. If you offer something to somebody, if they throw it away in front of you, how do you feel? How will you act? "Next time I don't want to offer anything anymore," will probably be your reaction. "How can they do that?" you might feel.

Most of the people will think like this. So because they didn't have any money they could hardly relieve their hunger and still they offered *dāna*.

Some people don't know how to appreciate things. They throw them away. Then the givers are not happy.

But these donors may be very good people. That is because they are very good people, for many lifetimes and they have done good things.

These kinds of people always have good understanding. So look at the people also. Such people always try to think in a positive way.

And *yoniso manasikāra* is a good way of thinking about other people. Even towards people who have been unkind, one can think in a positive way about them.

It is very important for the meditator to understand and practise in this way. A needs to be observant without making judgments.

Many meditators, when I look at them I think, "Ha...I cannot tell them anything." When one cannot tell them about things, there is fighting, and so there are quarrels. Roommates, even just two people, also quarrel.

Because you don't have enough patience, you don't know how to behave and take care of each other. And you have a lot of conceit. People cannot tell you anything.

So many negative mental states are with you. That's the reason you have unhappy feelings.

So those who know how to contemplate with equanimity have good feelings, good thinking. They don't have bad thoughts.

“Ok, we will try next time. We will try to offer the best food in the future. So that's the reason we need to earn more money,” *Mahātissa* decided.

Mahātissa and his wife had a discussion. Then the wife suggested to her husband, “Now we have one daughter. Why don't we give her to a rich man? Then she can be a slave and we can get some money.”

This was something like selling the child because in those times, when they gave the child to the rich people, they could get some money. So they thought, “If we give her to them, we can get twelve dollars.” They would receive just twelve dollars. At that time one dollar was worth a lot of money.

The husband also agreed to the plan, thinking, “After offering her, we can get some money. From that money we can buy a cow. From that cow, we can get fresh milk. Then we can make porridge with the milk. So then we can offer the best food for all the monks and all the *sāmaṇerā*. And then they will be happy.”

Both discussed the plan and decided to give up their daughter. In the end they offered their daughter to the rich people's house. They got some money and so they continued to give *dāna* everyday.

They were happy to give *dāna*, but they were also unhappy because of giving away their daughter. The daughter had to work so hard, day and night for the master. For that reason they were also very, very sorry for the daughter.

So then one day, the father thought, “If I carry on like this I cannot take back my daughter. I want to take back my daughter from the rich man’s house.”

From then on he worked very hard. And he moved to another city to work. After six months, he saved the twelve dollars. And he went to take back his daughter.

On the way home he met a *bhikkhu*. *Mahātissa* wanted to give some food to the *bhikkhu*, but he didn’t have any.

On the way he also met a layman, with a packet of rice.

When he saw that, he quickly asked the man, “Oh! Please, can you offer the food to me? I will give you one dollar.” Actually the food was only worth a few cents.

So then that man thought, “He knows that this rice is very cheap. Why does he want to give me one dollar? He must need it very badly.” So that man decided to make the rice more expensive.

“No I don’t want to sell for just one dollar,” he said.

“Ok then, I will give you two dollars for this one packet of rice,” said *Mahātissa*.

Even then that man didn’t sell the rice.

“Ok, I will give three dollars,” said *Mahātissa*.

In the end, that man sold the rice for twelve dollars—even for twelve dollars he didn’t want to sell it. So then *Mahātissa* was a bit disappointed.

Then he explained, “This food is not for me. I would like to offer it to the monk. That’s the reason I want it. I have only twelve dollars that I can give you. I don’t have more than that. Please take my twelve dollars.”

In the end they agreed on the price. *Mahātissa* bought the rice for twelve dollars. So then, as soon as he got the rice, immediately he was so happy.

You know how difficult it was for him to work for those twelve dollars. And then he gave it away in *dāna*. For this *dāna* he gave away all his money. He didn't worry about his daughter, too.

So then that made him happy. As soon as he got the rice, he ran out to look for the *bhikkhu*. As soon as he found him, he asked the *bhikkhu* to stop for a while and he gave the rice to him.

The *bhikkhu* realized he was giving everything away. And so he didn't want to accept all of it.

He said, "Give me half of the rice, half of the rice is enough. Half of it you can take."

Even though the *bhikkhu* wanted to give back half the food, *Mahātissa* did not want to accept it. He said, "Please accept my *dāna*." That time when he gave the rice to the *bhikkhu* he was so happy. So the *bhikkhu* ate the whole packet of rice.

After lunch, the *bhikkhu* asked, "Why didn't you want to accept half of the food from me? Why didn't you want to eat?"

Then he explained to the *bhikkhu* about his life. He told the monk how difficult this *dāna* was for him, how difficult it was to get the money. But although it was so difficult, he was happy, he was very happy to offer this *dāna*.

You can see different kinds of suffering in this story. *Mahātissa* had no money. He had to work hard to redeem his daughter. There were different ways in which he suffered. Although he suffered in different ways, he tried to overcome the suffering, to let go, to offer *dāna*.

When the *bhikkhu* heard about this, the *bhikkhu* felt remorseful and said, "Oh! This kind of *dāna* is very, very dangerous for me. If I don't practise the *Dhamma*, it is very dangerous for me."

The *bhikkhu* reflected, "This kind of *dāna* was very difficult for him to do. So I must respect this *dāna*. I need to give some kind of benefit to the donors".

Then he checked himself, “Do I have that kind of ability or not? Can I give good merits to the donor?”

That is reason he checked himself. In this way of checking, he reflected, “Am I enlightened or not?” Checking in this way is what he did.

He thought, “So if I am an *arahant*, there is a lot of benefit for the donor. If I am not an *Arahant*, if I am only an *Anāgāmī*, *Sakadāgāmī*, or *Sotāpanna*, I must realize *Nibbāna* as an *Arahant*. If I don’t have that kind of ability, it is dangerous. This is not so good for me. I dare not swallow that kind of food.”

He knew that he had to meditate and contemplate the *Dhamma*. Because of that, in the end, he became an *arahant*. After practising, he became an *arahant*.

After he became an *arahant*, he explained to others, “*bhikkhū*, the reason that I could become an *arahant* is because of that donor. Because of that poor man who offered *dāna* under very difficult circumstances, I tried with ardent effort to become an *arahant*. After I realised that, I practised hard. That’s the reason I attained *arahatta*. Because of him, I become an *arahant*.”

That’s the reason we need to think all the time about the people. We need to consider, “What have they done for us? How much have they supported us?”

So we still need to return something. We cannot just say, “Oh this is their business. I don’t care.” Don’t do that. You cannot do that.

We have received so much. For me, this is a bit of pressure.

Before the retreat, we opened the donation box with the *dāna* for this retreat. Some people are very generous. Every year they give *dāna* to us. They give to support us for a day or two. I admire this and I also appreciate it.

I also know that people have been working so hard, day and night,

sometimes they have to work overnight. Sometimes they work until very late, nine or ten o'clock.

And so, everybody loves money. Isn't it true? Who doesn't love money? Tell me. Everybody loves money. Everybody wants to be rich, don't they?

If you know how to save, only then you will be rich. If you only spend for enjoyment, then very soon there will be no more. That's the reason for saving. But there are different ways of saving.

So who tries to save if they believe in *kamma* and Buddhism? Those who know that if they give *dāna*, then next time there will be good results of *kamma* for them in the future. That's the reason that some people can be generous.

And then because of their generosity and their belief in good *kamma*, they like to give support also.

And this is the way people have come to be. Sometimes they need to save, for example, they should not eat luxurious food at home.

Not everybody is rich from that *dāna*. Some people save their money. They don't eat good food, because they like to give *dāna*. We see a lot of this in Myanmar.

So for this reason, in the retreat I always encourage all of you to practise sincerely and carefully.

I don't want to ask everybody here to offer *dāna* when coming for retreat. I won't say, "Everybody must pay for the ten day course. I won't say how much, how many hundreds it costs." I don't like to ask in this way.

I want everybody here to stay and practise free-of-charge. Whether you want to give *dāna* or not, it is fine. I want to support the *Dhamma*.

Because we receive our necessities easily, we still need to have respect. We cannot let go of what people do for us, of what they have done for us.

That's the reason, we try our best to practise sincerely; whether we can get *jhāna* or *sotāpanna* attainment doesn't matter. Our intention must be for the benefit of the people.

You must keep the precepts. Try to be mindful of your meditation object. It is very important. When you do that, you have good *kamma*.

Just now what I explained, also gives good *kamma* to others also. We can transfer the merits to them. It's true. That's the reason that *dāna* is very important. So the *bhikkhu* transformed his mind like this; in the end he became an *arahant*.

When he died, after he passed away, even the king went to the funeral and wanted to cremate the body, but the corpse didn't burn.

Only after the donor came and touched the body, the corpse automatically floated through the air, stopped and then dropped into the fire.

So in this way, we show gratitude to each other. The relationship between meditators and the donors is very important.

So everyday we must send *mettā* to the donors. Have you tried?

Everyday practice you should be sending *mettā* to the donors. Send *mettā* to them. It is very good.

Gratitude

The day before yesterday I went to Sagaing to visit one of the *mahātherā* who is like my father. He was celebrating his seventy-fifth birthday. He had invited 1,200 *bhikkhū* to his centre. He had invited me to go down there too.

I needed to go and give *dāna* early in the morning at four-thirty. I was standing giving *dāna* until nine o'clock.

We had no breakfast, but we were very happy. It had been a long time since I felt like that. That first day when I saw all the *bhikkhū* coming down and I gave *dāna*, I remembered the past.

When I gave *dāna* to them, it made me so happy. That day I thought, “I’m so very sorry that I didn’t tell other meditators. If they could have joined me, how good that would have been!” That’s how I felt.

So I felt very sorry and I apologise about that. I felt that I was very selfish in just giving *dāna* by myself.

I only asked a few people who stayed with me to join me in giving *dāna*. For that kind of happiness we don’t need to make it on purpose, it automatically arises.

That’s the reason that we really need to support each other; it is very important. Next day, I plan to give *dāna* again. I want to go back on Sunday. I want to go back to that monastery again.

They still have over one hundred *bhikkhū* there. I want to give breakfast and lunch *dāna*.

And also all the *bhikkhū* who come for the *dāna* are studying the *Dhamma*. So I want to give them some money for requisites, some for each one. I want to give for their use, to offer for whatever they need.

I don’t know whether you would like to share or not. If you are happy, you can give one dollar, or as you like. One dollar *dāna* for this is ok.

I really want all of you to join in this. It is giving *dāna* to the *Saṅgha*. And then we can do a *Brahma Vihārī* meditators’ *dāna* together this year.

So every year we can offer *dāna*, inviting many *bhikkhū* here. But this year I was very busy with the construction and i am also not feeling well this year. That’s the reason we cannot do it this year. I am glad to be able to go and do that wholesome *kamma* there instead—that made me very happy.

I also want all of you to be happy. Can you offer one dollar or not? So we will join together. I want all of you to be happy and I also want us to offer *dāna* together. We really need to support them. This kind of support is also very good for our *kamma* too.

If you are happy tomorrow after lunch you can go to the office and you just give one dollar each. One dollar is enough.

We will offer all that *dāna* to the *Saṅgha* and to the monastery. They also have a hospital there. The hospital is free-of-charge. They have been taking care of all monks and nuns of this country free-of-charge.

We have very good support, very strong support. So we can support that too.

So anyway I just share this with you, I just want to explain that when I am happy, I also want you to be happy like this. That's my purpose. Don't misunderstand me. Don't think that *Sayalay* is raising funds. Not to say anything also doesn't feel good...

You may offer even a small *dāna*, just a little *dāna*, it doesn't matter. Your intention needs to be pure and you must be happy.

When you offer, you should think about the *Saṅgha*. It's more beneficial that way. Think about the *Saṅgha*. We would like to support them because they have learning; they study the *Dhamma*, and they practise the *Dhamma*.

That *dāna* will cause an effect in the future. We want to get close to monastic life. We want to learn the *Dhamma*. You want to practise all the meditation. In this life, if you cannot, then never mind, next life you may be able to be in the monastery.

If we can practise with that intention, it is very important. You should not mix it with unwholesome thoughts.

'Unwholesome' means different kinds of unwholesome mental states.

So, we keep pure intentions with our happiness. Only then, in the future, with this *cetanā*, the wholesome *saṅkhāra* will affect us.

We are practising meditation in this lifetime. Some of you understand how I became very close to those *mahātherā* that I mentioned. He and those monks have been teaching me the *Dhamma*. I learnt and I practised with them.

So this lifetime I just listened to Pa Auk Sayadaw's *Dhamma* talk. Within one talk, I could recall all the practice—all the *nāma rūpa*, Dependent Origination, past and future.

Everything is so simple and within one sitting time, I can recall all the *Dhamma* because of my past. That is cause and effect. It is not for boasting. I just want to explain that I want to be close to this kind of practice of *Dhamma*. The effect of wanting to be close to the *Dhamma* is that *Dhamma* will be close to you.

You may want to be distant from the *Dhamma*. Then the *Dhamma* will be distant from you, too, in the future.

So that's the reason that I want to emphasize *dāna*. Behind this *dāna* is a lot of beneficial things if you follow it.

Why do you want to give *dāna*? Why do you want to give?

Because of your respect for the person, and then because you want to support them, you have *mettā* for the person. Without *mettā*, you might not give. So this all follows a beautiful mind, all is joined together. This is the ability of our mind. Because of that kind of ability we realize that we want to do something for others.

At the time of The Buddha, He and many *arahantā* practised, and they liked to teach *Dhamma*. They liked to share for the benefit of the people. They didn't want to keep it for themselves only. Until they died, they did as much as they could for the people in this way.

This is why I respect The Buddha and all the disciple *bhikkhū*. So that's the reason that I promised The Buddha to spread the *Dhamma*. Because of that promise I have to suffer a lot.

If at that time I wanted to be an *arahant*, it would have been easier. But I still needed to do a lot of *pāramī* to fulfil this promise.

I want to do it. I also want to be an *arahant* this time, but I don't know yet...

So that's the reason I just wanted to share with all of you that when

you do something you should do it respectfully, happily. Then only the effect will come in time and perfectly arise for you.

Don't do it simply. Even the one dollar you offer, also you must do sincerely. Then only you will get happiness.

If you think, "Oh! never mind, because someone asked me to give *dāna*, I'll go and give it." Just doing simply like that, this is not so good.

Because I just want you to understand how you need to apply your mind to pay attention to the object.

When you leave here very soon, you will be going back home. When you reach home, when you cook in the kitchen, please cook with a lot of *mettā*. Do so for your family. This is very important.

So, for us we cook for you also, although we don't know how to cook. We don't know how to prepare nice food, like a restaurant; we just try our best but with *mettā*.

With *mettā* it is very good. For the people to stay together, more than two people, we need *mettā*. Without *mettā* life is unhappy, we will create unwholesome *kamma*, *akusala kamma*.

mettā is better than *akusala*. Whatever we do, we always do with *mettā*, always with understanding. Then there will be benefit for our life.

When we do like this, then everybody will be happy and everywhere you go also you will be happy.

Don't expect anything from others. Take care of your side first. If you know how to accumulate *mettā* in your heart, no need to worry about people blaming or scolding or having feelings of hatred towards you.

So we can overcome these things by our *mettā* feeling. We can take care of ourselves.

The more you can generate *mettā*, the more you can radiate *mettā* to others, the better. Others receive it. They may scold you ten times, and you just smile.

No need to worry about anything, no need to react. Just smile and smile and send more *mettā*.

Then however much they scold you, how long can they scold you? Once they are tired, they will stop.

So anyway I just want to explain this. I don't want anybody to have unhappy feelings. So if we know how to balance our mind, we are happier and so that is the best.

That's the reason we need to train ourselves only. Don't go and think about others. Don't expect from others what you want. If you are good, people will be good to you.

If you are not good, people will react. The mirror will show you that, the way you react.



Chapter 5

The Ten Defilements



Sayalay told the story of how *Aṅgulimāla* was led astray by his teacher and how The Buddha engaged and saved him from himself by teaching him the eradication the Ten Defilements, i.e. greed, aversion, sloth and torpor, restlessness, doubt, ignorance, conceit, wrong view, shamelessness and fearlessness. Sayalay explained how the Ten Defilements can arise in the meditators' minds during the meditation retreat and emphasised the importance of guarding our minds with mindfulness. She also explained about the *ānāpānasati nimitta*.

What is *kamma*? We always emphasise in Buddhism about *kamma*. *kamma* is *cetanā*, *cetanā* is intention. *cetanā* is good intention, bad intention or volition accompanying any kind of thought. Good thought can become good *kamma* related to good *cetanā*. Bad thought will become bad *kamma* because it is related to bad intention. This is the process of *kamma*.

We believe that when we come to the retreat, we make a lot of wholesome *kamma*. Everyone wants wholesome *kamma* from a

meditation retreat. I think nobody would want to get unwholesome *kamma* from the retreat.

Painting

Everybody here is like drawing a picture. You have paper and pen, and I just tell you, “Please draw beautifully your breathing so that it is the same as drawing the lotus flower.”

You have to draw it on the paper using the pen. Who will get the beautiful picture? Then I will see. Drawing is your duty, checking the result is my duty. So how would you draw?

That depends on you. Somebody might draw very carefully from the beginning, through the middle until the end very beautifully. From the first day until the end of the retreat, they would carefully draw. Whether he/she can get *jhāna* or not, does not matter.

You should think, “I will try my best to draw beautifully.” Everyday try to be happy keeping the precepts and also be happy with the practice of the meditation object.

Some people sit but their their minds do not want draw. It is laziness. In their minds, they are making many pictures. Then on paper what kind of picture will arise? All is made by the mind. Your hand will follow the intention of your mind. When you simply draw, the picture may not be beautiful.

Whatever picture comes out, you cannot blame others. The final goal is the same. How you make your answer, your solution is your own mark. That’s why you cannot be jealous of anybody. We have to draw very carefully.

Purification of Mind

During meditation time we control our mind not to relate with any unwholesome thoughts. Once the unwholesome thoughts come in, our

mind goes deeper and deeper into the mud. You cannot pull yourself up and it's not easy to come out either. You keep on sinking and sinking. That is the reason you need to keep your mind on the meditation object.

In order to avoid sinking into the mud, we have to be very careful not to fall. When you drop in, already it is not easy for anybody to pull you up. People are scared to hold you because if they do they will also drop into the mud. It is very dangerous. Our minds need to be purified. Purification of the mind is very important. We want to make it clear.

Unwholesome Minds

We have to check our mind, “What kinds of thoughts make me unwholesome and unclear?” The Buddha taught us to recognize ten kinds of defilements that are really dangerous for us.

They easily make the mind dull and dark. They can make it sink easily into the mud. When you concentrate on the breathing on the *ānāpānasati* , after a while the mind starts to wander and does not want to concentrate on the breath.

1. Desire

You have to feel happy with the breath. When you feel bored you start to create wandering thoughts with desire, a lot of attachment. We call that greed (*lobha*).

2. Anger

Sometimes you have angry thoughts. Different people have different feelings and emotions. Sometimes you go and recall your past, unhappy memories. During meditation time, you think that nobody knows that you are angry inside; so you remain angry for the whole sitting. People can see if you are angry or not.

devā know if you are meditating or angry. I do not need to check. *devā* will check for me. Message will come to me. We have e-mail, you know. (*Audience: Laughter*) Be careful!

Being angry for the whole sitting is not good for your concentration. Once those angry thoughts come in, the mind is not clear, not peaceful, and it is very unhappy. This condition affects not only you, it also affects many people. Your actions become very hard and rushed. Everything is related with the mind.

3. Sloth & Torpor

The next defilements are sloth and torpor, sleepy mind. It has been only three or four days, yet many look like they have not had enough sleep. Today I also looked at all of you at the two o'clock session. Many people were still nodding; I was very disappointed.

After the interview I thought your concentration would be very good. I was so interested that I came and looked from the outside, but I did not open the door because I worried that I might disturb you. If I opened the door, maybe the sound might disturb you. So I looked from outside. Every sitting I looked. I was so happy to look, but many people were nodding. So how can you improve? You have from twelve to two o'clock to nap everyday; yet two hours of extra sleep does not seem enough for you.

Sometimes please remind yourself to wake up and concentrate. Do not waste your time. When you sleep too much, the more you sleep, the more you want to sleep. The lazy mind will come in. Just make it balance a little bit. Sloth and torpor are not good.

4. Restless Mind

Another mental defilement is restless mind. The mind is always wandering, wandering to many objects, creating many thoughts in our minds. Actually all the wandering thoughts we create ourselves. In this way the wandering thoughts are also not good for our meditation.

Some people think that meditation is about thinking good, so anything related with wholesome thinking should be acceptable. Such thinking is good for our *kamma*, good for our meditation. Many people have that idea.

Before meditation, you can think about wholesome things. You think about things that you have done, such as *dāna* and keeping the precepts. Making happy feelings from that reflection is good. However, when we start to concentrate on the breathing, do not mix your meditation object with other objects.

Although there is good intention, good object, you are not concentrating on the breath. The mind keeps on thinking about what you want to do. For example, you want to ordain. That is good intention, wholesome thinking, but it is not related to *ānāpānasati* object. Do you understand?

Ordain—You do not know when you are going to ordain. But the breath is already lost. The object has disappeared. Do not even think wholesome thoughts. Some people ask me if wholesome thoughts are good to think as we can get good *kamma* and that is good for the meditation. That is the reason I explain this. The meditation object is very important. One-pointedness of mind is concentration on only one object.

Where do we need to focus? For *ānāpānasati* we need to focus only on breathing, not on any other objects. Then only the mind can really focus and penetrate. Once the object disappears from your mind, there is no more one-pointedness of mind (*ekaggatā*) on the object, and there is also no more mindfulness on the object. There is no more effort. Everything drops. That is the reason we do not have concentration. This is all inter-related. Hence the mind cannot be in one consciousness state. All are related, and joined together. That is the reason we need to control restless mind.

5. Doubt

Another unwholesome mental state is doubt. You have doubt about the *Buddha, Dhamma, Saṅgha*. You have doubt about *kamma*. You do not believe in *kamma*. Some people think death does not matter. They believe that when they die, the body will disappear. Everything will stop, everything will disappear. Will everything disappear or not?

The body can disappear, can disintegrate, but the mind cannot disappear yet. The mind still needs to follow *kamma*. So if you have done good *kamma*, you will go to good place in the next rebirth. When you can stop in this life, it is because you practise until becoming an *arahant*.

If you can practise until becoming an *arahant* in this lifetime, the mind can stop. If you cannot yet practise until becoming an *arahant*, this mind will carry on to another life, and to another life, for many rebirths. This is called the cycle of life—Dependent Origination.

So some of you have doubt about *kamma*. Some people believe that we do not need to worry about it. Some people in other religions believe in God. That God will take care of everything. You just pray and the God will take care of you. I am not criticising others. We just contemplate on this only. Such people think we do not need to do any good *kamma*. When they nearly die, they just pray. The God will bring them up to heaven. That is not enough, you know.

We still need to believe and know about *kamma*. Good or bad life is only following *kamma*. If the God can take care of you, then nobody would be poor. Everybody will be rich.

Everybody will get good *kamma* and bad *kamma* based on what the person has done. We create our own suffering and unhappiness.

We need to use wisdom. We need to use wisdom and very carefully contemplate about what is really happening in life. What happens in life is because of changes to *kamma*, different *kamma* in the past lives.

kamma is the same as drawing a picture. We need to be clear of doubt. We really need to believe in our practice and *kamma*.

6. Delusion

Delusion-mind is what we call *moha*. Delusion-mind is also one kind of defilement.

7. Conceit

Another unwholesome mental factor is conceit. Do you have conceit? Are you proud, very proud? Everybody has conceit. Only *arahant* does not have conceit. Conceit is also one kind of defilement.

8. Wrong View

We call wrong view, *ditṭhi*. Wrong view is also one kind of defilement. There is wrong view concerning who I am, my family, my husband, my wife, my children... all are wrong view. Also we think that this is my house, my building, my car... all are wrong understanding, wrong view.

We need to let go. We just think all are *nāma* and *rūpa*. All have the nature of *anicca*, *dukkha* and *anatta* (impermanence, suffering, non-self). Only those who believe like this have what we call right view. So many people have wrong view. We have to cut off wrong view.

9. Shamelessness

Another unwholesome mental state is shamelessness. When we do *akusala* things, we need to be ashamed. This is what The Buddha taught us. If we are not ashamed, the first time we do not care, the second time we do not care, we become used to it. We will never feel shameful feeling. We are shameless in doing unwholesome *kamma*.

10. Fearlessness

When you do *akusala*, and you do not have any fear, you are very brave... You do not care about *kamma*. You do not care about anybody. You just do it your own way. That is called being fearless. You are unafraid of the unwholesome results of *kamma*.

These are all the ten kinds of defilements. So these ten kinds of defilements we need to clear away.

Intention

You can check in your mind. What kind of mind is surrounding you? The original mind is very pure. These defilements relate with one another. One kind of defilement or two can join together and enter into the original mind.

So the mind becomes dirty, becomes unwholesome. This mind becomes like this because you have unmindful contact with the object. You have wrong intention.

This kind of wrong intention will make our mind connect with wrong mental states, with the defilements until the wrong thought process arises. In this thought process, seven *javana* will arise, which can create good or bad *kamma*. In simple terms, if you have wrong intention on the object, then you have bad *kamma*.

When you have right intention on the object, you know how to pay attention with *mettā*, with loving-kindness, with right intention, with wisdom, how to observe *nāma* and *rūpa*. That kind of intention will give you more wisdom and right understanding. This is wholesome. So we need to check our mind all the time. Can I really concentrate and meditate?

We are now drawing the picture carefully with wisdom, without unwholesome mental states; we are happily drawing without defilements, using mindfulness. Then in the end we will get a very

beautiful picture. That beautiful picture is our good *kamma*. Every time you look at it, if you have a good picture, you will be happier. If you always contemplate in that way, you feel very happy. You will also feel safe because you are drawing this beautiful picture.

Sometimes when you are doing good things, the mind is not pure. For example sometimes *dāna* is mixed with a little bit of attachment, or little bit of competition, or little bit of anger. Some people think that they are now doing *dāna*. Do not think that you can get one hundred percent result from this kind of generosity. We need to do it very purely. You make whatever type of *kamma* you are doing very pure with very good intention. Then you can get hundred percent good result.

Meditation is making good *kamma*. During meditation time you may create many wandering thoughts. Sometimes you are doing *ānāpānasati*, sometimes you have wandering thoughts, sometimes you are creating unhappy thoughts, sometimes greedy thoughts.

Sometimes those kinds of mental states, many kinds of mental factors come and mix with your meditation object. The picture is not so good. So the last day what happens? The result we will know. Year after year when will we finish? When will you get a beautiful picture? From the beginning, we need to draw very carefully. We can control our mind. If we want to control, we can control. The mind is so simple. There are complications only because we like to create a lot of things. Just make it simple.

Let us consider a baby. If you give the baby a lot of money or jewellery, he looks at it, he touches it. Do you think he has greed? Give the baby jewellery, or a very expensive diamond, or money. He will touch it, but do you think he will get greedy about that object? He does not have greed. He just holds it only. His mind is pure. He does not know what will happen with this money. This money can create something good or something bad. Good or bad results can happen. The baby does not know what will happen.

He does not worry about the future. Money is only money. He doesn't know. He holds it and throws it away. Even if it is an expensive diamond, he can throw it away. His mind is so pure, and he does not get greedy. Even when the mother feeds him, he will just eat. He never complains if it is salty or oily. He does not complain. He just eats and swallows only. Someone who knows a lot, what taste this is, what taste is that, will complain.

The more you know, the more you will get defilement. So not to know is better. But not to know is not to sleep. Use contemplation to be unattached to any object.

The attachment will make us create. Life happens because of this attachment. It is because of attachment, that sometimes you may get greed and anger. Because of greed, anger arises, sometimes conceit arises, sometimes clinging. This anger sometimes makes you want to kill. Many *akusala kamma* arise based on greed or attachment.

To immediately cut all attachment is not easy. But we can try to ignore it by thinking this is not important, let it go. Training slowly, in the end we will be successful.

dāna Competition

Recently in Jakarta, Indonesia, I told a few of my friends, I am getting tired, getting old. I want to meditate in my silent retreat. The next day many people came, and brought me to see a very big bungalow. They said, "We offer it to you now. It is for you to use."

In the afternoon, another one came and offered two big pieces of land and two big houses. Then another four donors came to offer me another four bungalows. I was very happy to hear that. I knew them a long time ago and they took care of me, like their brother or sister.

They were very kind and I could feel also that their heart was really pure. Without attachment, they were willing to let go. They really did that. But I do not know why I did not want to accept anything. I did

not have any desire to take anything. So I told them sorry, I will reject all those offerings. If I accept from one person, another person is not happy. There will be fighting between them. When people came to know about it, they asked me what kind of *kamma* I have.

They said, “Everybody comes and offers to you immediately; yet you rejected all the offerings. You should have taken one.”

I said, “No. If I would have accepted something, I would have to worry. I would have to take care of it. It is better not to accept. It is very peaceful.”

I also contemplated why those people suddenly liked to offer. It was because in the past life I also sincerely offered *dāna* for those people. When I checked many of my past lives, whatever I did, I tried to do so sincerely and respectfully. All my actions related with the *Dhamma*. I offered my whole life for the *Dhamma*. When I teach, death does not matter, I will teach. Happily I will teach. I have that kind of intention. People can feel and see that. So people are very happy to help me.

I have rejected those offerings because I think they are not necessary for me. And also I do not want to take care of anything. Even my centre in Maymyo, every day I was thinking when I should give it away. But for one thing I would give it away; because I have this small place, it benefits people. People have come to meditate and many are successful. Some have finished the course, some practise Dependent Origination. A lot of benefits for the donors come from this centre. This is my happiness.

This is the reason I still maintain and keep this centre. But sometimes I am very tired keeping it. I feel that if I let go I will be very happy. I do not feel any feelings about whether I should accept it or let it go. Sometimes our *kamma* comes and goes. Sometimes it can be good. Sometimes your life is long, or sometimes you have short life; sometimes you are healthy, or sometimes you are not healthy, you are sick.

All the conditions can change. Sometimes you are rich, sometimes poor. This life you are beautiful but sometimes if you get angry too much, next time you will not be beautiful. You are drawing your own *kamma*. You cannot blame your parents about your looks. Low caste or high caste, good wisdom or no wisdom, many followers or no followers, all are related to *kamma*.

We cannot be jealous of one another. If we are jealous, it gets worse. That jealousy will be very bad for us. People know this is true, but they do not like to practise or follow the advice. This is the problem. Even after we explain, if you do that you will get the bad results of *kamma*, they still do it anyway. If you continue doing, the result is not good. When the result is bad, you cannot take it. If something happens, and you become poor, you cannot take it. If suddenly something happens, you cannot take it. You may ask, “Why does this happen to me?” When that kind of upset feeling arises, you cannot take the suffering.

Contemplate

So we need to contemplate more about *kamma*. We need to carefully meditate. The bad results of *kamma* can happen anytime. Sometimes they appear in this life. Sometimes they arise in the next rebirth, second life. Sometimes bad results of *kamma* can arise until *Nibbāna*, anytime they can happen. There are three kinds of causes and effects. We do not know if you have done bad *kamma* or good *kamma* and when the results will come. We do not know.

All the conditions appear because of what you have done in the past, good or bad *kamma*. Good or bad we need to accept without being happy or unhappy. If we are too happy, we can become greedy too. Unhappy feeling also is not good, as suffering makes you have a lot of pain.

Acceptance

We need to accept everything with a balanced mind. When we think about *kamma*, there will be more equanimity; everything is impermanent. One day we all have to let go. So we feel more comfortable and peaceful, without vibrating. It is because we train all the time, the mind is balanced and has equanimity in all the ways. Try not to vibrate too much.

Unwholesome Contamination

Sometimes surrounding you there is so much greed, so much anger, so much conceit. If those kinds of people were surrounding you, how would you feel? The vibrating energy can spread to others. Suppose somebody who is very angry comes to this room. Can other people feel that anger or not? Is it good or not good? Because of you other people are upset or have unhappy mental states. That is also not good. So when people stay together in one place, everybody needs to take care of each other.

Some people come in late or walk loudly. Even concrete floor can also break. Be careful, take care; walk slowly. People are meditating. If you walk too hard, the sound might affect their practice. It is very important to have understanding of that kind of intention. If you do not care and do with a lot of indifference, that equanimity is a different kind of understanding; it is not true equanimity.

We are living together in society; we need to follow the rules. Also we need to take care of each other's feelings and practice. Then only we can be good persons, become good people. Then only everybody will be happy. When everybody takes care of their own mind, we do not have problems. Just because a few people like to do that, other people are not happy. Also they do not look happy; they cannot concentrate. People get angry because of them. All that agitation affects everybody. That is why we try to take care of our mind until it is

purified, clear and has wholesome intention. The mind creates thought, speech and action.

People can know what kind of character a person has from the way that person walks. From the way people talk, people can see about your character and your behaviour. So be careful. Of course the character is not easy to change immediately. But we have to think that people are trying to meditate. Concentration is not easy. Once the sound comes in, everybody can drop their concentration. That is the reason, we still need to respect and try to take care of each other. Then very quickly you will get the *nimitta*.

nimitta

nimitta is not difficult, it is very easy. Try to cut out your defilements. We have just explained the ten kinds of defilements. Clear them away; cut them out.

Slowly the mind is happy watching the breath. The breath is actually very simple, in-breath and out-breath. Anytime you want to feel it, you can feel it.

Your mind is not easy. Your mind always likes to wander somewhere. That is the problem. So do not wander away from your meditation object. Just try to keep it and watch it happily. Do it respectfully. Twenty minutes you can do that. You surely will get *nimitta*, clear light, clear *nimitta*. Once you get clear *nimitta*, you are so happy! You do not feel suffering. You do not feel pain in your body. You do not even feel the body, the body is also lost. This is from our experience.

Many students feel that. Once they have concentration, they do not feel pain. They feel happy. That happiness-mind is very important. We encourage all of you please try again and again until you reach this level.

When you get to this level, then you will know what *Sayalay* said is

correct. I do not think you really believe me now. You might also think it is real torture because even if you want to go out, you cannot. I really want you to be free but if I give you freedom now to talk or relax, I do not think you can get *nimitta* and *jhāna*. If you do not have *jhāna*, why do you come? If you just relax, it is better to go on a holiday. There is no need to come here.

Why do I have to waste my time if it is better for me to meditate? So I try again. What people think about me does not matter. I make the rules strict and let yogis practise sincerely. Once you get *nimitta* and *jhāna* you will understand what I have explained to you and you will know how to balance your mind. Try to be happy with the breath for a while, in-breath and out-breath. Watch carefully.

Brains Not Functioning

It is because you all use the computer too much, so the brain does not work. Your brain becomes dull and does not want to put in effort. You just switch on the computer and you get whatever answer you want; you have all the results immediately from the computer.

You do not need to think. Sometimes you use a lot of calculators. When I ask you something, you cannot immediately give me the answer. You need to find the calculator. That is the reason the mind becomes very dull. It should not be like this.

Sometimes we need to use our brain and the mind to think carefully. How should we concentrate on the breath? We need to think how to get the object and make the mind happy. You cannot get the answer immediately.

nimitta is not from computer. *nimitta* is from your mind. Your mind needs to be happy and relaxed. If your mind is relaxed, then only can you get *nimitta*.

Many people say it is difficult, but when they use the computer it is very easy. Studying in university is so easy, but coming to the

meditation retreat is so difficult. They start to feel that way because they do not want to use the mind to be attracted to the object. They want to analyse.

We need some feeling. You know how to love? Love is the cause of feeling. Do you love other people more than yourself or yourself more? Do you love yourself more than others or is it the same? Who do you really love? Yourself! Those who have husbands, be careful.

The wives also love themselves more. Do not think that they love you more. Even when people love each other, they cannot share suffering. Loving time is fine, but suffering time nobody wants to share. You suffer alone. That is the way it is.

So make sure it is a happy feeling with the breath. You need to like the object. If you do not like the object, it is very difficult to get happiness. In this way you try slowly until you get subtle breath. And you feel happy with the breath. After a while you will get the *nimitta*.

There are different stages of *nimitta*. In the beginning you will see different colours appearing in front of you. Whether they are in front of your face or at the side of your face or from any direction does not matter.

Do not concentrate on the light. The first stage of *nimitta* is seeing yellow, purple, blue, those kinds of colour, or a cloud. Do not concentrate on the colour. Just keep your concentration with the breath. Sometimes the breath can disappear. When the breath disappears, try to breathe again. Slowly breathe again.

Then, the colour will change to white colour. When changing to white, it will slowly approach the nostrils. Even when it comes and approaches, relax and keep with the breath continuously. In the end the white becomes transparent.

Clearly and slowly it will change colour to clear glass or clear crystal. It will come and stop in front of the nostril. So the clear light is stable for a while, only then we can concentrate on the clear light. If

the light comes and goes, do not concentrate on that light. If it is not yet transparent, do not absorb on that.

If you concentrate on the light too early, sometimes the light can spread to everywhere—all over the body. This is also not good. Many people think that the light spreading all over the body is very comfortable, that this is *jhāna*. Many people have this sensation. You might have that kind of experience. But that is not true absorption.

jhāna feeling is not on the body. *jhāna* feeling is the feeling of the mind concentrating on the *nimitta*, on the meditation object. The absorption object is the *nimitta*. We still need to have awareness of the *nimitta*.

nimitta cannot disappear. So *nimitta* must be in front of the nostril. Keep awareness on the *nimitta*. The mind thinks this is *ānāpānasati nimitta*. The mind notes, “*nimitta, nimitta, nimitta.*” Slowly continue and in the end the mind does not feel the body. And the mind starts to be happy. Then go to *jhāna*. It’s very easy. You can make it easy.

It is because you go and make it difficult that complications arise. You see, it is very simple. When you have happy feeling with the breath, you get *nimitta*. Ninety-nine-point-nine percent of the time this will happen, we can guarantee. Stay on it and try for twenty to thirty minutes. If you really make it a happy and subtle breath, very quickly you will get *nimitta*.

The only thing we have to do is cut off our defilements. Also do not recall repeatedly previous unhappy feelings.

Last Thought Moment

People when they are near their death moment have to see the image. The image shows them where they need to go, their destination. This is very important. If you keep on thinking about unwholesome things at near the death moment because you are used to that kind of thinking, unwholesome states will appear to you. We need to destroy

that kind of unwholesome image and *kamma*. Sometimes it can easily be destroyed by the wholesome *kamma*. Sometimes, although we want to destroy, it is not so easy. The *kamma* is there; we have to accept, many different types.

Aṅgulimāla

I want to share one of the stories at the time of The Buddha, about a very famous *bhikkhu*. His ordained name was *Aṅgulimāla*. He was born in *Sāvattihī* country. His father was a minister of their country. When he came to becoming a human being, in his mother's womb, his mother took good care of him. (He was named *Ahiṅsaka*.)

That night when he was born, all the weapons became very bright in the whole country. The king was living in his palace. At the time the baby was born, many weapons became bright inside the king's room.

The king was worried. He knew that if such things happened, some kind of danger would happen either to him or to his country. He was worried and could not sleep the whole night.

At the same time, the father of *Aṅgulimāla* knew how to look at the sky and knew some astrology. He went out of the house and looked into the sky. He checked on the movement of the stars and the moon. He knew that his son would get into trouble in this country one day. He would become a thief in this country.

The next day the father went to the palace. He met the king and asked the king, "Last night could you sleep well?" The king replied, "I did not sleep well because all the weapons in my room were very bright. There is some kind of danger. How do you feel about that?"

The father of *Aṅgulimāla* started to explain, "Please do not worry. This thing happened because last night my wife gave birth to my son. That's the reason not only in the palace but in the whole country all the weapons became bright."

And the king wanted to know why these things happened. The

minister replied, “The signs say that one day the baby will become a thief in this country.”

Then the king asked, “Will he be alone? Or will he have followers that attack the country?”

“Please do not worry, he will be alone.” replied the minister.

When the king heard about that, he was no longer frightened. He said, “If it is like that, he is not dangerous. You do not need to do anything to him. Do not harm him. Please take care of him.”

The parents really took care of him until he was sixteen years old. At the age of sixteen the parents sent him to the university. When he was studying in the university, the professor liked him very much. That was because he was very clever and liked to follow the rules. He knew how to take care of the teacher, the master.

The professor liked him so much. Many students became jealous of him because the teacher paid a lot of attention to him. This is human nature. In their jealousy they started to discuss with one another how they should break the relationship between their teacher and him.

The students said, “Even if we want to complain about his relatives we also cannot because he came from the minister’s family, a good family. In school he is very clever. He is at the top in his class. We cannot say that he is stupid also.”

In the end, they said, “Why don’t we start saying he has fallen in love with the wife of the master, the teacher. If we tell that to the teacher, surely the teacher will be very angry with him.”

The next day the students divided into groups. Each group had three or four students. The first group of the student approached the master, “Have you heard the news? *Ahiṅsaka* and your wife have fallen in love.”

The teacher had heard about it and said, “What kind of news? Do not come and speak to me about that kind of rubbish. I do not believe

what you are telling me. Next time do not come to talk to me about this anymore.”

Another group came and spoke to him again and said the same thing. Then another three or four groups continuously came and spoke to him. Then he started to believe. The students told him if he did not believe what they had told him, he could observe himself.

In the end the teacher started to observe. One day he observed that his wife really took care of *Ahijsaka* like her son, taking care of him like a close family member. Another day the teacher saw the wife and student were very close and very friendly to each other. He started to misunderstand thinking they must have really fallen in love with each other. He wanted to kill the student.

He was also a smart man. He started to think, “If I kill him, and other people know, they will criticise me, saying, ‘That teacher killed the student.’ This will give me a bad name and people will not want to learn from me anymore.” He was worried and he wanted to protect himself. So he started to scheme, “Why don’t I try to kill him in a different way?”

The next day he called *Ahijsaka*, “*Ahijsaka*, you should kill a thousand people. If you kill a thousand people, when you come back I will teach you the major secret learning.”

When *Ahijsaka* heard about that, he immediately rejected the idea, saying, “Among my relatives nobody likes to kill and we avoid killing. We should not do such a thing. I do not like to kill other beings.”

His teacher forced him, “If you do not kill, you cannot learn. I will not teach you. This major teaching nobody can teach. You are a very good student and person. So you can learn. That is why I want to teach you.” In the end he also wanted to learn. He promised the teacher and left the university.

He started to go from one forest to another forest to kill people. At that time, he was a very powerful man because of his good *kamma*.

When he killed people it was very easy. Nobody can fight with him. He can fight one hundred people all at once. I do not know what kind of *kamma* he had done in the past.

Everybody was scared of him. Nobody dared to cross from one village to another in the forest area. As soon as he saw people, he would start to kill them. After killing, he just put the bodies here and there. He wanted to count. But because of killing, that *kamma* blocked his wisdom, so his wisdom became very low. Even his memory became very poor. He could not remember how many people he had killed.

He just threw the bodies here and there for many years. He had killed many people. But he did not know how to count. In the end, he cut the victims' fingers. He did not take any money, clothing or anything. He took only one finger—Kill one person, keep one finger, and then he put each finger under the tree.

When animals came, the fingers were lost again. In this way, he struggled so much. In the end he used a string and tied all the fingers and hung them on his neck. The last day he realised that staying in the forest was not good, the food was not good and life was very poor.

He started to realise these things in his mind. Maybe the results of his good *kamma* started to arise in him.

“I want to finish the duty of collecting one thousand fingers. I would like to go home. I want to pay respect to my parents.” He had this intention.

After that he started to count the fingers. He had nine hundred and ninety-nine fingers. Now he only needed one finger, one person only. Then he could give it to his teacher. For the last finger he was wondering who he should kill.

For many weeks all the people in the country were afraid to stay in their villages. So they moved to surrounding places. They approached the king. They said, “We have suffering in this country. The thief,

Ahiṅsaka is killing and we are scared. Please protect us and kindly take care of us.”

The king heard that. Actually the king was also very scared of *Ahiṅsaka*. He knew *Ahiṅsaka* was very powerful. Actually the people wanted the king to go and catch the thief. The king did not want to because he was also scared to go. Yet he also wanted to “save face”. He also did not want to show fear. So he ordered the whole army just to catch one thief. On the way he went down to the village.

The minister, the father of *Ahiṅsaka* knew about that. He started to tell his wife, “In our country, a big thief has appeared. That must be your son. Long ago I predicted that my son would become a thief. Now he must have been killing many people. He is the one who is really giving suffering to the country people.”

The wife was very worried about her son. Now the king also wanted to catch and kill him. The mother had so much worry and told the husband, “Please go to the forest and search and bring my son back. I can talk and explain to him and he will become good.”

But the father rejected immediately her plea. He said, “No. I am scared to go. If he sees me, surely he will kill me.” The father did not want to go to see the son.

The mother said, “If you are scared, I will go.” The mother and the father saw things differently.

It is because the mother gave birth and suffered a lot for him and so she really loved the son. The father’s love and mother love’s is a little bit different. The mother cannot be indifferent. The mother really wanted to go.

That day, our Buddha was living in the monastery. Every early morning he used the power of attainment of compassion to search for those who he should teach that day, whose *pāramī* are mature. In his mind, he saw *Aṅgulimāla*.

The Buddha reflected, “If I teach today he can renounce. If I do not

go to teach today, he will kill his mother. If he kills his mother, in the future he will go to the hell. He cannot meditate anymore and cannot be an *arahant*.”

So The Buddha went to the forest. He saw *Āṅgulimāla* and *Āṅgulimāla* was also waiting. When *Āṅgulimāla* saw The Buddha, he knew that this was a *bhikkhu*.

Āṅgulimāla said, “*bhikkhu*, please stop. I want to see you.” Actually he wanted to kill him. The Buddha also knew that. So The Buddha continued to walk. The Buddha has power. The Buddha continued to walk but with psychic power. In *Āṅgulimāla*’s mind, The Buddha was running. *Āṅgulimāla* kept following The Buddha.

When *Āṅgulimāla* was almost close to The Buddha, The Buddha became far from him again. *Āṅgulimāla* followed and ran all the way until he was very tired and sweat a lot. However fast *Āṅgulimāla* ran, The Buddha continued ahead of him as if walking at a normal pace. *Āṅgulimāla* was very tired. In the end, he said, “*bhikkhu!* Please stop!”

The Buddha said, “I have stopped but you have not stopped.”

Āṅgulimāla started to realise in his mind, “I look at him and he is walking, but he tells me he has stopped. I am standing and he tells me I have not stopped. I do not know what the meaning of this is. I want to know.”

So he asked The Buddha, “I am standing, but you told me I have not stopped. But you are going, and you have told me that you have stopped. Why do you tell me like this?”

The Buddha said, “Because in my life I have stopped torturing, killing or harming people. I only have compassion and *mettā* for the beings. I want to help people.”

“That is the reason. I have stopped doing *akusala kamma*. That is the reason that I said I have stopped. But you still want to kill, harm and torture people. You have not stopped. You are still running by *akusala*. This is the reason that I say you have not yet stopped. You do not have

mettā and compassion. You are still running!” The Buddha explained very briefly.

When *Āṅgulimāla* heard about this, his mind started to become alert. He thought, “When he talks to me he is so brave and confident. This cannot be an ordinary *bhikkhu*.” He started to realise that this must be The Buddha. Then he started to feel that.

Immediately he bowed down and paid respect. He asked, “Are you Buddha?”

The Buddha replied, “Yes.”

Then *Āṅgulimāla* said, “You knew about this and purposely came to see me. You want to save and help me. That is the reason why you came here. I am so grateful and so happy to be with you.”

After that he wanted to ordain. His mind totally changed. After that The Buddha just called him. The Buddha knew about his past life.

In the past life, he had *dāna* robes to other *bhikkhū*. So that *kamma* was with him. So when The Buddha called him: “*ehi bhikkhu!*” he immediately, completely became a *bhikkhu*.

There are those who do not do such *dāna* in the past.

Remember that day that I explained about *Bāhiya Dārucīriya*. He wanted to ordain, but The Buddha cannot call him like this: “*ehi bhikkhu!*” Why is that?

In the past he did not make offerings to the *bhikkhū*; he only used the requisites for himself; he did not offer *dāna* robes to others. That is the reason The Buddha could not call to him: “*ehi bhikkhu!*” And he could not immediately become a *bhikkhu*

After *Āṅgulimāla* became a *bhikkhu*, he followed The Buddha. He was not an *arahant* yet. He followed The Buddha all the way to the monastery. When they reached the monastery, he was sitting beside The Buddha.

At the same time, the king of Kosala did not want to catch *Āṅgulimāla*. The king thought, “If he sees me, he will kill me.” He was very worried. “Why don’t I go to the monastery and pay respect to The Buddha? The Buddha always likes to think for the good of people. If I explain to The Buddha I want to catch *Ahiṅsaka*, The Buddha might know how I can easily catch *Ahiṅsaka*. The Buddha will not tell anything, he will be quiet.

If I am going to be caught by *Āṅgulimāla*, The Buddha will keep me from going. If The Buddha keeps me from going, it is easier for me to explain to the people. I can say, ‘I wanted to go and catch *Āṅgulimāla*, but The Buddha does not allow me to go.’ That is the reason I did not go.”

In this way he contemplated. So he went to the monastery, sat and bowed down, and paid respect to The Buddha.

Then The Buddha asked, “Where do you want to go?”

“In the country there is the thief, *Āṅgulimāla* who is really violent and has destroyed our country. Many people died because of him. I want to catch him.”

Then The Buddha asked him, “If you see that he has become *bhikkhu* what do you want to do? Do you still want to catch him and kill him or put him inside the prison?”

“If I see him as a *bhikkhu* I will be very happy and offer whatever he needs. I can be his *dāyaka*, a supporter of this *bhikkhu*.” The Buddha said, “Like this is very good.”

Then he pointed to the king, “This is *Ahiṅsaka*.”

Many of the king’s followers were there. When they heard that the *bhikkhu* was *Āṅgulimāla*, all of them put down their weapons and ran away except the king. The king was so scared that he was shaking. He had a lot of fear, but he could not run, and he began to sweat immediately.

The Buddha knew that the king was very scared. He told the king, “Don’t be scared. Now *Ahiṅsaka* has already changed and does not harm or kill anybody. Now he is a *bhikkhu* and trained to be good.”

Only then the king slowly released his worry and fear. He started to become happy.

He praised The Buddha, “He is a powerful killer. How extraordinary it is that you could train him to become a *bhikkhu*!”

After ordination, *Āṅgulimāla* needed to go for *piṇḍapāta* in the village. When people knew or heard that it was *Āṅgulimāla*, everyone ran away and closed their doors to hide from him. Nobody wanted to offer *dāna*. Every day, he had difficulty with the food. Without enough food and enough nutrition, he could not meditate. His mind was not peaceful.

Food is very important. The mind is related to the food. If the food cannot be eaten or is not suitable, the body will easily get sick. A meditator does not have enough energy to meditate.

The Buddha knew that he was suffering every day as he had that problem. Even if he meditated he could not attain anything because he did not have enough energy.

One day in the village *Āṅgulimāla* saw one lady about to give birth. She wanted to give birth but there was a difficulty and she was suffering for many days. When he heard the voice from the lady, he thought, “People are really suffering. They have been suffering so much in many different ways.”

He started to contemplate. After contemplating, that day in the evening, he approached The Buddha and paid respect and explained to The Buddha. He said, “Today I went to the village and I saw this lady. She was having difficulty giving birth and was so tired. It was very great suffering.”

“When I observed this, I realised that people are really suffering in different ways. I saw her suffering, but I could not help her. I just

contemplated about impermanence, suffering and non-self.”

The Buddha realised that *Āṅgulimāla* now had difficulty with the food. That is the reason he could not meditate. The Buddha thought, “If I teach him the *Paritta*, the lady would be able to give birth easily.”

So The Buddha taught him. When The Buddha taught, he learned, but he explained to The Buddha that he did not have confidence to chant because he has not practised to the level of an *arahant*.

He said, “Buddha, in my life I have killed a lot of people. So I have a lot of bad *kamma* and have done a lot of bad things. If I chant this *Paritta*, I do not think that the recitation will be powerful.”

He had doubt in himself. But The Buddha asked him to learn the chanting by heart and go back to the house. He should stay beside the lady and chant. Actually when lady is giving birth, it is not suitable for a *bhikkhu* to be there. It is only because The Buddha forced him to go that he went there.

When he was there, they used the cloth to cover the lady. *Bhikkhu Āṅgulimāla* sat outside the curtain and started to chant. As soon as he chanted the *Paritta*, she easily gave birth. The baby came out smoothly.

From then on, *Bhikkhu Āṅgulimāla* helped many people and many people were freed from suffering. So people started to respect him. After that, people started to offer food to him. When he got the food, he had energy in his body and started to meditate. Everyday he focused on the meditation object and went to the forest to meditate.

When he meditated on the meditation object, he could not concentrate even for a few minutes. It was very difficult for him. As soon as he closed his eyes, he could see the images of what he had done previously, killing people.

People had a lot of fear approaching him and pleaded to him, “Please do not kill me, I have family.” Those kinds of voices and actions arose in his mind. All the images continuously arose to him.

It was very difficult to let go. These kinds of images and voices kept on coming to him. The mind could not be peaceful. Worries and fear always came in. In the end he could not attain any kind of concentration.

Everyday he finished meditation practice very disappointed. He thought, “I do not think in this life I can have any kind of attainment.” He was so disappointed.

The Buddha knew that he had that problem. So The Buddha started to explain to him, “Try to let go and cut the ten kinds of defilements. These defilements create a lot of problems for you and the mind becomes dirty. You recall past unhappy feelings, restless feelings, worry feelings, all the defilements keep on coming. So your mind is not pure at all. It is not clear at all. You cannot easily contact your meditation object. Do you understand?”

The Buddha asked him to clear all the ten kinds of defilements from his mind. The Buddha asked him to make his mind pure and to concentrate on the meditation object. After a while, *Aṅgulimāla* attained enlightenment as an *arahant*.

In this way, *Aṅgulimāla* became an *arahant*. After he became an *arahant*, one day he went to the village. It is not known if it was by accident or people purposely threw stones at him. After being attacked by the villagers with stones, his head and bowl were broken and he was bleeding. All the robes were covered with blood. He did not have any fear or worry because he was an *arahant*. There were no more defilements.

He slowly walked back to the monastery. The Buddha saw this and explained to him, “My son, please be patient. This *kamma* is because you have done a lot of killing. These bad results of *kamma* are produced by you. Actually, you have done so much bad *kamma*, that after you die you were going to have to stay in hell for a long, long time to suffer as a hell-being. But because you meditated, you have cleared away most of the bad results of your *kamma*.”

“Because of this *arahant magga* and *phala*, all the defilements have been cut and cleared from your mind. You do not need to go to the hell and can go to *Nibbāna*. But you cannot cut away all the results of *akusala kamma*. Still you have to suffer a little bit with the results of *akusala kamma*. You have to accept those now. What people have done to you is also your own *kamma*.”

“Because of what you have done in the past all the results of that *akusala kamma* are coming to you now. Please try to accept this.” The Buddha explained to him in this way. In the end he also realised *kamma*. For a while he went to the area where he used to meditate and meditated for some time. Finally he attained *parinibbāna*.

Meditate!

This story is also very good for us to learn. Meditate! Meditate! Wandering thoughts create many kinds of defilements, disturb your concentration so you cannot see *nimitta*.

nimitta arises when you have clear mind only. When you are happy with the meditation object, then *nimitta* arises. When you are angry with somebody, *nimitta* will never appear.

Thinking of desire, relating to greed also you cannot see *nimitta*. Sleepy mind—can it see *nimitta*? It cannot see. But wake up and you will see bright light.

People asked about whether they see *nimitta* or not? Some people said to me, “We are very good; the subtle breath becomes very soft and we fall to sleep. When we wake up the bright light appears. Is this *nimitta*?”

That is dreaming! We have to wake up and focus more on the breath. Try to be happy and take care of each other. That happiness is very important.

So we come here, gathering together. Are you happy? We must be happy. Only good people come here. Can bad people come? It is not

that they cannot come, but they do not want to come. They want to go drink beer, or go to the casino. Good people do not like to do that kind of thing.

Good people want to come to retreats. They think, “I want to stay away from suffering first. I want to keep the precepts and practise meditation.” Only with good intentions do they come. Those who already come here with good intentions, do not destroy your good intentions.

You destroy yourself. All the wholesome *kamma* is not destroyed by others. You destroy yourself with your defilements. So we have to cut all the defilements. Within these ten days, you must really want to get *jhāna*. Make strong determination and do it respectfully.

I am very happy to do interview. I try my best but I am not Buddha. I cannot put the *nimitta* in front of you. I can only shine torch light at you. But after a while it will disappear. That is not good. I really want you to see the *nimitta* from your heart. That is better. Then only you know how to balance your mind.

If you can get *nimitta* or *jhāna*, I will be very happy. Then I will not feel any tiredness. Everywhere I go many people are successful. They can see *nimitta* and can get *jhāna*. This is our happiness also.



Chapter 6

Happiness Within



Sayalay explained how happiness and unhappiness are dependent on how we take care of our minds. When we come for a meditation retreat with an intention to cut away our defilements, we are as good as having renounced. For a Noble Person, the mind is home, founded on the heart-base. Mindfulness is the protection. Meditators should strive to maintain mindfulness and keep the mind humble, respectful and wholesome at all times.

I hope that all of you are very happy in this retreat. Try to be happy even if you are not happy. Do you know where happiness and unhappiness come from? From where do they arise? Do they come from the outside or from the ‘inside’ of the body? Do they arise from thinking? Where does thinking come from? Does it come from the brain? Don’t know?

Mind Your Heart

Before you were married, you said something to your girlfriend or boyfriend that you must remember...and, when you said it, did it come

from your heart or from your brain? Was it from an 'idea' from your head? Where did it come from? Did it come from the head or the heart? It came from the heart!

Yes, people like you only when you say it is from the heart because only then do they feel you are sincere. And if you are not talking from your heart, then people may not respect you and they may not be happy with you or your speech.

That is the reason why our hearts and minds are very important. Why do we say our heart is important? We believe our mind is important. The mind is always based on the heart-base (*hadaya-vatthu*). The mind occurs on the heart-base.

You will understand this more when you practise meditation. We can say that each one of our minds or the house of our mind is in our heart-base (*hadaya-vatthu*).

Normal Comfort

All of you, before you came here, came from your house, your home. Therefore people from different countries, different houses come together in one centre, in one place. So wherever you live in different countries, your home is very important for you to relax, to stay peacefully. You know that wherever you go, you do not feel comfortable like when you are in your home.

It is especially true in a retreat like this as we have to share a room with two or three people. Maybe it is not as comfortable as your own home. Sometimes you might miss your home too and feel homesick.

During sleeping time, it is cold. At your home, you can wear more clothing and you can turn on the heater. But here, you cannot turn on heater, so it is suffering. I know you will not be as comfortable as in your own home. Hence, people are very comfortable to stay at their own living place.

For every house, security is important and therefore the doors of the

house are important. People need some kind of protection. Hence, the boundary or fence is very important. The gate and the door keep you safely inside and you stay peacefully.

So the boundary and the roof of the house are very important. Without the door, you cannot stay peacefully inside and you do not feel safe. Also, thieves, robbers or even insects can disturb you.

You do not feel it is safe to sleep or stay without those things. For that reason protection is very important. Therefore, for the lay or ordinary people, we can tell them that the house is important for them to live peacefully.

House of ariya

So it is with the enlightened beings, the *ariya*. The house of the *ariya* and the house of the lay people are a bit different with different designs and different kinds of bases.

The house of the lay people, our house and our centre are built on the ground which is the base, although the buildings may be different. But for enlightened beings, the house is not like this kind of building. For them, the building is in their hearts.

For enlightened beings, their house is their mind and their mind is built in their heart-base (*hadaya-vatthu*).

Lay People's House

Even the houses of the lay people are different. They have doors and windows in their houses, but we can visit anytime. For the rich people or special people like the Minister or Prime Minister of the government there are special houses. You can see that the President's house, for example, not only has doors, but it has the army to protect it too. So you have to wait to visit them.

This is the case because there are important persons inside. Hence,

at every corner the gatekeeper has to provide the protection there. There are different kinds of protection. The more protection, the more secure you feel.

It is the same for the enlightened ones. They need to protect their mind. Mindfulness is their gate and protection. This is why mindfulness is so important for the meditator. Mindfulness is the main protection of our mind and our house.

There are two types of owners for the enlightened households. The first type of owners is ordained.

After ordination, such people take the precepts, accept their robes, shave their heads. Their appearance is different from the ordinary lay people. They observe the precepts and practise according to the *Dhamma*, contemplate mindfully and follow the *Dhamma*. This kind of owner is one kind of person who has renounced.

The second type of owners and type of people who have renounced is people like all of you who have come here for the practice of the *Dhamma* and meditation, with the intention to cut off your defilements.

We want to try to practise on how to release our defilements because we do not want to be trapped with our defilements. Our intention is to be released from defilements which are unwholesome thoughts based on greed, anger and delusion. (*lobha, dosa, moha*).

So we don't want to be stuck all the time with unwholesomeness. We want to try to always have our mind in the wholesome states by releasing all unwholesome thoughts.

You may tell yourself, "If possible in this retreat I want to be an *arahant*. I will try until I become an *arahant*. If I cannot attain the level of an *Arahant*, I will aim for the attainment of *anāgāmi* or *sakadāgāmi*. And if I cannot reach those attainments, never mind, I will try to attain some state of *jhāna*. If I still cannot do that, oh never mind, at least I want to be with the breath."

Your intention is to be with the breathing and with the *dhamma* object. Because of this intention, you are already a person who practises renunciation, similar to the monks and nuns. Because you want to destroy defilements, you are also a kind of *bhikkhu* or *bhikkhunī*.

Although the clothes you are wearing have not changed, your mind has changed. Your mind is no longer like ordinary people because of your intention to study and practise the *Dhamma*. You are now like ordained people too.

These kinds of people who practise renunciation, according to the *suttaṅ* (see *sutta*), are a kind of ‘*bhikkhu*’ and ‘*bhikkhunī*’. For the many *bhikkhunī*, all that we have renounced is according to the *vinaya* and the *suttāni*.

For lay people who want to practise the *Dhamma* and to cut off defilements—that is renunciation too. This kind of renunciation means you are following The Buddha’s teachings, in accordance with the *suttāni* and the many *Dhamma* teachings.

I can see that many of you who come here for this retreat shaved your hair after a few days. Many girls have their heads shaved and they are so brave and so happy. They could let go of their beauty. They do not care about whether they are beautiful or not. They do not want to worry about what people will think about them. They really wanted to let go.

Of course there are some conditions that cannot be totally let go of or renounced, but still we can see that their hearts want to ordain. That is the reason why I would like to encourage all of you to renounce.

You are not at home, you are in a monastery, in a centre and you practise the *Dhamma*. Your heart is with the *Dhamma*, so you are temporarily a *bhikkhu* or a *sayalay*.

For those who renounce, the most important thing is mindfulness. With mindfulness, we really need to protect our mind. Mindfulness of

course comes from the mind. But mindfulness has to protect the rest of our mind.

Not Losing Your Mind

We know that during sitting meditation, sometimes our mind wants to concentrate on the breathing, but after a few minutes of concentrating on our breaths, the mind goes somewhere, and you do not know where the mind goes.

If you do not know where your mind goes, neither will I know. If you cannot take care of your mind, how can I teach you meditation? It is very difficult if you do not know where your mind is. You should know where your mind is. Then it is easier for me to explain how to bring your mind back from where it has wandered off to.

Some people reported to me that they did not know where their mind went. So I cannot say anything. At least if you know your mind has gone to Singapore, I can tell you to come back by Silk Air, or Air Asia or Jet Star.

If you do not know where you go, it is difficult for me to interview you. Do you know what kind of people it is that do not know what they are doing? Don't know? Crazy people! When one is crazy, the mind is lost from the object. One does not know what one is doing. This is very dangerous.

Slowly you cannot control your mind and you do not know what you are doing, so it is like dementia. When you are seventy or eighty years old, it is very dangerous as sometimes you lose your mindfulness.

Losing your mindfulness and memory is not good. You cannot remember even your name, other people's names, or your family. Sometimes you forget and keep asking again and again.

This is quite ok but sometimes it is totally crazy to lose your mind completely. You cannot remember yourself. You totally cannot remember what you are doing; the mind has wandered off. That is very dangerous.

Before this thing happens, we have to take care of our mind. If you have strong mindfulness, you will know what you are doing every moment. Every step we are able to check about what we are doing. If the person is very good, he can practise until he reaches the stage of an *arahant*.

Meditation is very easy if you have mindfulness. Why is there difficulty with meditation, concentration and *vipassanā* practice? This is because of insufficient mindfulness only. But do not worry, everybody has *pāramī*.

Because you want to practise the *Dhamma*, we can say that you have good *pāramī*. Do not blame your *pāramī* as not good enough, just because you cannot concentrate. If you cannot control your mind, it is because you do not want to control it, not that you are unable to control it.

Wandering Too Freely

All of you are still young, not yet seventy or eighty. Your memory is still good. You can watch the whole movie and can remember the whole story and can retell it because your memory is still very good. It's only that you do not have enough mindfulness. This is why you cannot concentrate.

So do not blame the meditation teacher nor should you blame anybody. It is not because your neighbour or roommate disturbs you, but rather your mindfulness does not adhere to the object.

That is the reason why you feel agitated with anything that comes in. You accept them all too easily - unwholesome or wholesome thoughts, happy or unhappy thinking and all the different kinds of thoughts wandering through your mind.

The reason and the cause of this wandering mind are because all of you always like to be free, to be relaxed, to be peaceful, and thus your mindfulness is not strong. You do not want to make a boundary in your

mind nor take care of your mind. You adopt the “never mind” or “let it be” attitude.

Your heart is open for wandering thoughts, sensual desires, and the urge to have contact with pleasant feelings. You always expect to be happy and peaceful. You want to be comfortable all the time in your heart, your body and your mind. With this expectation, you do not want to protect your heart and your mind properly.

This is the reason why you are happy when greed comes in and you follow this desire regardless of whether you will get it or not.

You have this desire to be with happiness, but sometimes when anger comes in, you also accept it as OK. The truth is you do not want to concentrate on your own meditation. Instead you want to look at other people and want to know what they are doing. In this way, you make yourself unhappy.

Don't go and look at what others are doing. The more you are in contact with what they are doing, the more you will always end up with negative feelings. That is the reason to stay away. The main problem is you. You never guard your mind. Just close your mind, your heart and everything.

You may reflect, “What do I need to do now, this hour and today?” Busy people do not have time for anger, greed or other desires to come in. They are always busy with things that need to be done, every moment, every hour.

Busy Benefitting Others—Busy People

For those of us who are very busy, there will be no time to think of anything, such as: “Oh, now I want to handle the construction site, next the cooking, and then I have the interview to attend to.” You have to entertain the visitors who come for the whole day. All the time you will be thinking, “What do I need to do?” Then there is no time to relax or to think, “I want to be happy.”

You then ask yourself, “Happy for what? Relax for what?” You have no time. All you want is to do beneficial things for people. When you have time, you sit down quickly, or you may read books, sometimes you meditate.

This year, I apologize that I could not come to the Shrine Hall to accompany all of you because of the injury to my knee. Although I could not come, in the *kuṭi* I meditated and I sent *mettā* to all of you. I tried my best to do my duty, to guard my mind so I do not get unwholesome thoughts.

The whole day I don’t want any unwholesome thoughts to come into my mind. I don’t want to say that I am happy. This is my duty to do it; so I don’t want to think about if I have to be happy or I have to be upset. With wisdom, mindfully and respectfully, we work for all. This is the reason why our mind is so peaceful.

We always feel we have good life. We feel like this because we help people to practise the *Dhamma*. This is the most important thing in our life! We can fulfill what we desire and want. In this way, we feel we have benefited ourselves and others day by day, hour by hour.

So we try to manage our life with this kind of understanding and effort. We put in a lot of effort daily for the people and we feel happy. This kind of happiness is not the kind with desire. We use wisdom for the benefit of people to help them progress in the *Dhamma* and to be enlightened.

Meditation & Work

That is the reason for us to provide support. If you come for a holiday, I am sorry you will not be able to see me. For the *Dhamma*, we support you and although I cannot come, I still think about all of you.

Sometimes I see that after breakfast, all of you have to work in the garden, sweeping the floor, cleaning the dining area and the meditation hall. I feel very sorry and worry that all of you will be tired after forty-five minutes or an hour.

You can still concentrate on the breathing or on your meditation object. While you are sweeping the floor or even cooking in the kitchen, you can still concentrate and practise the *Dhamma*.

The most important thing is our mind. If our mind knows how to guard, then we know how to practise and clean our mind with the *dhamma* object.

It is important that we understand each other in one place. My intention is for you to relax and be peaceful, have a happy life and be comfortable. I want you to do walking meditation peacefully and relax in this compound and just walk. If you don't want to walk, you can lie down on your bed and just think about a meditation object.

If you know, you can really appreciate my intention. After breakfast or lunch, don't sleep immediately. If you sleep immediately after meal, you will get indigestion and become too tired and also uncomfortable. This is not good for you and you will easily get drowsy and get sick too.

After lunch, please do walking meditation or do some kind of activity in your room for half an hour. It is good for you. If you feel it is hot outside, you can do meditation in your room, under the trees, in front of your *kuṭi* or even outside the gate.

You can walk under the trees or shade. If you don't want to walk outside, it will be good if you can do some activity in your room such as washing the toilet, cleaning up your bed or sleeping quarters or tidying up anywhere.

Living Habits

Some people are used to staying in a clean area or wearing clean clothing. For others, they don't care. They just throw everything everywhere when they come into their room. So when others see this, they feel very uncomfortable.

Some people might not be happy with your actions, and yet they do not want to tell you not to do it. But their minds are not happy.

Cleanliness and tidiness are also important for the concentration of other people, their practice and so it is for you. So because of our speech, thoughts or actions being not mindful, that is the reason or the cause of trouble for other people.

When people get unwholesome thoughts and unhappy mental states, they do not confine them only to the room; they will bring them somewhere, to the meditation hall too.

They bring emotions to the meditation hall. As they sit down, they think about what others have done, how and why they do certain things and how they shall tell *Sayalay*. They do this instead of thinking about the breath-object. This is not good for the practice. Although it is very basic, we need to be very careful.

Pure Love

We need to support each other and to know how to love each other. This is very important. Love is about your desire to care for other people. This is love, pure love!

When someone wants to take care of other people, to help them to be happy, peaceful and to be good, then there is really pure love. Do understand that these kinds of people only can be good persons and their life is high-class. We emphasise the mind.

We can only consider the persons who have good intentions, good hearts, and good minds to be persons of high class. No matter how expensive clothes you wear, if your mind is not good, always angry and jealous, although you may wear beautiful clothes, we cannot say you are 'high-class'. You see many people wearing diamonds and expensive things, but they always make trouble. Who wants to love them and be close to them?

In my centre, many big diamonds come. I do not care. I run away. I know they will make trouble because they will talk and talk.

We need to guard our minds, we need to take care of our minds, to be humble when we think about people. If you know how to care about people's minds and they are happy because of you, then the more you analyse your mind, the more you like to do it.

The more you can appreciate yourself, knowing how and what you do for people makes them happy, and that they are doing good things because of you, then the more you realise happiness. That is the kind of training we need to do.

If you never train or take care of your mind, you will never realise your mind and you don't know what you are doing; and that will always create problems. You always feel dissatisfied in your mind and everything is negative and you never think positively. That is the reason why we need to train our mind to be positive and with good intention.

Then only our heart can slowly become pure, happy and good. We can become enlightened. If our mind is not good, we are far from enlightenment.

Enlightenment must be based on wholesome thoughts and wholesome mind and actions. Then it is easier for the enlightenment practice. The basis for the mind to be unwholesome is greed and anger which in turn are controlled by delusion.

It is because of delusion that greed and anger happen. We don't know we have delusion because we don't have wisdom and mindfulness. This is the reason unwholesome states arise in us.

It is very simple. If we don't want unwholesome states, we just need to guard our mind with mindfulness, with wisdom.

Tomorrow you can be enlightened! We must try to humble ourselves and it is very good.

We need to practise this one too, to train and train ourselves so slowly we become used to being humble which is good. It is not good to purposely do it. Just stay below on the ground.

I sit on the chair not because I am proud but because my knees are painful. Don't misunderstand me. I really cannot sit on the floor because it is very painful for my knees. I really would like to sit on the floor.

On the first day of the retreat I was thinking how I could teach like this. I don't know if I can go for the many retreats next year.

I have to sit on the chair always. I cannot sit for a long time and I feel very sorry. I don't want to do retreats in this way. It is very tiring to think very highly of oneself, to think about whom one is. We reflect, "I am a teacher, so people take care of me." We in turn have to respect and appreciate people; it is not for our ego.

We should not be proud of this. We must respect what people have done for us. That is our happiness. So we always try to be humble. When we stay low, we do not have much problem.

Learning from Others

You always want to be high, always want to think who you are and want people to treat you as number one. This is very tiring.

Even myself, I stay with the workers. We are like a family, eating together using the same table. We always share with each other. This also makes me more relaxed.

I appreciate that someone comes really from good life. I met many very rich people, highly educated people. Some of these people are very humble. This is their original heart, not because they pretend, not because I am a *sayalay*. I can see their actions, speech and how they treat people. It is very humble. So I admire them greatly.

People respect them because they are happy and good. They make people comfortable.

When people look at them, they feel, “Oh, they have the *Dhamma* and they like to practise the *Dhamma*. They have mindfulness! They are very humble.” For me, I learn a lot of things from the outside world. Wherever I go travelling, I see good things and I learn.

Even how workers do their jobs - I learn from them sometimes. It is the same wherever I go, United States, Europe or in Germany. In Berlin, when I looked at the Berlin wall, I wanted to find out why they had a boundary.

Even when I go and look at all the designs of the buildings, they are also different. East Berlin is totally like Singapore and Malaysia with flats. Whereas in West Berlin, you can see the design is very European. So it is all very different!

So where we go, we observe and we respect what they do. We can learn a lot of things. So when you have a bit of basic knowledge and you want to do something, you don't have much trouble.

You know that we have a centre so we need to take care of people. The cooking is important. If I don't know how to cook, I don't know how to arrange things, that means we have to waste a lot of money and veggies.

If we know how to take care of the workers, we can save a lot of money. In this way, we need to understand everything so that we can respect other people.

If you don't know how to observe the job, you don't know how to appreciate what people have done for you. You don't think they are tired. You only think that because you paid money, they have to do it for you. Please understand this is not the correct way.

Although you pay money, you still need to respect the people and how they have done the job for you, how they worked for us and how they put in their effort. This is what we respect.

We understand their problems and difficulties, their tiredness, and we respect these. Every day I went down and thanked them very much

for what they had done for us. We don't think about the money we paid them.

The reason why I declared tomorrow a holiday is because I looked at all of you working so hard, so I felt sorry. This is the way we look at people. So our mind is very happy and peaceful. So we don't have problems.

I want you all to practise this way and then you won't have negative feelings, you won't have problems with your roommate and your meditation will improve very fast within a short time.

If this mind is clear, everything is perfect. Meditation is so easy! It is so easy to be with this breathing. Look at the breath and concentrate on the breath! The teacher told you to do this for twenty minutes. OK, I respect this advice!

Respect Teachings

You may consider, "Since *Sayalay* instructed, I will concentrate. She told me that after twenty minutes I will see *nimitta*. I will check out if this is real or not. I will follow her idea and her instruction." If you follow them, you will very soon see *nimitta*.

When you don't listen, you will still have wandering thoughts. In the past, when I was learning, when Pa Auk *Sayadaw* told me one thing, I penetrated, and did not move and i did not want to go out, I will try until the end! Even while other students have yet to finish the homework, i am the one who finished it all. I was very eager. I put in a lot of effort in the practice so much so that i used three sessions as one session!

Of course when the students put in a lot in a lot of effort in their practice, the teacher likes it and is happy. If you don't want to practise, never mind. If you want to make me happy, try harder!

Freedom Guarded by Mindfulness

Practise and you will get benefits from it. Please try to prepare your mind to attain ‘freedom’. Freedom is not a kind of relaxation nor is freedom ‘what I want to do I can do.’ Freedom is not like this. With boundary established, the freedom of the mind is taken care of by mindfulness.

Try to make everything ready for the practice, not to cling, not to attach to anything, even the six-sense-doors in yourself or the six-sense-door external objects.

External objects are colour, sound, smell, taste, tangibility or touch, and external objects which strike at your six-sense-door organs. Because of these contacts, all the thoughts and feelings that we have arisen.

Different kinds of feeling arise with eye’s consciousness, when there is eye’s contact, wholesome or unwholesome mental states will arise.

The same is true with the other sense-doors. The more you contact, the more you will get wandering thoughts. This is why we try to make it simple in our daily practice.

Even if the food is not good, try. Of course, you might not get used to it. Different cultures, different types of food, may be a bit difficult.

I just want to ask you to try to be accepting. If you cannot and really fall sick and do not feel well, please do not feel uncomfortable to tell us. We have many workers this year. We are prepared. If you are not feeling well and you want to eat porridge or whatever, do not feel uncomfortable speaking about it, just tell us, it is very easy. They are very happy to serve and happy to cook for you.

Chapter 7

Question and Answer Session



Through answering a series of questions, Sayalay explained a range of topics including the importance of *nimitta* and the attainment of *jhāna*, the practice of Dependent Origination, the dying process and how to share the *Dhamma* with our parents.

* Question 1: “What is *nimitta*, how it can be formed?”

This is a very good question. Maybe you were very angry with me for the first few days of the retreat. You wanted to sleep but you could not. You wanted to go out but you could not! You think that it is really torture to you. You might think, “This nun is very fearsome.” Is this true? No? Oh, very good!

You might be thinking, “Oh, *Sayalay* really tortures us. I want to sleep but I cannot. I want to go out but I cannot. I cannot move! She controls everything!” But after a few days, as you have experienced, the mind becomes calm and you start to be relaxed in the sitting position. You also start to feel comfortable with the breathing. Is this true? Yes! So slowly, you start to feel happy watching the breath and there is no need for me to come and use the cane to beat you.

Fight with Defilements

Once you start to feel comfortable, comfortable with the breathing, there is an improvement in your concentration. In the beginning, you had to struggle and struggle. The mind would go out again and again and you had to pull it back again and again which made you very tired. Then you felt sleepy again and again, and you would wake up again, only to fall asleep again. Is that so?

That is fighting with the defilements. After we become used to it, the mind becomes alert and happy. The moment the feeling of happiness arises, concentration improves. Then the mind starts to become bright. Concentration-mind produces bright light in your heart-base.

After that mind arises, you will see after a while, bright light in front of your face or surrounding it. Different people have different conditions appearing. Some people start to see the light in front of the face. They see different colours or just a bright light which we call the *nimitta*. For some others, they will see that light from the side, either from the left or right side.

Perception

Why is it that they see the light on the left or right side? That is because when we concentrate on the breath, the breath is more obvious on one side. For those who see the light on the right side, their perception of the breath on the right side is clearer than that of the left. Our mind's perception on the right side is very strong and we always pay more attention to the right. In that way, since the concentration is on the right side, the light comes from the right side too.

There are some people who keep following the breath until they feel that even their bodies have turned to the right side! Even the face turns! They do not know how to turn back. Since they cannot turn back, they open their eyes and turn it back physically. Actually it is just perception. It is because the mind focuses too much on one side, in the

end they feel like everything is on one side. They want to turn back but they cannot turn back, so they have to open their eyes and physically turn back! This is because their perception focuses too much on one side.

Sometimes when our concentration is focused more on one side, one may feel that the light comes from there. There are also some people who follow the in-breath too much, such that the *nimitta* appears on top. The light comes from the top, so what do they end up doing? They want to get into *jhāna* urgently, so they are impatient to wait till the light comes down to the front of the nostril. So they say to it, “Come down! Come down!” Is that so? But it does not come down, and in the end, the *nimitta* is lost because the concentration level drops.

There are some others whose out-breath is stronger than the in-breath. So they follow and follow it until the *nimitta* appears from below. So it is different in each case. We cannot say that the *nimitta* will appear in exactly the same way to everybody. It depends on how you focus on the breath.

So do not get confused. Some people think, “Oh, they saw the *nimitta* in front of their face. Why is mine coming from the side? Mine must be the outside light. Or it could be from the sunlight.” You might feel confused in this way. That is why many people have doubt and they open their eyes to look at the light. At that time, their concentration will drop.

It does not matter what kind of colour or bright light appears. Let it be. Our duty is just to keep focusing on the breathing, do not forget about the breath. Just be aware of the breath in front of the nostril. Slowly, slowly, the colour will start to change. Slowly, no matter whether it is at the right or left or top or below, just keep your attention in front of the nostril. Slowly, it will move and this happens naturally. It will come closer towards the nostril and automatically becomes clearer and clearer.

Sign of Concentration

The *nimitta* is a sign of concentration. We have three levels of *nimitta*. The first level *nimitta* can be yellow, orange, blue, purple or cloudy—these kinds of colours. Different people have different experiences of the first *nimitta*. At that time, the *nimitta* will be moving, appearing and disappearing. It disappears easily at this stage. Do not worry when that happens and do not look at it. Just relax and try to focus on the breath continuously.

After a while, the colour changes to become white. This becomes the second level *nimitta*. As it slowly changes to the second level *nimitta*, it will slowly come and approach the nostril. It will come slowly. This will happen naturally. Keep the mind continuously aware on the breath and after a while, the white will become brighter and brighter. If the white becomes too bright, do not concentrate on the light.

Many people make this mistake when the white light becomes bright. They think, “I want it to become transparent. The final level *nimitta* is the transparent *nimitta*.” So in order to get the transparent *nimitta*, what do they do? They make more effort to breathe again and again. This is the mistake. At this point of time, we cannot try to make the breath clear. The mind needs to be very soft and very subtle. So we just need to relax. When the white colour becomes brighter and brighter, the meditator needs to just relax and make the breath very soft and very subtle.

Happy Mind

The mind starts to be happy with the breath only when it becomes subtle. When the mind calms down, the light slowly becomes transparent. It gets clearer and clearer and automatically comes to stop in front of the nostril.

That is why we need to be very careful at each stage of the *nimitta*. Even though it seems like just a small mistake, it becomes very big

because if you get stuck there and do not know what to do. It will take a long time for you to get the clear *nimitta*.

Even though you already have the white light, it will never become clear and transparent. So this is the technique on what to do. Just relax and the clear *nimitta* will come automatically and stop in front of the nostril.

Some people can get a *nimitta* like a crystal ball or glass ball. That is good. It is difficult for some others to get that kind of *nimitta* but it does not matter. Others will get a *nimitta* like a clear, bright star which is also alright. As soon as it becomes clearer and more stable, we can start to focus our mind and concentrate on the *nimitta*. Keep on thinking, “This is *ānāpānasati nimitta, nimitta, nimitta.*”

Absorption

Now we start to enter into absorption. The mind stops concentrating on the breathing. We let go of the breath. Just relax and keep the awareness on the *nimitta*. Then slowly, we will enter into absorption, into *jhāna*. *jhāna* means concentrating on the *nimitta*. At that time, the mind does not want to be aware of the breath. There is only one object of focus, the knowing of the *nimitta* object.

The knowing of the *nimitta* is applied thought or we call it *vitakka*. The second *jhāna* factor is *vicāra*, or sustained thought. This sustained thought is continuously aware of the *nimitta*, again and again. This awareness cannot stop. We are continuously aware. There is sustained thought throughout the entire sitting. After concentrating a while on the *nimitta*, you will start to feel happy and joyful. This happiness and feeling of joy arise. Then there is one-pointedness of the mind. That mental state is concentrating on only one object, the object of the *nimitta*. The mind is not with wandering thoughts or with bodily sensations; it is only with the *nimitta*. This is one-pointedness of the mind.

So when we concentrate in this way on the *nimitta*, the five *jhāna* factors arise. This is what we call the first *jhāna*.

There are different *nimittāni*. In the beginning, there are different colours that may arise but it does not matter. In the end, all of them are the same. They become white, bright, clearer and stable.

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* Question 2: “Why does Sayalay emphasise so much on attaining *nimitta* and *jhāna*?”
.....

nimitta To Enter jhāna

Earlier, we explained that it is very difficult to concentrate on one object if there is no *nimitta*. You may want to concentrate on the breath. But when the breath is subtle, the breath disappears. How can you enter into *jhāna* then? Some people teach that we can enter *jhāna* by concentrating on the breath. It is not that easy, you know.

The *jhāna* object needs to be very clear and it needs to be very stable. It cannot even move or disappear.

The breath as an object can change at anytime. Sometimes it can be very subtle, sometimes it can disappear. When it disappears, the breath-object is lost and you easily fall into *bhavaṅga*—the subconscious or unconscious state—you fall asleep! So we do not know whether it is sleeping or *jhāna* state. These two are different! Without an object, it is very difficult to enter *jhāna*.

For the practice of *ānāpānasati*, we need clear light *nimitta* to enter *jhāna*.

For the skeleton meditation, the skeleton image needs to be clear in our mind. In our mind, if we can recall and imagine the skeleton image, then that is called the *nimitta* for the skeleton meditation.

We have ten *kaṣiṇa* objects. For the *kaṣiṇa* meditation, the coloured object needs to be clear in our mind. Without an object, we cannot

practise *jhāna*. What can we focus on? Without an object of focus, we cannot enter *jhāna*.

That is why if we practise *kaṣiṇa* meditation, the coloured object in our mind is the *nimitta*. Without the *nimitta*, it is very difficult to focus and to be stable on one object for an hour.

Therefore, without a *nimitta*, it is not easy to enter into *jhāna*. When we enter into *jhāna*, from the first to the fourth *jhāna*, the concentration-mind becomes stronger and stronger.

Foundation of Noble Eightfold Path

jhāna is what we call ‘*samādhi*’ or concentration. *jhāna* is also Right Concentration. Earlier, we talked about the Four Noble Truths and the Noble Eightfold Path. They are all mentioned in The Buddha’s first *Dhamma* talk, the *Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta*. When you chant this *Sutta* you will know that it includes ‘*sammā samādhi*’ and also ‘*sammā vāyāma*’ and so on as part of the Noble Eightfold Path. I will not explain further now, as it would take too long to do so.

In this Noble Eightfold Path, *sammā samādhi* (right concentration) is also one of the components. It is very important! For those who wish to enter into *Nibbāna*, to practise up till *Nibbāna*, it is very difficult to get *vipassanā* knowledge without first having concentration as a stepping stone. Can you understand this?

For example, we know that *vipassanā* is the study of what is inside our body. And what is inside? It is easy to feel sensations. Isn’t that right? We have many objects of *rūpa*. We call this body ‘*rūpa*’ too. But knowing this alone is not enough. We still need to penetrate within the body.

The four elements are also one type of *rūpa*, and the thirty-two parts of the body are also another kind. The thirty-two parts include all the bodily organs. These are one kind of *rūpa*. And there are also *rūpa-kalāpa* which also fall under *rūpa*. So there are many different ways in which we need to analyse inside the body.

Concentration with vipassanā

The easier one is thirty-two parts of body. Can you see now? Close your eyes; look at it. Can you see or not? Can or cannot? Can or cannot? Please answer! Can you see them or not? Why? Why couldn't you see? It's lack of concentration!

When you have concentration-mind, no matter what you wish to see in your mind, you can see it. Just look at it inside of your body. You will be able to see the image of what you wish to see, clearly either in front of you or inside the body. That is why we really need to have concentration.

Some people do not need to develop concentration because in the past, they had accumulated very good *pāramī*. They had already practised for many lifetimes. So for people like Venerable *Sāriputta* and Venerable *Moggallāna*, it is very easy for them. After mere listening, they could penetrate into *nāma* and *rūpa* very easily. For ordinary people, even after listening for many times, we still do not really know *nāma* and *rūpa*, we are not able to really see inside.

I say this not to blame anyone. This is just what we have observed. We need concentration. Without concentration, it is very difficult to practise *vipassanā*. So that is the reason why we emphasise *jhāna* so much.

* Question 3: "Sometimes the children take their parents' characters, behaviours, etc. and often we say they have the parents' genes. Is there such a thing as genes in Buddhism? If not, how do we explain these similar characteristics? Thank you."

When we talk about character differences, parents and children in the same family can sometimes have the same character. Sometimes they can be of different characters as well. We cannot assume that just

because they are the parents' children, the whole family will have the same character. Why do we have different characters?

kamma Links

When people have the same character, it could be because in the past, they might have been together as a family over and over again, continuously in many lifetimes. They knew each other, they associated with each other and they liked each other, so they have that kind of *kamma* link. So when they come into this family, they are already used to each other.

When they came out of the mother's womb, whether it is towards the environment or the way the family trains them, they feel used to it. There are no negative feelings on their part and only positive feelings. They can accept whatever their parents do in the present condition. They can accept and understand them and they feel alright with them. Since birth, the character will also be the same as their parents. Do you understand? This is related to the past lives.

As they were already very close in the past, therefore in this life, they can accept their parents whether they are good or bad. Sometimes, not only good characteristics are the same. Bad characteristics can be the same too. If the father is a drinker, the son can end up being a drinker too. So the same kind of character can develop also from childhood onward because of the environment. The child likes the environment and he can accept this kind of environment.

Sometimes, even though the parents are very, very good, the children cannot follow what the parents do no matter how much they are taught. They disagree with the parents. Do you see such examples? The parents tell them, "This is not good, do not do this." And they will do it behind the parents' backs. If they cannot do it in front, they will do it behind. This makes the parents upset. You might have had this experience before.

Maybe it has happened in your own family or outside of your family. You will see children having different characters from that of the parents. Why do they have different characters? Maybe in the past, they were not very close to the parents. They did not have the same kind of practice. And people have different characters also because of their different *kamma* and character in the past lives. But with some *kamma* links, we meet accidentally in this lifetime.

There are also some people who may already have practised meditation in the past. But in this life when they came, they were accidentally born into a fisherman's family. The father wants to catch fish and kill them, but the son, even though he is of the same family, does not like to do it. The son does not feel happy with this.

And the father likes to drink but the son does not like to drink because he was a strong Buddhist in the past. So character can be different because of past life influences.

Mother's Consciousness Influences in the Womb

There are so many different reasons. The genes or what we call genetics are due to the same blood. Many people think that way. The same blood means we are part of our parents, for which we have gratitude. It is because of our parents that we can become *human*.

We are grateful to our mother especially because the mother has been taking care of us even when we were still in the mother's womb.

The mother feeds us. All the energy and nutriment come to us from our mother. We are related and dependent on our mother, on her mind as well.

The parents' mind, the mother especially, has influence on us also. When the mother sends *mettā* to us, it can spread by the mind-producing *rūpa* (*cittaja-rūpa*) to our body in her womb. Her mind can influence us in this way. So we also have the mind-producing *rūpa* in

our body.

During that time, which is at the beginning of *rūpa* stage in our life, there is only *kammaja-rūpa*, caused by our own *kamma* only. At that time, our mind-produced *rūpa* and nutriment-produced *rūpa* have yet to appear; temperature-produced *rūpa* also has yet to appear. These arise a few weeks after conception. During the first few weeks when our mother is really taking care of us, her mind can influence us too.

When our mother is sending *mettā*, you can receive, and can sleep very peacefully inside there. You can stay peacefully because the mother always has so much *mettā* for you. It is always the mother who is sending *mettā* to you. The mother feeds, the mother eats, and her energy, her nutriment will spread to you. The food also creates *rūpa*. And her temperature - the mother really gives you the heat too. So all the external objects, coming to you are connected to the mother.

So the mind-produced *rūpa* also, mostly is generated from the mother. The mother gives you a lot of *mettā*, but the main component is your own *kamma*. *kamma* produces *kammaja-rūpa* in the body.

Own kamma Influences

Parents have great influence on your character, but if your *kamma* is too strong, your character cannot be the same as your parents. Sometimes the parents and children have similar character. For example, the person's past is mostly a *mettā*-type of character, and the mother also likes to do *mettā*. They are of similar character type; they become more like the same character.

In the past, if the child never practised *mettā* and always liked to do bad things; even though the mother sent *mettā*, he could receive only very little. He would not be able to follow his mother's way. I am sorry but this is a little complicated.

Some parāmī Influences After Birth

In this way, mind can change because of environment also. So after birth, even though the character is the same from the first past life and is good, the person's mind can change because of environment also. The character can change sometimes. But, because of strong *pāramī* or strong practice in the past, even though in present birth there are changes, after a while, when the mind is awakened, and *pāramī* matured, the original mind or the original *pāramī* can come back to a person.

Environmental Influences

Do you understand? Maybe this person in the past was a strong Buddhist and a practitioner but in this life because of the environment, or under the influence of friends, he starts drinking and does something bad. But when his time is ripe, he will know that this is not really beneficial for him, that it is a waste of time. Such person will be able to realise this within a short time.

There are some young meditators here, who could have taken the time spent here and gone on a holiday, gone drinking and so on, but they could let go of these distractions to come for this retreat and to do a good thing like meditation. This is also related to their past characters.

In the same way, there are those who have very good characters but their parents are different. Their parents have different characters so the child does not know how to change back to its original character. The environment might be impure too. But when the time is ripe, such children can wake up and they can come back. So it is very difficult to say that everyone is the same or at the same level. Different people have different conditions too.

.....
* Question 4: “According to Tibetan Buddhism, when the person dies, the process involves many different stages. For example, there is the breakdown of the four elements, the “bardo” stage. Those stages can be quite painful. Is it true that death involves these many stages? Thank you.”
.....

I do not really know or understand much about the Tibetan practice, so it might be better for me to just explain about the *Theravāda* way of practice.

In the *Theravāda* way of practice, we have *nāma* and *rūpa*. That is, in the present condition, we have the mind and the body, which are *nāma* and *rūpa*.

Four Causes of rūpa

In the body, there are four causes for the arising of *rūpa*. We have explained earlier that there are six sense-doors in our body; they are eye, ear, nose, tongue, body and heart-base. So the bases are in our eyes, ears, nose, tongue, body and heart-base. You have to concentrate on every part of the body in order to see these.

In the eyes, The Buddha taught that there are four causes for the arising of *rūpa*. In our ears, nose, tongue, body and heart-base, it is the same too.

So what are these four causes of *rūpa* that we need to know? These are very difficult to analyse without concentration. Can you see it now? Are you able to differentiate these causes or not? Do you know what kinds of *rūpa* are caused by food?

These four causes of *rūpa* are firstly, those caused by the *kamma*, secondly, those caused by the mind, thirdly, those caused by temperature, which is hot and cold, and fourthly, those caused by food or nutriment. These are the four causes of *rūpa*.

The Buddha taught that you need to penetrate and analyse inside your mind until you are able to see how many of these causes there are and what they are. These are what we need to know.

When we concentrate on the four elements inside our eyes for a while, we will be able to see many particles arising and passing away. From the start, we need to choose from the particles, we need to check which ones are the temperature-produced *rūpa*, which are the nutriment-produced *rūpa*, and which are *kammaja-rūpa* (*rūpa* produced by *kamma*) and so on. In the whole body, all *rūpa* are caused by these same four conditions.

Four Elements in rūpa-kalāpa

Every type of *rūpa-kalāpa* has the four elements inside it, even the *kamma*-produced *rūpa-kalāpa*. Do you know the four elements? They are the earth element, water element, fire and wind elements—four elements in total.

Every type of *rūpa-kalāpa* is based on the four elements. There are the four elements in the temperature-produced *rūpa*, and also in nutriment. The food that we eat is based on the four elements. Every *rūpa-kalāpa* contains not just the four elements. Some, like the *kamma*-produced *rūpa-kalāpa* contains ten components in total. Temperature, mind and nutriment will have eight components inside one *rūpa-kalāpa*. So there are different kinds of *rūpa* by this way of analysis.

We need to check the different types of *rūpa-kalāpa*. Every part of the body contains the four elements but to different degrees. There are many, many *rūpa-kalāpa*. Sometimes, some areas have many *rūpa-kalāpa* which produce a lot of heat so you will feel that this area is hot.

In another place, if the hardness sensation is produced more, you will feel that part as being hard. At another place, if the softness component of the *rūpa-kalāpa* is produced a lot, you would feel soft

there. So although the four elements exist throughout the whole body, there will be different sensations felt in different parts of our body.

Why do you feel pain in only one part of the body and not in the entire body? There is pain in this one part because the elements are not balanced there. Because you had pressed it down for a long time in one position, the hardness sensation appears followed by heaviness and cohesion. Then, you contact it in your mind. Do you know that *rūpa* is not the mind? *rūpa* is the body.

Many people think that this is suffering, my body is suffering! Is it really this way? *rūpa* does not have mind. *rūpa* is the body, the condition of the four elements. Our mind contacts with the *rūpa* which brings about the painful sensation. So it is really the mind in pain, not the body in pain!

Many people think, “Oh, my body is in pain, my body is painful!” Sometimes we hear them speak this way, though something does not sound quite right, we are quite used to this way of speaking. They say, “My body is in pain.” Actually it should be, “My mind is in pain because of this body, because of this *rūpa*.”

Because of this body, my mind is in pain. Because of this *rūpa*, our mind is in pain.

In this way, we need to analyse mind and matter. From some causes we die. We die in different ways. What is the main cause?

Sequence of Natural Death

The main cause is the mind; the mind is in control of everything. Then the mind is connected with our *kamma* also. So because the *kamma* is stopped, the person has to die. That is one reason. The body is very good, temperature *rūpa* all are very strong, nutriment *rūpa* all are very good, still very young, can digest very fast.

So nutriment *rūpa* are very strong, temperature *rūpa* are still very strong, and also consciousness, the mind is still young, very strong,

very powerful. Why does this baby die immediately? The baby is only two, three years old, and dies very fast. It is because of some *kamma* also that it dies. When the *kamma* dies, the other three automatically have to die. It is based on the *kamma*.

When the *kamma* dies, the mind starts to stop. First *kammaja-rūpa* stops, and is followed by the mind-producing *rūpa*. *kammaja-rūpa* will stop first; after that *cittaja-rūpa* will stop; then next, slowly the nutriment *rūpa* stops. The nutriment *rūpa* continues for awhile because there is heat inside. That inside-heat will still produce generation, and generation of nutriment *rūpa*. So because of the *cittaja-rūpa* has stopped, the mind doesn't move anymore. Then nutriment-generation also slowly declines and drops. In the end, after you die, only temperature *rūpa* are there.

The same applies for temperature *rūpa* also, because nutriment *rūpa* cannot produce further, because the heat is less and less. The heat is connected to the mind also. Then the temperature, in this case, is the temperature of the dead body. It has only the sensation of coldness. At this time the sensation of coldness is more obvious than heat. So after people pass away, you can see that after a while, the whole body starts to get cold. The coolness feeling arises, because only temperature-produced *rūpa* remains there. So for the four elements, we cannot say whether all are destroyed. It depends on the stages of the condition.

Different Conditions of Death

What I mean by conditions is that what elements are destroyed depends on what kind of *rūpa* is first damaged in you. The cause of some deaths is not by *kamma*. Their *kamma* is still very good, but because of food, due to indigestion or poisoning—if the food gives you some problem - that person can die immediately too.

So in that case, due to food poisoning, the main cause of death is the nutriment-produced *rūpa*. Because of nutriment-produced *rūpa*, other kinds of *rūpa* will also have to die.

There are some others who have depression. The mind is very weak and always unhappy. So *cittaja-rūpa* becomes fewer and fewer and the mind becomes weaker and weaker. And because the mind is not happy, *rūpa* gets weaker and weaker. Such people have difficulties sleeping and this causes many other effects happening in the body.

The effect of depression shows in the face, and the whole body becomes smaller and thinner. And what happens in the end? What happens when one is depressed and always unhappy? In the end, some people kill themselves by committing suicide. Some people kill themselves because they do not know how to take care of their minds.

The mind is very powerful in those who know how to take care of their mind. When the mind is strong, the body gets stronger too. When the mind gets weak, everything else can slowly die too. So there are different ways of dying.

We cannot say that death is caused only by the imbalance of the four elements. Of course, there are those who die because the four elements in them are not balanced. Some people who are sick for a long time and stay only indoors may have the condition whereby the four elements are not balanced.

Our body is not only balanced by the four elements. We also need to be balanced by the other types of *rūpa* like the mind-produced *rūpa*, the temperature-produced *rūpa* and the nutriment-produced *rūpa*. We still need to know these. In this way, we need to check what kinds of mind happened at the time when the person was nearly dying and after death occurred.

Near-Death Consciousness

The mind will take the destination picture as an object. So the mind will see some image near the last moment. Although it is nearly the death-moment, the mind will see the image, where they will be reborn. So then, at that time, the people see where they need to be reborn. For

the *human* beings, who will be reborn in the mother's womb, they will see the red colour. Red colour image is the sign for their next destination.

Then at that time, the mind is very active, and the body starts to get weaker. It is the same as a coma, like in a coma. So the body doesn't move; there is not much energy; the body is close to death. But the mind is still active.

The mind starts producing and searching as to 'where I should be reborn', the place of the next birth. Then the image appears. For rebirth in heaven, beings will see many beautiful buildings, bright light and many *devā* and deities. They will see that kind of image. Some people, who are to be reborn as animals, will see an animal, the mother animal standing and waiting for them. Then you should know that, "I have to go to the animal life". Do you understand?

Some others go to the ghost or spirit life. We call that spirit life, *peta*. That kind of individual will see water or some kind of ocean. For that kind of person after they die, they will have to go to that kind of hungry ghost life, to that kind of feeling. So different images will be seen depending on what we have done in this lifetime, depending on our *kamma*.

This lifetime is our *kamma*. Based on our *kamma*, if *kamma* is good, we will get good sign, good image; if our *kamma* is not good, if we are doing bad things all the time, then the image of a realm of suffering will arise. So that time, at near-death moment, people emphasise more on the mind, not on the *rūpa* already.

For that reason, *cittaja-rūpa* is stronger than other *rūpa*. Other *rūpa*, like nutriment *rūpa*, is not so strong. Because the nutriment *rūpa* is not so strong, the elements of nutriment are also weak. As the body doesn't want to move, you will feel temperature *rūpa*; its four elements are also weak. Only the mind-producing *rūpa* are very active to move. The mind is considering where to go, where to go.

When it comes to your near-death moment in future, you should remember what I am saying now. Please do not forget. At that time, you will be rushing and asking, “Where? Where? Where? Please tell me, *Sayalay!*”

At that time, I will not be able to tell you! You have to choose your way. Please do not choose the wrong way at that time. Try to remember, “Oh, in the year 2010, I attended a retreat in Bekok, a ten-day retreat.” Try to recall this. This is very, very important. This time when you were meditating, the *kamma* from meditation was the best, the highest *kamma* that you have ever done. It is superior to you doing many, many other wholesome deeds like *dāna*. Doing *dāna* is wholesome, keeping the precepts is wholesome too and you make a lot of wholesome *kamma* through these deeds. But the *kamma* gained through meditation cannot be compared with those others. It is very strong *kamma*.

Recall Good kamma!

So, all this good *kamma* has been accumulated. At that moment, remember this image of you meditating, listening to the *Dhamma* talk, keeping the precepts, doing *dāna*. Recall every wholesome thing that you have ever done. If you can recall these in your mind, even a bad image can change immediately to a good one. If you want to go to heaven, it is easy and you can go there.

So do not think that you are wasting time and suffering here! This is a good sign for you to use in the future. I am so tired of talking so much and sometimes you do not know how to appreciate it. Sometimes in your sitting meditation, you want to scold me, don't you? (*Audience laughs*) Is it true? No? If no, it's alright.

Build and Accumulate Good kamma

We encourage you because we know. Many people too have the experience when they look at their past and future lives; they know that good *kamma* is so important. The near-death moment is so important. From the Buddhist point of view, we emphasise that the mind is more important than *rūpa* at the near-death moment. We do not concentrate on the body. At that time, even if you want to concentrate on your body, it is difficult to feel and to understand it unless you have very good concentration. Only with good concentration, will you be able to understand the nature of *rūpa*.

Mind More Important

So for the Buddhists, we concentrate more on the mind. We need to take care of the mind because the body is useless as soon as you are dead! We really cannot use it anymore and nobody wants it. You cannot use it for yourself and nobody else wants it. Who would want it?

After one week... even after few days also, nobody wants it. They don't want it. So we need to prepare our mind, take care of our mind, and at near-death moment, the mind can be the determinant to the next destination. It can even change your destination if you can recollect one single wholesome *kamma*. Therefore we build more *cittaja-rūpa* in this way. The mind is more important than body.

Do you believe this? So the body is not important for a Buddhist, or in Buddhism, because we believe in *kamma*. Only the mind can produce the next rebirth. Only the mind can transfer. When one dies, immediately one will be reborn in another life. We are not waiting for seven days or forty-nine days. Do you know?

Merit Sharing

Some people have this misunderstanding. They think that after death, we can still wait for seven days. What are we waiting for? Do you know? They believe there is a stage in between. Why? The reason could be that some people after dying have attachment so they have to stay seven days. Some people have very short attachment, very little attachment so they become a ghost only for seven days. After becoming a ghost, they can change their life easily. If they get sharing of merits from their family and they can remember the wholesome deeds they have done, then they can change their lives. Only one kind of ghost or spirit can do this.

Some others have very strong attachment and they get a bad life as a ghost or spirit because of heavy *kamma*. Even though we share and give merits to them, they cannot receive it and they cannot change their lives. So do not think that all ghosts can change their lives after we share merits with them. So we need to be clear about this.

For those who have done very bad *kamma*, even though you share a lot of merits with them, it is not easy for them to change their lives. They still need to suffer for a long time in hell as a hell-being. It is not just for one or two days. Seven days are already very lucky and that condition is only for those beings who are able to change their lives.

If one has wholesome *kamma*, that is, those who need to be reborn as *human* beings will see the colour red immediately before they die. When consciousness stops, death-consciousness stops and rebirth-consciousness immediately arises in their mothers' wombs, just within one second. It cannot be any different from this.

As for those who are reborn in heaven, they will appear immediately in the *devo* or deity form. There is no need to stay in the mother's womb for heavenly beings. They are immediately reborn at the age of sixteen years old for the ladies and about twenty years old for the

males. They will immediately arise as such! So this is for birth on a different level.

That is why we do not emphasise so much on *rūpa*. Also, I feel that it is more important for us to take care of *nāma*. Sometimes, when you concentrate on *rūpa* too much, you can get attachment easily. That is also a little dangerous. If you know how to do *vipassanā*, then it is alright and you can let go of it.

.....
* Question 5: “At which stage of the meditation process does the meditator observe his or her past life?”
.....

Oh, this is so important. Just now we had explained the Four Noble Truths. Those who practise Four Noble Truths only can enter and attain *sotāpanna*. Whoever aspires to practise until the level of an *arahant*, cannot let go these Four Noble Truths.

The First Noble Truth—we know and understand about *nāma rūpa*, the nature of *nāma rūpa*, arising and passing away of *nāma rūpa*; we understand impermanence, suffering, non-self, both internally and externally. This is only for those who understand the Truth of The Suffering. We understand the *dukkha sacca*.

The Second Noble Truth is The Origin of Suffering. We need to know the causes and the effects. We call this Dependent Origination. We examine one life to another life, how the mind transfers. So this is the same, as we just now explained, how the *kamma* is transferred from one life to another life. This is what we call the ‘Dependent Origination’. Also we understand the causes in the past, what we have done. We need to find out about this. Also the present *kamma* will produce results for the future life—this also we need to connect, that is, the present to the future.

We can discern one continuous round of the past, present and future life, how rebirth takes place and we can understand the cause and effect relationships. It is what we call Dependent Origination.

We also believe in *kamma* because of that. Because we are able to see many past lives, we see that just one unwholesome thought can make one take birth as a hell-being or an animal. Just one wholesome thought process is also enough to cause one to get a *devo* or *human* life.

More understanding of *kamma* arises because of discerning Dependent Origination. If we are not able to understand Dependent Origination, it is very difficult to believe in *kamma* because we only concentrate on the present life.

One day, Venerable *Ānanda* approached The Buddha and told him, “Oh, for me, Lord Buddha, *paṭicca samuppāda* (Dependent Origination) is very easy. The moment I contemplate, it all arises very easily for me.”

Then the *Buddha* replied, “*Ānanda*, please do not speak like this. It is easy for you, but so many people are still trapped inside the nest.” This nest is like the bird’s nest, you know. They cannot find where it begins or where it ends. It is so difficult to find. Our mind is always being caught up, it is like in a nest; we are always turning round and round. We cannot find where it starts and where it will end. This is what we call Dependent Origination. It is very difficult to penetrate. It is very difficult! Although it is difficult, we still must practise it. Whoever does not practise *vipassanā* and Dependent Origination cannot attain the stage of *sotāpanna* even if they dream of it! So we need to understand Dependent Origination. It is for this reason that we need to look at our past lives.

It is not for attachment to the past that we do so. When we look at the past lives, we need to know what kinds of causes were planted in the past: ignorance, wrong knowing or *avijjā* as we call it; also we need to know *cetanā*, the kinds of *kamma* we have done.

We need to know the following causes: *avijjā*, *taṇhā*, *upādāna*, which are respectively, ignorance, craving and clinging. We need to find out about *cetanā*, the kinds of good or bad *kamma* we have done. We need to find these causes and after knowing them, we relate them

to the present life, “Oh, it is because of this kind of *kamma* I have done in the past that has led to this effect coming to me now.” After seeing this, we understand that what we do again presently, whether good or bad, will bring results in the future again. We do not know whether the results will arise in the next future life or in other rebirths in the more distant future.

That is why we need to look at our past and future lives. We can see them by concentration. It is not enough to use our imagination without concentration, you know. It cannot be done. Mere imagination cannot help us see any kind of causes and effects. It is for this reason that we practise until the attainment of *jhāna*.

After attaining *jhāna*, it is very easy to see your past lives. We can guarantee for the person who gets the *nimitta* that it is very easy to enter the level of the *sotāpanna* next. If you can give time for practice, it will be very easy. Is it easy or difficult to get the *nimitta*? It is very easy!

Many people have successfully gotten the *nimitta* now. That is good! I am also happy with that. Actually once we have got the *nimitta*, we just need strong determination. We may think, “Now I am not able to attend a long retreat. So next time, this life will be very beneficial and very important for me.”

Do you know that though you are human now, or even if you are a *devo*, not being a meditating *devo* is also dangerous! You can enjoy yourself so much with many deities that you forget about meditation. You can also forget the *nimitta*.

So you should make determination, “One day when I have time, I will go for a long retreat.” You are welcomed to come for two-month retreat. So come and practise!

If you can see your past life, you can practise Dependent Origination and practise *vipassanā* until you attain *sotāpanna*. Then this life will really be of value! Do keep some time for practice. Anyway, we have

to die, you know. Before we die, we need something that really gives us safety for our future. It is not easy for the future generations because the *Buddhasāsana* is declining day by day. We do not know whether we can still learn about the meditation practice in the future. We are not sure at all. In the present life, because of your good *kamma* from *dāna*, *sīla* and *bhāvanā*, you might go once to heaven. But when you come back there may be no more *sāsana* and no more teachers.

It is very important. Do not waste your good life on only eating and enjoying.

You know, every day you are just eating, enjoying, sleeping, and one day after another goes by just like this. You are getting old day by day, year by year and soon you will die. This is useless. There is no benefit or any good for you at all. But all of you are already very good, because you really want to practise for the *Dhamma*. This is what only those who have wisdom can do. So you already know how to use your time and energy.

.....
* Question 6: ‘*Idaṃ no ñātīnaṃ hotu, sukhitā hontu ñātayo*’
—merits to departed relatives. A Buddhist teacher told me that this must not be chanted at home, because it will attract ghosts or unfortunate beings into the house. But to me, I feel it is alright because I chant at home daily with the intention to transfer to our departed relatives so that they will rejoice in receiving the merits and then be reborn in a better place of existence. We want to help them. So what do you say about this, *Sayalay?*”
.....

Are you afraid of your relatives? When your family members die and you feel that they have become ghosts or lower beings, when they come to visit you, are you scared or do you welcome them? Huh? I have to ask you this question.

So how is it? Will you be scared or will you welcome them?

You might say, “Oh, *bhante, sayalay*, please come and chant, please chant to let them go away.” Most people would react this way. They say, “Oh, we hear something at home. My family member is dead and I do not think he is doing well. He might have become a ghost and he has come to disturb us and we cannot sleep. We are very scared and the family is scared too.” You do not want to say that it is yourself. You say, “My son is scared, my children are scared”. But actually you are also scared, scared of your wife. When your wife dies, you are also scared. Or when your husband dies, you are scared. Then what kind of love is it between you? If that is the case, what you have is ‘broken love’.

‘Broken Love’

‘Broken love’ means you only like to concentrate on your feelings. You feel good with whoever takes care of your feelings. You do not feel good with whoever cannot take care of your feelings.

Actually you love yourself. Your love for yourself is more than that for your wife, the ghost of your wife or the ghost of your husband. Is this true? Is this true or not? Yes, ‘broken love’ and pure love are different.

Pure love is being able to love all kinds of beings just like your family. Although your family member becomes a ghost after death, you have to love him or her more than in the present condition. Is this correct? Is this true?

But this is very difficult to accept. Many people cannot accept that. But we have to practise like this. When you love them, you have to love them not only in the present life because they took care of you, cooking for you and fulfilling your desires, so that you felt good. We need to think in different ways.

Now he or she is really suffering. Because of you and attachment to your family, she became a ghost or he became a ghost. So we need to do more for that being, thinking how to free that being from suffering

in that life. However much we can do for that individual and help that individual through sharing merits and some kind of chanting, we will do it. Even if that person is at home, never mind! Let it be. Just think about the present life. Do not think about individual being a ghost.

Gratitude Not Fear

Think about how that being had been kind to you and had taken care of you in your present life. Try to think this way and if you do the sharing of merits at home, because he or she is familiar at home, they must always be surrounding you. If you do it at home, it is better than doing it at the temple. In this way, the person can receive it closely and you can give more easily and they can receive easily.

So this is the relationship you should have. The attachment is from your family and not from outside. So if you do transferring of merits at home, it is more beneficial and that individual can receive it easily and directly. There is no need to be scared.

Compassion to Lower Beings

Why do we have to be afraid? We need to train our mind to love the lower beings. Many people think that the higher beings are the best; they want to stay with the *devā*. When the *devo* comes to them, they will be very happy. But when the ghost comes to you? You are not happy! You are scared! Your mind is not balanced. It is not balanced. You have not trained your mind enough.

So this is the way we need to train. This is what I have done in my life. Since I was very young, without a teacher's guidance, I tried truly from my heart to really love even the ants and other animals. I love, I try to love them. And without anyone telling me, I love the ghosts and the lower beings too. I feel in my heart and in my mind when they show themselves in my dreams that they are suffering. I did not know how I could help them. But they told me, "Oh, just chant The

Buddha's qualities." At that time, I did not know about meditation so I chanted, '*Itipi so bhagavā arahañ*' continuously for two hours, using the chanting beads. At the end of it, I felt that I became full of energy. So I just gave sharing of merits for them.

I did that intentionally for them, spending many hours everyday. When I came back from school, I would quickly go to the pagoda and sit down and quickly chant, chant and chant. I did this for many years. Then I started to feel familiar with the ghosts, and also because I am kind to them, I do not feel scared. Anytime, I can feel *mettā* for them.

That is the reason that for some meditators, sometimes the ghosts disturb them, obviously disturb them; the form changes and then everything changes. We just talk to them nicely, "Please don't disturb. It is bad *kamma* for you all. I give you sharing of merits. Please go away." They listen! I said just one time and they went away. This experience has happened to me many, many times. They listen and they go away.

It is very easy with the ghosts because they can feel our *mettā*. This is not for boasting, I just want all of you to learn to love your family members. Do not do this way. Of course they would also get hurt because they thought that you do not know. They would also know that they have passed away just a few days ago and you are now afraid of them. They can feel and they understand how you feel. If this happens to you, and your family member does this to you, how would you feel?

We always need to have contact with others' feelings so that we can feel them. Then we will understand more about what has happened. If we never try to contemplate on the others' point of view, we will not know what is going on. We will always think that we are right and we cannot see our mistakes. So we try to feel others' feelings for this reason. When I am put in the same position, how would I feel? We need to contemplate on the feelings of both parties all the time. Then we can be really kind and really balanced.

Take Care of kamma When Alive

And also, life is so dangerous. That is why we always explain to you not to be attached too much. Before that kind of life happens, we can still take care of our mind. Once it has happened, it is very difficult to change back. If you go to ghost life or hell life accidentally and you want to come back, it is very difficult. It is not easy to help you at that time. The last moment before death is very dangerous.

For that reason we still need to taking care of the mind. We need to take care of our *kamma*. Please understand that it is for everybody, not to be attached too much. So try to love the ghosts or lower beings, the same as you love *devā* or anything else. It is good to love.

Many people don't want to associate with lower beings or poor beings. All are the same. After death there is nothing special, you know. All are the same!

* Question 7: “My parents are getting old, they are suffering from illness and pain due to their advanced age. They are not Buddhists. As their child, I would like to know how I can get or what I can do to relieve their pain and their suffering?”

This is difficult to answer. If they are not Buddhists, at least, if they believe in *kamma*, it is better for us to explain some kinds of *kamma* to them. If they do not know this, it is sometimes difficult for us to explain directly about meditation. Many people cannot accept meditation immediately because they think that it is very difficult and suffering.

It is very difficult to talk immediately about meditation. So if we want to change them into Buddhists, maybe we can persuade them by letting them listen to the loving-kindness chanting. They may get that kind of nice feeling. We have that kind of chanting in Malaysia—“*averā hontu...*”—you know. For them, that is not too difficult; they can understand and follow that easily and it can give them a peaceful feeling.

So you can let them listen to that kind of loving-kindness chanting first. While listening, they do not need to concentrate too much. After listening, they feel relaxed and comfortable and they feel happy. This is the first step.

In the *suttāni* (see *sutta*), The Buddha explained that in Buddhism, our intention should be like how we love our children. Your love for your children is pure love and pure intention. This *cetanā* is what we call meditation and good *kamma*. We need to start from the basics. If we want to change them by force immediately into Buddhists and have them meditate, it is a little difficult.

We need to go slowly, so that they can accept easily and become happy eventually. Only at that time, we can explain that they are actually very attached to their children and the family. If you ask them to let go immediately and to see everything as impermanent, suffering and non-self, to cut off everything, they would not be able to take it!

So we need to start with the basics, one of which is *mettā* or the qualities of the *Buddha*, *Dhamma* and the *Saṅgha*. Sometimes, they might find that too difficult to accept, so we need to explain more about how wholesome intention will create good *kamma* which will help you get rich in the next life or that with wholesome *kamma* you can get a good life and a healthy life. We can only explain this basic understanding of *kamma* as the first step, you know. So keeping the precepts with *mettā*, this is good for you; it helps you to be peaceful in the present and also has benefits for the future. This is the first step to help them.

Once they are happy and they can start to accept, then the second step is to ask them, “Oh, why don’t you follow me to the temple to see *bhante* or *shifu*?” Since they are ordained people who have let go and renounced the ways of the ordinary people, who also keep the precepts and practise meditation, we can sometimes get good *kamma* by going to pay respects to them.

This is the next step. After that, let them be happy and communicate

with the monks and nuns. In the beginning, we cannot teach them about *nāma* and *rūpa*. Let them form friendships with the nuns, let them feel familiar and happy with them.

Only after they feel comfortable, can we start to explain the basics of meditation or of *ānāpānasati*. “Ok, slowly, if you concentrate on *ānāpānasati*, the breathing, it is so simple. We need to breathe all the time. Isn’t that right? As soon as your mind is aware of the breath, as soon as it knows the breath, this is meditation and you will get good *kamma*.” We just try to explain in this way. Then we have to talk to them slowly, it is very difficult to go directly to the subject. Step by step, we can talk to them.

We can talk about how fearful it is to become a hell-being, about how much suffering is in the ghost’s life. Beings in the woeful states do not have food and they have to suffer many times; they are suffering in hell and other beings attack them. Sometimes we need to add in that kind of image as well.

We need to explain both the good and bad pictures until they can accept it. Then slowly, after this, meditation would be the next step.

Sometimes it is a little difficult because it is not easy for parents to accept what their children tell them. Although they want to follow the advice, they will sometimes not show you directly that they want to follow it. It is a little difficult. We have to be very careful when talking to our parents. You cannot tell them, “Oh, you will get bad *kamma*.” You should not argue with them. You need to have gratitude for them, you know.

You need to explain nicely about how you feel about meditation and how other people feel about meditation. Do you understand? Sometimes, some children like to show that because they have studied more than their parents, they know everything. They want to show that they know more than their parents. This is not good. So we have to be very careful with our parents.

sādhu! sādhu! sādhu!



Chapter 8

Four Elements



Sayalay elaborated on the practice of *rūpa kammaṭṭhāna* beginning with the Four Elements meditation.

It is important for us to understand the four elements, both in knowledge as well as in meditation practice. The Buddha taught forty meditation objects for concentration practice, and four elements meditation is one of these objects.

If you follow and practise systematically, you can reach neighbourhood of the *jhāna*. This is for concentration.

vipassanā

The four elements meditation is also for *vipassanā* practice. Although *vipassanā* is known as insight meditation, I like to call it ‘inside knowledge’. We need to study the ‘inside’ of our body and the ‘inside’ of others too. This is what we call *vipassanā* knowledge.

To prepare for *vipassanā* practice also we need to practise four elements; then only we start to see the next step for the ‘inside’ practice. The four elements are very important as a base, for the practice of both concentration and *vipassanā*. You know roughly, four elements: the earth element, the water, the fire and the wind.

There are six characteristics in the earth element: hardness, roughness, heaviness, and their opposites, softness, smoothness and lightness. Sometimes when you meditate, you may feel heaviness, roughness, hardness—the ‘heavy group’ sensation—throughout the whole body, while the other opposite feeling like softness is not obvious.

At other times, when you have concentration, you can feel the whole body becoming very soft, very smooth, or very light. When the ‘softness’ group feelings are prominent, the opposite feelings of hardness, roughness and heaviness are not so obvious.

Sometimes, if you have the heavy group sensation for too long, you can get headache easily and the whole body becomes tense and tight. That kind of cohesion feeling happens because of hardness, roughness, heaviness characteristics being very strong in your body. Subsequently your body becomes tight, like it cannot breathe. We call that cohesion.

When that happens, we can try to balance with four elements meditation in our body. We can practise noting soft, smooth, light sensations in the body and feel the flowing.

Cohesion and flowing are opposite characteristics in the water element. When we practise noting the flowing sensation, tightness feeling is released. We can release our tightness through focusing on softness, smoothness, and lightness characteristics. A second way is to continuously practise the flowing sensation.

In the end, your body doesn’t feel that tight anymore. It is more relaxed, comfortable, and light. So we can combine earth and water element practice to solve physical discomfort.

Physical Problems of Body are Based on the Four Elements

Everybody has feelings whether they are meditating or doing other things. Sometimes, your body gets all kinds of sensations. The more you focus on the body, the more you will begin to feel these sensations. Then, we can start to check what is really happening inside the body.

Sometimes, the body is very hard sometimes very soft, sometimes very tense, sometimes very relaxed—so much so that you can fall asleep.

You notice these yourselves. Can you notice if you ever fall asleep throughout the whole sitting? Don't know anything? Where are you? Where is the meditation hall? You know yourself. Even if *Sayalay* is standing behind you, you also don't know. It is because you only concentrate on softness. So you are too comfortable and fall asleep!

Another reason for sleepiness is too much attachment to food, overeating of biscuits. This comes with indigestion! You can eat, but you will need to exercise like doing walking meditation. Then you can digest easily. So when you start sitting, it will be better.

And also the mind is very important. We need to have strong determination and strong effort. And we must know, "I have done bad *kamma*"; we must also check that.

We are very scared about bad *kamma*—bad thoughts, bad speech and bad actions. So we double check in different ways, in all ways. Tomorrow we have to be very careful if we have made a lot of mistakes today. We should not repeat the same mistakes tomorrow. Some may think, "If today I cannot get concentration, never mind, tomorrow I will then." Year after year they continue like this, until they get old, without much time left. This is not good.

That's why we have to put in more effort when we still have the energy to sit. After one is seventy or eighty years old, it is very difficult

for practice. When you still have energy, make a strong determination: “I want to get concentration. I don’t want to talk. I don’t want to waste my time.” Then your meditation will slowly progress. Slowly observe your own mind carefully in various ways. Then you can take care of your mind by really learning to observe it.

If this meditation is not suitable, you can see *Sayalay* and let her know. Maybe four elements or skeleton meditation will be suitable. I do not mind explaining. Please do not be scared or upset because you cannot because you cannot see *nimitta* while practising *ānāpānasati*. There are many ways to try.

Adjusting with Four Elements

So that’s how you can adjust. If you are very sleepy, you can motivate your mind by practising on the characteristics of the four elements, on hardness, roughness and heaviness sensations in the body. Slowly, energy will arise and you can further concentration on your meditation object.

In this way we can practise the earth element meditation. There are six characteristics—hardness, roughness, heaviness, softness, smoothness, lightness.

Wind element characteristics are pushing and supporting, and fire element has hot and cold characteristics. Water element possesses flowing and cohesion characteristics.

Fire

Sometimes, you may feel very hot in your body, after putting in strong efforts in concentration meditation. You will feel the whole body becoming warm, even very hot. You may then want to balance by practising with coolness sensation, by breathing in fresh air. You may stay aware of the cooling feeling of air coming to the nostril as you breathe.

Then, breathe in again, push the air in, all the way inside the throat, then the stomach and to the whole body.

When your concentration is good, you may feel the air slowly spread to the whole body when you just breathe normally.

All the cooling sensations will come, from your face to the whole body. That is how you can balance hot and cold feeling.

Now that the weather is quite unstable, you may feel it is cold inside the hall during early morning and evening sittings. Many people said it is too cold, and that is because you feel the sensation of coldness inside your body, so you shiver. At that time, you can balance with four elements meditation.

If you are shivering, you can focus on the digestive fire at the lower part of your stomach. That fire can actually help you in digesting whatever kind of food. This fire is always there. You can focus at the lower part of the stomach and can easily feel its heat.

You can just pay attention to the heat sensation, noting, “hot, hot, hot.” Think slowly, slowly because your mind also has the power to concentrate that feeling and sensation.

The mind power slowly can produce *rūpa* all over our body. If your mind gets stronger and stronger by concentration, your sensation of heat feeling will also get stronger too.

From there, we can slowly spread to upper body and lower body parts too. Slowly, the heat will flow, slowly the body gets warmer. Sometimes you may even sweat.

You don't need to wear so many layers. You can try, if you are feeling very cold during sleeping time, just focus on the heat. Since you have been practising concentration for so many days now, you can do this. So you have some concentration. This is true, very true. If your mind wants to focus on heat, you will feel hot.

Attaining *jhāna* or not does not matter. Just think about the feeling

so you just concentrate on that, regardless of *jhāna*. You realise you have been training on the object, for some time. When you continue to put your mind on heat, noting, “heat, heat, heat”, then your body will slowly warm up. In this way, we can balance the elements. Therefore, for beginners, we need to practise noting each element’s characteristic one by one until each one is very clear.

Noting Each Characteristics of Element

We start with ‘pushing sensation’ from top of the body as it flows to the lower body. We need to feel slowly, until we have a clear ‘pushing’ feeling.

Then we move to hardness, roughness, heaviness sensations— all twelve characteristics one by one. Once each one is clear, very clear, and quickly seen, then we can do an overall simultaneous concentration on all elements, forward or reverse order does not matter. We try to meditate on all elements at the same time only after we have tried with each element one by one and achieved mastery in that way.

Noting Characteristics in Group

In the end, sometimes you may feel the earth element grows stronger, as you feel two or three characteristics together. It means hardness, roughness, heaviness appear together. When softness occurs, softness, smoothness and lightness can also be felt together.

In this way, we can do four elements, group by group—earth, water, fire and wind. But at the beginning, we need to do each characteristic one by one.

With practice, concentration will improve. We have to do this slowly in the beginning to make it clear.

Gradually, the concentration shall improve and you can naturally

feel the elements growing stronger. The sensations just happen and you just need to watch and notice only—what is this, what is that, in the end. There is no need to put in much effort. Automatically, you will feel this is only earth element, that is water element, and then there is fire element.

Four Element nimitta

Again and again we keep trying. As concentration improves, the mind also gets brighter. Slowly in front of you, you may also feel bright light is there, just like *ānāpānasati nimitta*. Or some people may feel it is inside their body.

That's also a sign of concentration. When the mind is bright, the light starts to appear. For the body, you may feel only some part at first, that's for the beginning training of concentration.

When you get that light, it is not clear in the beginning, almost like a cloud, grey or even yellow, like sunlight. This is the first step for *nimitta* from the four elements.

Even if you feel the bright light, either in front or inside, continue to concentrate on the four elements. You cannot let go of the elements.

When you continuously concentrate on the elements, the light will become brighter, and slowly become clearer. In the end, you may feel like an ice block. We just need to keep with it, until the clear light appears. You may feel that light in your body too. Once you can feel inside your body, bright lights will happen together as you continue with the elements meditation.

In the end, you don't feel your head, your hands or your body. There are just elements moving inside the body with light.

In the elements, sensations slowly will disappear and only clear light remains. You just concentrate one hour or half an hour on this clear light. In this practice of the four elements we can only reach until the neighborhood of the *jhāna*. We can try this way.

Internal & External

We can practise four elements internally and externally. Everyone can feel other people. With your mind you can easily feel others if your concentration is there.

Sometimes, you may feel if the person close to you is hot or cold. You can feel that, sometimes. If you sit too close, you can feel some kind of heat or heat waves coming to you.

Just like healing, your heat can be sent to another person too. Heat transfers. Do you believe? Or can you feel vibrations from others? It is like pushing feeling. Can you feel it?

When a person is angry, let us say in your room, you may see the vibration from their heart, their action, is very strong. Can you receive that kind of vibration? Sometimes a person beside you is angry. You will feel this immediately or gradually in your heart. Their heart beating can also make you feel agitated.

Even if both of you are not related, you can listen and look at her, and feel some kind of energy in you. You may feel that kind of energy being transferred.

If someone is meditating in your room very peacefully, like a full moon, you will also feel relaxed. She is happy to look at, and you feel coolness in your heart, and the vibration is not strong. Maybe nobody meditates inside their room, so you don't have that kind of experience. Check in your room.

When someone practises *mettā*, the energy is cooling and you can feel so peaceful, quiet and calm. The feeling will spread to you, especially if she is sending *mettā*. Do you believe *mettā* can spread, can be transferred? Tomorrow you can try. Then you will feel very peaceful, very calm, and very relaxed.

You should not be tense. That's not the way we transfer *mettā* to all the universes, all beings, all countries. You will be the first one to feel

peaceful because you are sending *mettā* to somebody. From the *mettā* you send, you can get peace, and others receive it too.

Layers of Elements

We all live on the earth, on the ground. You may see only the earth element, but that is not so. Below the earth, there is water. Above the water, there is earth, the soil. Under the earth, beneath the water, there is wind. The wind supports the water, and the water supports the earth. Fire is also inside and under the earth too.

Like in a volcano, you know all the fire is hidden there. When the time is right, the volcano can explode.

All the four elements are not only inside your body, but they are found internally and externally too. You can feel and you can see that they are everywhere. It is very important to learn to balance them.

Balancing Elements

If the elements are not balanced, if the wind is too strong under the water, then the water will vibrate. An earthquake then follows and problems arise. All because of imbalance of the wind, the earthquake happens.

If you want to learn, you can transform external elements into energy too. If you know how to concentrate, let us say on sunshine, you can transfer that to your body too.

It is not necessary to sit under the sun. If you know how to concentrate, you can put the sun just in front of you. That is mind-power. If you concentrate, you can put heat and fireball just in front of you.

That is mind-made. You can make energy from that heat and slowly, slowly, you will feel very hot. Heat of fire is coming up, inside your body spreading. You will then feel hot. Some people have *nimitta* bright light, which also gets its power by heat.

If you think about the heat from this light, after awhile, the face can be burning, very hot. And once it comes in contact with the body, the body gets very hot.

Even the appearance of the *nimitta* is due to concentration power. Some may be able to create in the mind and reproduce the sun, or ball of light, or fireball, or moon. Then it is correct.

With your mind, you can expand or contract the *nimitta* automatically. If power is strong, you can also extend to everybody too.

Sometimes when it is too hot, you need to go out of the sun. If the weather is too hot, and you want a thousand people to follow you, you want them to go peacefully. So you can do determination, “This sunshine is too hot, I want it to get cloudy.” Then after determination the sun will totally disappear all becomes very shady.

So you can walk peacefully. Everybody can walk, not only one person. Do you believe or not? Yes! Try it! Sure we can! Psychic power also you can do, but not only psychic power.

If you are full of *mettā* and compassion, with a pure heart, or wholesome pure intention, you can get whatever you want easily.

Don't think psychic power is impossible, that it cannot be accessible. Don't think like that. Psychic power is possible. Another type of power is pure heart—if you do not believe, you can try it. You can be successful. That is just only at concentration level.

From Four Elements to vipassanā

In *vipassanā* practice, we keep practising four elements again and again, until *nimitta* becomes transparent. From there, focus internally in the body and slowly feel the light in the body. Light is everywhere because of colour. You can see different kinds of *rūpa-kalāpa*, in different parts of the body. The colours can be different too. Every *kalāpa* has colour and it can be bright or dim.

Some of the transparent *kalāpa* also have light. If you shine your *nimitta* into your body, you may see the whole body coming into contact with the transparent elements of the *rūpa*. Your body will feel brighter.

So you will feel that your body will become clear and transparent, like an ice block, as if the ice penetrates your whole body. After you feel this, as you concentrate, you make a determination: “I want to see *rūpa-kalāpa* in my body.”

After making the determination, do ‘the four elements meditation’ on the whole transparent body. Keep practising four elements again and again, until the body-ice-block becomes only particles, *rūpa*. We call that *rūpa-kalāpa*.

All the particles—*rūpa* will be arising and passing, arising and passing, arising and passing. You will see it. However, sometimes even after you repeatedly meditate on four elements, you cannot see the *rūpa-kalāpa*. It is not so easy to see.

Alternate method to breakdown

So what we can do is to penetrate inside the body very slowly and focus on the transparent-ice-block parts.

You will see very small holes. We call that *ākāsa*, or space, like the pores on the skin. With ordinary eyes, it is very difficult to see, unless you use spectacles or even a microscope. Those holes are where the sweat comes from.

Similarly, inside your transparent-ice-block body, the more you penetrate with concentration, the more you will slowly see many small holes too.

Among a few holes, you try to penetrate, slowly. Then in the end, you can see each hole is formed by a few *rūpa-kalāpa*. In this way, you break it down. In the end, you can see that all can be broken down. You will see particles arising and passing again.

So we can break down the body in two ways: using the four elements meditation directly, or by concentrating on the transparent-ice-block area and focusing in the space to penetrate.

Breaking Down Six Sense-doors

Visualize the small hole, the space, and penetrate into the hole. In the end, there are many particles arising and passing. In this way, we can break down the whole body, our six sense-doors—eyes, ears, nose, tongue, body and heart-base.

So we try to break down each part of our body into *rūpa-kalāpa* by four elements meditation. The *rūpa-kalāpa* are like the dust you see under sunshine, moving very fast, arising and passing.

When you look at it, it's just like dust, moving around, turning and turning very fast. Likewise, you concentrate in the eyes, first on the eyeballs. You use four elements to break them down, until you see particles moving, and the eyeballs are no longer apparent. Only particles start moving around. Then we concentrate again on the inside. We will see two types of *rūpa-kalāpa*. One type is very bright and transparent; some are very dim, not so clear.

For both types of particles, there are eight characteristics found in each one. Once you see the particles, use the concentration power of third or fourth *jhāna* to focus inside.

In the beginning, very slowly, feel the characteristics one by one. Concentrate on the elements, and the particles, and inside your body again. The four elements are earth, water, fire and wind.

rūpa-kalāpa

Inside every *kalāpa* they have the four elements as components plus colour, smell, taste and nutriment of each particle.

There are four plus four, eight components inside every *kalāpa*. The

colour of the eyes-particles is different from the ears-particles. The taste and smell of particles also vary with different organs. In this way we can check.

For transparent particles, we can also penetrate and find not only eight characteristics, but we can feel life faculty too. For the eyes, in each transparent particle, we can see ten characteristics including the eyes-transparent element.

What is rūpa-kalāpa?

Do you believe or not? Inside water, what kind of *rūpa-kalāpa* do you see? The *rūpa-kalāpa* is similar in concept to the molecule. What kind of molecule do you see inside the water?

Theoretically, there is H₂O. Two parts hydrogen and one part oxygen make one water molecule. With concentration-mind, just penetrate the water and you may see many particles moving around.

When we check, we check one particle in each molecule. It will exhibit the characteristics of the four elements. The taste may be different even though water is water. Some water tastes sweet; some tastes salty due to the combination with earth element.

Four Elements Energy

There are different kinds of *rūpa* in the body. Inside each *rūpa* energy can be found. This energy is called the four elements' energy. Do you understand or believe they exist?

Don't presume only The Buddha can see them. You need to believe you can see them too, through practice. Everybody can practise.

In fact, if you have concentration-mind, you can study a lot of things. You are like a scientist, you know. With concentration-mind, you can penetrate everywhere and into every object. The more you penetrate, the more you will understand. Wisdom starts to grow.

If you sleep and sleep, wisdom will never grow. If you want more power, you need to put in more effort. It is not enough to understand one thing only, but we need to know a lot of things.

Knowledge

Don't think studying hard is wasting energy. We need a lot of general knowledge. When we need to build the meditation centre, we must concentrate on the knowledge of building, on how to build the structure. If you know how, you can save a lot of money for yourself.

You can save a lot of money if you know how to check the cost of things. If you know how to cook, you can save a lot too, and not waste time and money. We can just make everything simple and cheap too.

Everything we need to learn, not just sitting meditation is important. We can learn everywhere. For example, how people arrange flowers, we can also go and look to learn. In Japan with one stalk of flower and bamboo leaf, it still looks interesting. I am grateful they let me watch and learn, because it makes me happy.

You need a lot of patience for this, which I don't have. I am happy to enjoy what people have done. I like to be active. I like to build structures and do cooking too. Anyway, when we learn a lot of things, we can save and not waste energy and money.

Learning before Letting Go

The more you learn, the more you can penetrate. Meditation is the same. When we can penetrate every object, then we can say that we have achieved wisdom, understanding and much more in the end.

Of course, all is *anicca, dukkha, anatta*. Everything will disappear, but before disappearance, we need to study and know first.

Before you have understood, you don't want to know, you don't care, you let go. Then you don't get any wisdom! We still need to learn

what the truth is. After right understanding, then only we can let go. Then we can talk about ‘emptiness’. Please don’t be so lazy to learn.

You can penetrate inside your body, especially in the eyes, with four elements meditation breaking down everything into particles.

Penetrate Four Causes of rūpa

We need to penetrate and analyse repeatedly and see the arising and passing of *rūpa*. The Buddha has taught us that there are four causes of *rūpa*—*kamma*, mind, temperature and nutriment.

We need to check which *rūpa* is caused by which of the four causes—what is *kamma*-produced *rūpa*, temperature-produced *rūpa*, mind-produced *rūpa*. We need to analyse to understand what *rūpa* looks like, its colour, and its taste.

After understanding, we try to do *vipassanā* to see arising and passing of different kinds of *rūpa*. At the same time we contemplate *anicca*, *dukkha*, *anatta*. We first break down *rūpa* in all the six sense-doors, in all thirty-two parts throughout the whole body, checking for different types of *rūpa*, one by one.

There are different types of causes for different types of *rūpa*. There are four causes in every part of the body. We practise four elements to break down the body in the end. In this way, we can practise internally and externally.

To practise internally means to look inside our body and see the *rūpa*. Externally, if you have enough concentration, you can penetrate into other persons’ bodies too.

We can start first with thirty-two parts of body. Then we try to see the four elements on other persons’ bodies. Then we slowly see *rūpa-kalāpa* in different parts of their bodies.

That is followed by *vipassanā* on other external parts of the body, watching *rūpa* arising and passing away, and contemplating about *anicca*, *dukkha*, *anatta* internally and externally in this way.

The Buddha always explained to us in this way so that we may understand *nāma* and *rūpa*, so we may completely understand mind and matter. The term *rūpa* does not mean only the body, nor does it mean just sensations only. We need to see into ultimate breaking all into particles and seeing the real nature and seeing the real nature of arising and passing away of *rūpa*.

Without breaking these things down, it is very difficult to see arising and passing, or the growth of *rūpa* generation. One *rūpa-kalāpa* can produce another *rūpa*, and the new *rūpa* can generate another one. We can also learn from penetrating with understanding.

Twenty-eight Kinds of rūpa

Only through deeper practice can we understand clearly about the twenty-eight kinds of *rūpa*, that The Buddha has explained. We still need to further our understanding on these twenty-eight types of *rūpa* for *vipassanā* practice.

Among the twenty-eight types of *rūpa*, we can separate into two groups—real group and unreal or artificial group. We shall practise *vipassanā* on the real *rūpa* group. The other group, the unreal *rūpa* group becomes support to *vipassanā*.

Real rūpa Group: Four Elements

For the real group, we are familiar with it already, so it is not too difficult. The first group is four elements—earth, water, fire and the wind, four kinds of *rūpa*.

So there are four types of *rūpa* which you can check throughout the whole body—including the eyes, as we have already explained.

Real rūpa Group: Five Transparent Elements

In the eyes, we have two parts to *rūpa*. In the centre of the eye, there is something shiny and transparent, something bright. We call it eye-transparent-element.

Only the eyes' transparent element can contact external objects, distinguish colours of material things. These objects' appearance only comes into contact with this central part of the eye.

The white part of the eyeball cannot 'see' the external object. Only the transparent part of the eyeballs can 'see'. Eye and eye-transparent-element are different.

Hence, The Buddha said eye-transparent-element is also a kind of *rūpa*. It is for deep contact with external object.

The same is true for the ears. Inside the ear centre, you may see ear-transparent-elements; there are transparent elements inside of the nose, the mouth, in the body and the heart-base. There are five kinds of transparent elements existing in our body.

Real rūpa Group: Colour, Sound, Smell, Taste Elements

How many *rūpa* do we have now? There are four elements, and five transparent elements; altogether there are nine real *rūpa*. In external world, all *rūpa* have colours, like on flowers—white, yellow, pink or green leaves. Even people have colours. Some are white; some are brown, some yellow; all different skin colours arise. We do not decide the superiority of either flowers or people simply by colours, thinking that one colour is superior to another. We just know they have colours.

That's the reason, in the end that we don't differentiate so much when we just think about colours. That applies for everything. Colour is also one kind of *rūpa*, so is sound, which comes into contact with your ear-transparent-element.

The smell will come in contact with nose-transparent-elements. These colour, sound, smell, taste objects can create sensation on our senses. We do not include touchable object as it already is included in four elements *rūpa*. Therefore we need not count touchable object.

We will count these four as *rūpa* only, that is, colour, sound, smell, and taste. With the previous nine plus additional four we get thirteen kinds of *rūpa*.

During the time of The Buddha, many people listened very carefully. You can easily check your own eyes, just the coloured part of your eyes. Do you really see particles yet or not? Due to these transparent bright parts of the eyes we can make contact with the external world. When the sound contacts the ear, we can have a feeling of contact. If you know how to contemplate, by the end of *Dhamma* talk, you can be an *arahant*. That is why we learn to concentrate, to listen carefully to *Dhamma* talks.

We must also learn like this. Always I practise after listening to Pa-Auk Sayadaw's *Dhamma* talk; we analyse and memorize until we understand everything. Meditation is not difficult if you are interested.

Real rūpa Group: Sex Elements

There are another two sex *rūpa*—*bhāvarūpa*, male and female materiality. Female *rūpa* is soft and subtle.

These two types of *bhāvarūpa* plus previous thirteen *rūpa* equals fifteen types of *rūpa*. Softness and grossness are the characteristics in these two types of *bhāvarūpa*, respectively. However, in some females, some have very strong characters and actions as well. At the same time some men are very soft, like a woman.

There are so many possibilities, not just because of sex *rūpa*, including consciousness and *kamma*. Individual characteristics could be due to past lives. The lady may have been a man in her past life. And the man was formally a lady.

It is not likely for character to change immediately to become ladylike. Their actions could be the same as in their past character, arising since they were young. Some men are gentle men. Actually I don't understand why only men are called 'gentlemen'. Why aren't there 'gentleladies'? It's not fair. Some men are so soft like a woman. Maybe in the past lives they were all living women's lives.

That is the reason why their character is very soft. Similarly some women are very strong in action when they come to this life. Don't be confused. This is because present life has relation with past actions. After you see your past life, you will understand.

There is also the effect of mind-producing *rūpa*, not just the effects of *kamma* and sex *rūpa*. Some people learn how to be polite and how to be respectful even though they are men. Hence they become gentle, very soft, yet not like a woman in their actions. It is because they are polite that they become gentle.

Some ladies can be very gentle and very soft, and they consider others' feelings first before they speak so they will not be hurt. They speak softly and gently. That is something we should learn. If everybody is like that, thinking for people, we will have no problems.

Class and status problems existed during time of The Buddha or even before The Buddha's period too. If you are born in royal or rich family or you are well-educated, you are high class. The beggar or poor family are low class. However Buddhist tradition is not like that.

High or Low Class

Whether you are high class or low class depends on your mind.

With a wholesome mind (*kusala* mind) think with compassion for other beings' and people's welfare. Taking care of people's minds for good *kamma*, that is 'high class'. If you only create bad things, bad energy, act badly toward people, with not so good intentions, that is a lot of unwholesome thoughts. That is 'low class'.

Do you want to be low class or high class? Actions and speech will follow the mind that is high or low. If you speak so loud or too harshly, that is not so good.

Do you want to be low class or high class? In Europe, they follow you by your actions. They can listen to the tone of your speech and know your background.

They can tell immediately whether you come from a rich family, whether you are educated or whether you come from royalty. Everything, they can check by the speech. We are definitely not good because we speak so loudly.

It is not my character to be so loud, but I have to scold you. It's our duty, even though our training is to be very soft and very gentle—we cannot act like we are gentle and soft.

That is how you are training your mind now. Slowly you like to be quiet and don't want to talk. When you talk, talk softly and nicely to each other. People can feel so much good energy from you and it will give you good association.

When you combine with The Buddha's teaching, you will have a good heart, with good thought processes, good mind and good intentions. That is high class.

At the same time, we will be able to take care of our mind, action and speech. All are gentlemen and gentle ladies. We put it altogether.

Peaceful Togetherness

It will be very peaceful when everyone can think for others' benefit. Everyone wanting to help each other is so beautiful, and we have to learn this way.

Sometimes I listen to you, saying, "Oh, she told me this. Oh, she told me that." After I listen to all of your fighting, my heart also grows very weak because I have listened so many times. Even if I do not have problems, your problems come to me.

Since I am taking care of you, if you are upset, I get upset too. Therefore my heart becomes very weak. If everyone is happy and peaceful, I can be so peaceful, and not worry about you.

When I know you will meditate and be able to take care of yourself, and each other, I can trust that my mind will be peaceful and not worry anymore. And I can meditate like everyone. Then I can be so gentle and so good, and I will never scold you.

I become bad, just like a reflection of all of you. You are the cause. If I am by myself, I need not talk and I can stay quiet. That is why I prefer to be alone. It gets tiresome to be with others sometimes. This is from my heart, and I just explain how I feel.

So, how many are there *rūpa* now? (Audience: Fifteen.) Oh good, we shall continue.

Real rūpa Group: Heart, Life, Nutriment Elements

Now there are *hadaya vatthu rūpa* (the heart-base matter), and *jivita* life faculty *rūpa*, and nutriment *rūpa*. Altogether there are eighteen *rūpa* that are taken as *vipassanā* objects.

Unreal rūpa: Ten rūpa

The first one is space. As we explained earlier, *rūpa-kalāpa* are separated by holes. These holes are called space, *ākāsa*. We can break down *rūpa-kalāpa* by use of these holes.

Even this is not real *rūpa*. These kinds of unreal *rūpa* can help us in *vipassanā* practice. With these holes, we can break things down. They also support and help *rūpa* too. These are supporting *rūpa*.

The second kind is *rūpa* of verbal intimation, or speech.

The third kind is *rūpa* of bodily intimation.

The fourth kind is softness of *rūpa*.

Lightness of *rūpa* is the fifth kind.

Wieldiness of *rūpa* is the sixth kind.

The beginning of *rūpa* is the seventh kind.

The eighth kind is continuity of *rūpa*.

The ninth is growing of *rūpa*.

The tenth is the disappearance of *rūpa*.

So these ten types of *rūpa* will support your practice of *vipassanā*. We call them artificial ones. So eighteen are real *rūpa* and now ten *rūpa* are unreal. Twenty-eight types of *rūpa* are very important for us to understand for our practice.

Internally and externally we can practise not only for people but for other beings and even animals too. Animals also have different kinds of *rūpa*—they have six sense-doors. When you were in university, let us say during biology practical session, you may need to operate on a frog. When you wish to see an open frog, you use the scissors to cut the skin off, and then you can see all the systems inside his body. We are quite similar with a frog, you know.

We can study every part from there. The brain, the nervous system, all the organs are quite similar to humans.

From there, we can penetrate. Even highest beings, *devā*, deities and *brahmā*, you can also penetrate different kinds of *rūpa*—arising and passing.

This applies too for inorganic material things, such as buildings, trees and cars, and sometimes clothes, whatever you are attached to.

Some people may think, “My jacket is more expensive than hers.” Clothes also can become an attachment.

Some may think, “My flask quality is better than hers.” There can be attachment to brand names and quality. So when you have the more expensive things, you feel more important. I am illustrating how attached you have become. You know yourself.

We can all use *vipassanā* on these things. Do you understand that this is psychological training? I don't want you to become greedy. Just eat what is given. If one piece is not enough, drink more water! That is what we do; we always do it this way.

Go Along

In Japan, they eat very little. Here we eat a lot of rice. In the first few years when I went to Japan, I really suffered. They prepared very beautifully one small ball of rice and one piece of bean! It is not very polite to ask for more!

Each person is given one tray. Even if you are the teacher, you cannot have two trays. I ate what I was given. By evening time, I was really very hungry.

During *Dhamma* talk, we sat so closely together in Japan. My stomach started having a lot of wind sound. Everybody could hear it! Have you heard of stomach wind movement? The more I wanted to control it, the louder the sound became. I felt so embarrassed. Still, no one knew and that continued for a few years.

I trained myself by drinking a lot more water. In the end, all was ok. This is how we respect people by wanting and demanding little. Politeness is very important.

In Germany, the portion is so big. Even if I cannot finish, I cannot throw away, and so I force myself to finish the big bowl. They like to eat, and their bowls are so big. Their body size is big too. So when they offer me a lot, even though I cannot finish, I could not simply throw *dāna* away. So I force myself to finish.

In my previous trip to America, my friends brought me to a restaurant and ordered one plate of noodles. "Here is one big noodle plate. Sister, you have to finish all," the friends said. Wah! I could feel they were very happy.

Anyway, I want to explain how we can train ourselves slowly and

gradually. Don't think too much about biscuits. Otherwise you cannot concentrate very well on your meditation object. Tomorrow I shall come again to inspect. Are you angry with me? (*Audience: No.*)

Tomorrow, you can practise *vipassanā* on your food after you chew for a long time. No matter how choosy you are with food, in the end, it is only 'porridge'.

You can concentrate and analyse the food after chewing and swallowing. You can see saliva and everything inside, including fire cooking in your stomach. After cooking in your stomach, all becomes porridge.

What people offer, just accept and eat it and contemplate this is for energy, and not be attached to. Even if you do not like it, try to eat it and make kitchen *dhamma* workers and *Sayalay* happy.

Sometimes you may not like to eat our food. We really do not know how to cook for you. You are eating for meditation practice, for the need of energy. If you contemplate in this way, you will not feel uncomfortable and unhappy.

So very sorry I give direct talk to you; I am a very direct person. I do not know how to talk beautifully. I must apologize again to all of you.

Chapter 9

What The Buddha Taught



Sayalay told the story about the ‘noisy’ newly ordained disciples of Venerable *Sāriputta* and Venerable *Moggallāna*, and spoke of the four dangers that those new to renunciation have to be cautious about. She also explained how these teachings could be applied by the meditators participating in the retreat at *Brahma Vihāra*.

This evening I would like to share with all of you how The Buddha taught his disciples. We know roughly that He had been teaching the *Dhamma* and you know that there are different kinds of *Dhamma*.

After The Buddha passed away, many *arahantā* helped to consolidate all the *Dhamma* into three different groups. We know about the *Tipiṭaka*—the three baskets of *Dhamma*:

- (a) *Sutta*
- (b) *Vinaya*
- (c) *Abhidhamma*

These three kinds of *Dhamma* are very important.

Many people may already have a lot of *Dhamma* knowledge. But some of you are new meditators, very new to Buddhism, so I just want to explain again.

You know about *Sutta*—the way of life. After The Buddha became enlightened, on the first day of His teaching, He taught the *Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta*.

From that day onwards until He passed away, He had a total of 45 years:- Starting from the age of 35 years old, until 80 years old, so around 45 years, He taught the *Dhamma*.

Throughout the 45 years, He had been teaching to all the monks and nuns—the *bhikkhu*, *bhikkhunī*, *sāmaṇera*, *sāmaṇerī* and all the lay disciples. He had been teaching different kinds of teachings.

Consolidating all the teachings, we can only see three kinds of *Dhamma*. For teachings on the way of life, we call them *Sutta* (see *suttāni*). There are many different kinds of *suttāni* that He had been teaching in different ways at different places. Combining it all together, we call them *Sutta*.

The second group is *Vinaya*. *Vinaya* comprises rules for the monks, the nuns, and also the lay people. We call them precepts. The Buddha had been taking care of the lay people too.

All the lay people need to take at least the five precepts. They need to keep five precepts properly and mindfully. This is also very important. The best is if you can keep eight precepts. You all are very good because you can keep the eight precepts.

The Buddha encouraged us to keep precepts, as this is very important. For those of us who keep the precepts, we can take care of our desires which may appear in many ways. By taking care of our precepts, we can cut different kinds of desires and anger. We can practise in this way.

Vinaya is also very important. Are you happy to keep the eight precepts? Do you feel that *Sayalay* is torturing you? Do you think I am torturing you? (*Audience: No!*)

The third group is the *Abhidhamma*, which is very important.

Abhidhamma is the more difficult part of the teachings and is very important for the practice.

Without understanding *namā rūpa*, and without understanding Dependent Origination, it is not easy to be enlightened.

The Buddha always emphasised the practice of the *Dhamma*. The main purpose of the practice is to be free from suffering, to be liberated, to attain *Nibbāna*. Everyone can attain *Nibbāna*, where there is no more suffering.

As we cannot yet reach *Nibbāna*, we are always in the rounds of *samsāra*: rebirth, ageing, and death, rebirth, ageing and death, many rounds. This is called the Cycle of Dependent Origination.

That is the reason no one sitting in this room has reached *Nibbāna* yet. That includes me too. I also don't know why. Attachments!

Anyway, this is due to attachments. We are under the control of our attachments. Everybody has been suffering due to attachments.

This is the reason that The Buddha had been showing us how to practise in order to attain liberation and attain *Nibbāna*, i.e. how to systematically practise the Noble Eightfold Path.

If we can all practise the Four Noble Truths, really at the end of the day we can all go to *Nibbāna*. Do you want to go to *Nibbāna*? Are you sure? There is nothing, nothingness. *Nibbāna* is nothingness. Only those who can let go of everything, then only can I believe that they want to go to *Nibbāna*. How can you want to go to *Nibbāna*, yet still want to go home? If you cannot let go, you cannot go to *Nibbāna*. We must let go. Let go.

Only those who want to stay here permanently—for them I will believe them only fifty percent. Because after two or three years, they still want to go home. So I cannot trust them.

Whoever still wants to go home, he/she is far from *Nibbāna*. You can see that the direction (to *Nibbāna* and to home) is different.

For those who want to go to *Nibbāna*, for them there is no home and no family. They are without attachment to anybody. There is freedom. There is nothing. They do not even have attachment to themselves. Can you let go of your wife or your husband, and your family? Whoever can let go, show me your hands? There is nobody. So, tonight's *Dhamma* talk will end here.

Anyway, it is very important to let go of attachments. If we want to explain the Buddha's teachings, we not only need to know *namā rūpa* and Dependent Origination. The Buddha taught in different ways to different disciples. As His disciples had different problems, The Buddha had different ways of teaching.

Cātumā Sutta

One day, Venerable *Sāriputta* and Venerable *Moggallāna* came to visit *Sāvathī* in India. The Buddha was then living in *Jetavāna* Monastery.

At that time, Venerable *Sāriputta* and Venerable *Moggallāna* had five hundred followers. All these *bhikkhū* followed them and wanted to pay respect to The Buddha.

Before they went to pay respect to The Buddha, they met all the other *bhikkhū* that were living at the monastery. They were happily greeting each other, just like all of you like to do, hugging each other.

They talked very loudly and the noise generated from them could be heard in the whole monastery. The Buddha could also hear the sound. When The Buddha heard the noise, He was not happy with the situation.

Venerable *Ānanda* had always been taking care of The Buddha. At that time, Venerable *Ānanda* was beside The Buddha and so The Buddha asked Venerable *Ānanda*, "The sound in the monastery is very loud and very noisy. Why is this happening just like in a big market?" In the market, the fishermen selling fishes are shouting at each other, similar to this situation.

“It is not suitable to do like this. So I would like to know what is happening.”

So, Venerable *Ānanda* explained, “This is because Venerable *Sāriputta* and Venerable *Moggallāna* have brought five hundred followers and they want to pay respect to The Buddha. When they arrived at the monastery, they met all their good friends. So they have been talking very loudly and from them come the sound and the noise.”

When The Buddha heard this, He told Venerable *Ānanda*, “Please go and tell Venerable *Sāriputta* and Venerable *Moggallāna* that I would like to see them. Ask them to come and see me.”

Venerable *Sāriputta* and Venerable *Moggallāna* and all their followers came and paid respect to The Buddha. After they had paid respect to The Buddha, The Buddha told both the venerable monks, “This is a monastery. Why have all of you been talking as if you are in the centre of a market? You are just like the fishermen who are selling fishes shouting at each other. This is not the proper way.”

“I do not like this. I do not like to see all of you. Please leave the monastery. I do not want to accept all of you. Please leave the monastery.”

As you know, Venerable *Sāriputta* and Venerable *Moggallāna* were the top disciples of The Buddha. They didn’t argue with The Buddha. They didn’t say, “Oh, we were not talking.” They didn’t react like this. What they did was to respectfully bow down to The Buddha, and the whole group of *bhikkhū* left the monastery slowly.

This is a noble silence retreat. I don’t know what kind of silence you want. You have also promised me at the beginning of the retreat: “Yes, we promise that we don’t want to talk.”

Are you keeping your precepts and your promise? Truthfulness or *sacca* is very important. Once you have said anything from your mouth, for the entire life, you have to keep to it very carefully. Only by doing so, you will be able to respect yourself.

Do not think whether other people will respect you or not. You need to respect yourself. If you don't know how to respect yourself, this is dangerous for your life.

Then Venerable *Sāriputta* and Venerable *Moggallāna* and all their disciples left the monastery and walked towards one place in the city area.

In that place, there was a place like a guest house. In it, many members of the royal family and royal ministers were having a meeting.

They saw Venerable *Sāriputta* and Venerable *Moggallāna* and their followers were coming and passing by their place. So they quickly came down and paid respect, and they asked where the venerable monks were going.

One of the venerable monks explained, “We had visited the monastery and paid respect to The Buddha. But because we had made some mistakes, so The Buddha didn't want us to stay in the monastery.”

“He had dismissed us from the monastery. So we had to leave the monastery.”

After all the ministers heard that, they said, “Please don't go away yet, please wait for a while. We would like to see The Buddha and apologise to The Buddha on behalf of all of you, so that you may be able to go back to the monastery.”

“So please wait here. We would like to see The Buddha.” After that, they went to the monastery.

After worshipping The Buddha, they explained to The Buddha, “All the disciples are new in the *Buddhasāsana*. They have just ordained to follow the two venerable monks.”

“Without The Buddha's teachings, and if The Buddha doesn't want

to see them and teach them, it would be very difficult for the young generation, for the young monks.”

“For this reason, please forgive them and give them another chance; let them have an opportunity to train themselves. In the future this should not happen again.” So they apologised and pleaded with The Buddha.

The Buddha didn’t answer them. At that time in the *brahmā* realm, there was a very famous *brahmā* who always liked to come down to see The Buddha. His name was *Sahampati Brahmā*.

Sahampati Brahmā could read The Buddha’s mind. So he knew the situation. He also quickly came down and apologised to The Buddha, and requested The Buddha to accept the *bhikkhū* into the *Buddhasāsana*, and not to throw them out from the *Buddhasāsana*.

In the end, The Buddha agreed, and He forgave all the *bhikkhū*. After that, all the venerable monks and their disciples returned to the monastery and worshipped The Buddha again. After they had finished worshipping, The Buddha started to explain and gave some *Dhamma* teachings to all the *bhikkhū*.

Before He gave the *Dhamma* talk, He asked a question of the two venerable monks, Venerable *Sāriputta* and Venerable *Moggallāna*.

Firstly, He directed His question to Venerable *Sāriputta*, “After I had dismissed all of you, what did you think? What were the thoughts in your mind?”

Then Venerable *Sāriputta* replied to The Buddha, “I was contemplating then that The Buddha would now like to stay quietly and did not want to associate with many people.”

“For this reason, we need to respect The Buddha’s wishes, and we also should follow the same way. I also need to be quiet. And I just want to take care to stay with the peaceful feeling.”

The Buddha immediately answered and explained to Venerable *Sāriputta*, “Oh no, no, venerable. Please, you should not say this. You still have a lot of duties. You cannot and should not make this kind of decision.”

After that, The Buddha asked Venerable *Moggallāna*, “What about you?” So Venerable *Moggallāna* answered, “Now The Buddha would like to stay alone, He would like to be quiet, we should respect this.”

“But now because The Buddha would like to stay alone, from today onwards, both Venerable *Sāriputta* and I have the duty to take care of all the disciples.”

They didn’t want to disturb The Buddha. They would take care of the entire group for The Buddha. Actually the teacher has his duties. When The Buddha didn’t want to take care, didn’t want to teach, they should take over the responsibilities for this group of monks. Venerable *Moggallāna* had this kind of thoughts with him.

Because of these thoughts, The Buddha was very happy and called out to Venerable *Moggallāna*, “*sādhu! sādhu! sādhu!* Yes, this is a very good idea.”

Then The Buddha told both the venerable monks, “Yes, I (The Buddha), Venerable *Sāriputta* and Venerable *Moggallāna*, we all have to take care of all the disciples.”

After that, The Buddha continued to explain to the whole group of the *Saṅgha*, “As a meditator, as a member of the *Saṅgha* who is living in the monastery, especially for all the *bhikkhū* (as the audience are all *bhikkhū*), the practice of mindfulness is very important.” The Buddha explained that mindfulness practice is very important in our lives.

Similar to all the *bhikkhū*, now all of you are also practising renunciation. You have renounced for one and a half months, or for one month. You don’t have family now. You don’t have house. You are living in the monastery.

Of course, renunciation is not only restricted to ordination. I have already explained that before. If you can let go in your mind all the attachments, all the society and family, this can already be considered as renunciation.

If you have been carefully keeping the eight precepts, in your mind you have already renounced. It is the same as *sāmaṇerā* and *sāmaṇerī*. It is the same as all the monks and nuns too.

For all the meditators, because you want to learn the *Dhamma*, and you want to practise, that is the reason we have respect for you. The Buddha had been explaining to all the meditators, all the *bhikkhū*, that mindfulness practice is very important.

It is the same as someone who is going into either the ocean, or the sea, or the water. In this story, The Buddha didn't mention which type of water; He only mentioned going into the water, so I added in the three types of water.

Four Dangers

For anyone who wants to go into the water, there are four kinds of danger. From this story, we can see that The Buddha probably meant either the sea or the ocean, because the first danger is high tide or big waves. Big waves can be dangerous for you.

Sometimes they can be very dangerous, like in the case of the tsunami. Many people may die due to the very big waves. So, big waves can be dangerous for our lives.

The second danger is meeting with crocodiles. Crocodiles are very dangerous in the water too as they can cause death too.

The third danger is a whirlpool. In the water, in the ocean, there are whirlpools. They will spin and spiral downwards. As you are going in, you may not see any dangers, but as soon as you are in it, it will pull you down. This is like a whirlpool.

If there is a big whirlpool and a ship enters into it, the whole ship can be sucked in and can sink. If it is a small one and there are people caught in it, the people can die by being pulled into the water.

This is also very dangerous and can certainly happen this way if you enter into a whirlpool. Sometimes when you are swimming in the sea, you may encounter such problems too. Anyway, whoever goes into the water may face such a problem. This is dangerous too.

The last danger is caused by big fishes, many different kinds of big fish like sharks.

So these four kinds of dangers can easily affect you. The Buddha gave examples to illustrate.

“For all monks and nuns, all those who are living in the monastery, everyday from early in the morning, we must practise with mindfulness on all our actions, speech and thoughts.”

“We have to be very mindful. If we are not mindful, we can get ourselves into these kinds of dangers.” The Buddha explained in this way.

The Buddha explained to all who were there to practise, that they must think of life as suffering. This is because of *paṭisandhi*. The word *paṭisandhi* means rebirth.

When you enter into the mother’s womb, you will start to have *paṭisandhi*; this is the starting point of life in the mother’s womb. From the start, we have to suffer inside the mother’s womb, for nine or ten months. All this is suffering, The Buddha said.

When you look at your past life, you need to look at how you lived in the mother’s womb before crossing to your past life. From the pictures and the kind of actions, you will see that you were being squeezed in the mother’s womb.

You will really feel the tight and very uncomfortable feeling. You will feel the suffering inside the mother’s womb. But at that time, you

might not know this because your mind was in the *bhavaṅga* state, and therefore you didn't have many thoughts then.

But when you look again into the past, how you have been living, your actions and how you have been staying, you can see the kind of suffering in the mother's womb.

Everyone, who has looked into their past, knows that life in the mother's womb is full of suffering. It is very tight. And very uncomfortable feelings arise there.

So that is why The Buddha said that staying in the mother's womb is suffering. When you come out from the mother's womb, you also have to face suffering every day due to your desires, and then followed by aging.

As we age, we will see suffering. Before aging, you may be already faced with a lot of happiness and unhappiness - for human beings, mostly a lot of unhappy things arise.

The unhappiness is due to desire. If you cannot get what you want, you are unhappy. However rich you are, you cannot be satisfied; also you are unhappy.

There are many different kinds of unhappiness. There is so little of happiness. If you realise it, you will know that in our lives there is a lot of unhappiness and a lot that is unsatisfactory. If you want to get any achievements, you have to try so hard, this is also suffering.

If you want to be successful, if you want to be rich, it is also based on suffering first. Nobody can be rich automatically. If you want to get higher education level, you also need to study very hard.

So for the lazy people, it is very difficult for them to be successful. In this way, all happiness is based on suffering.

So The Buddha said that we should feel that life is suffering, and that if we practise the *Dhamma*, the *Dhamma* can help us to be free from suffering. That's why we want to practise the *Dhamma*.

This is due to *saddhā*. Actually *saddhā* is faith in the Dhamma. You have renounced, and have come to the monastery, letting go of your job and everything. You have already come here to practise, same as what The Buddha said.

First Danger: Big Waves

In the monastery at the time of The Buddha, after ordination, the *bhikkhū* need to pay respect to the senior monks and nuns. Sometimes, it may happen that the newly ordained may be older in age than the more senior monks and nuns.

So the new monks, or the new *bhikkhunī*, when they come and are new in the monastery, it may happen that the senior monks who are younger are telling them, “Oh, as a *bhikkhu*, you should not speak like this, you have to be polite, and you need to be careful about the way you walk. How do you walk? The proper way is to walk mindfully. Also eat mindfully.” And there are many other instructions. Are you happy or not happy after listening to *Sayalay*?

So at that time, for some who are young or who may be rich, they may think, “Oh, he is so young. Even a young *bhikkhu* comes to control us. I cannot do this, I cannot do that. It is so demanding and there are so many restrictions.”

They could not take it like this, thinking, “Oh, I come to this monastery and the monastery has so many rules. I cannot do this, I cannot do that.”

When they are told off by the seniors, they are not happy and anger arises.

They talk to senior monks, “Why are the rules for the monastery so tight?” Because of that angry feeling, you may think that it is better to go back home. You don’t want to stay in the monastery.

Your *saddhā* drops. The faith drops and you don’t want to practise anymore. You want to go home immediately. Or you are waiting

eagerly for the end of the retreat, counting down and hoping that the retreat finishes quickly.

This is because you are not happy that someone is telling you not to do this, not to talk like this, not to do that. Is that true? Then you decide to disrobe and go back home.

The Buddha said that for this kind of person, it is the same as being attacked by the dangers of big waves. The wave is like a tsunami wave. Where can it carry you to? The tsunami wave will send you back to your home. Your home! Do you believe that the big waves can send you home?

Or your house will also be lost in the big waves. It is so very dangerous. That's why the Buddha said this is very dangerous.

Especially for those coming here to practise renunciation, they need to be humble. They must want to learn the *Dhamma*. All these are The Buddha's teachings. We should follow and take care of our mind with mindfulness. We should follow The Buddha's teachings.

And then we can improve in our meditation. This kind of understanding is very good, better than just complaining.

I am not complaining. This is from The Buddha, from how He taught Venerable *Sāriputta* and His disciples.

Second Danger: Crocodiles

Now let us look at the second type of danger. The senior monks and nuns could be teaching, "Oh, you should not eat like this. This type of actions is not suitable. You have to eat mindfully. You have to be careful with the food and the way you eat."

"The Buddha does not allow you to eat dinner. If you eat then it is not suitable."

Some of the *bhikkhū* may not be happy about this. And so they may say, "Oh, people want to offer. Why aren't we allowed to eat? We should eat. Why do they like to block our luck, our good fortune?"

“They want to control everything. This I cannot do, that I cannot do. I want to eat, also I cannot eat.”

“Everything is controlled by them.” So, these *bhikkhū* are not happy because of this.

And in the end, they would also have decided, “Oh, it would be better if we go back home. At home, no matter how many times we want to eat, we can eat. Whatever kind of food we want to eat, we can also eat. Here, we only can eat vegetables.”

Not being happy with the food can also be a problem. This problem of eating is similar to being attacked by a crocodile. The crocodile will bite you, so be careful.

Sharing Merits with Donors

During The Buddha’s time, at breakfast, the *bhikkhū* would also go to the *dānasālā*, the same as what we are doing now. The Buddha also taught all His disciples that when they went to the *dānasālā*, even if it was out of their meditation time, they still needed to be mindful on their meditation object.

Are you thinking, “When the bell rings, ok, there is no need to worry anymore. I can let go of *ānāpāna* object.”? Is that freedom? You must still mindfully walk, and mindfully think about breathing, about your meditation object.

And when we go into the *dānasālā*, I have suggested that you look at the whiteboard and find out the donor’s name. If you want to continue practising *ānāpānasati*, it’s good for the donor. If you don’t want to do *ānāpānasati*, just look at the donor’s name and send *mettā* to the donor.

Even if you don’t know the donor, you can just pay attention to the name. How beautiful it is that you can just stand quietly and send *mettā*, as you go into the *dānasālā* one by one.

You follow and join the line. Walking in very carefully and slowly and just quietly stand there and concentrate on your *dhamma* object.

This was explained by The Buddha. Don't think that *Sayalay* is demanding too much. The Buddha taught this to the *bhikkhū*.

I was worried about saying all this because you all may think that *Sayalay* is too much and likes to control a lot. This is not from me but from The Buddha's teachings. The Buddha liked it this way.

And you can also walk slowly and mindfully to the place where you take the food. When you arrive there, no need to think what food is being offered, whether the food is good or not good. Even if you don't like what you see, you should also not be angry.

You can send *mettā* to the people in the kitchen, all the *dhamma* workers, including me. You know, I am also a *dhamma* worker.

If you have bad thoughts towards the *dhamma* workers, then you are also having bad thoughts towards me. Just send *mettā* and think: "Every day early in the morning, from four o'clock, they have been there taking care of all of us, preparing food for us. They must be tired."

With *mettā* feeling, everything is beautiful. We need to keep trying and training again and again on *mettā*, on how to practise *mettā*. If you think of everything with *mettā*, everything will be perfect.

Retreat Meal Etiquette

Even if the food is not good, you will also feel good. This is because of understanding. You just go to take the food, and take mindfully, but not too slowly, as there is a long queue. Still, you can take mindfully.

Like today, we made *laksa*. You know *laksa* has gravy, and it is a bit watery. There is a little bit of each ingredient inside such as cabbage etc. You know with *laksa*, you should stir the gravy. Then after that

you just take mindfully, putting gravy into your bowl with the noodles, which you have portioned for yourself.

Do you know what some meditators did? They used the scoop to filter all the cabbage and pieces of tofu. It took them almost five minutes each. That was while the rest of the people had to wait behind them. They didn't care about other people waiting behind them.

They just filtered out the food. They didn't want to take any of the water, just wanted to take everything. This action was not so good, but I didn't want to talk about that then.

Just think if you do so, other people may not be happy looking at you, because there are a lot of people behind you. What goes inside the scoop doesn't matter; you just take what is offered and put it into your bowl. If you scoop, pausing to filter, waiting for all the gravy to drain to leave only the solid food, it takes a long time for the people waiting behind you. Do you understand? Also when other people look at this, they can see that you are not mindful. This is not so good. It is not because we want to complain, but as a meditator, this kind of action is not so good.

People may think that you are only thinking for yourself, and not for those people behind you. If the people in front take out all the ingredients by filtering, those behind will only be left with plain gravy. So I always have to keep one bowl of food to pour in again for the people queuing behind.

It is not so nice to explain, but I just need to explain. That is because if some visitors come here, they may think, why are all the meditators in this centre behaving like this? This is not good for me also. They may think that I never train the meditators.

Just stir and take whatever is inside the scoop. You need not look for what you want. Don't be like some people who were bending to look inside so much that they nearly fell into the pot. I don't want to see this kind of action. Still I am very happy if you all can eat and finish all. Then only I am very happy.

We need to be mindful. Our actions are very important. It is important to eat mindfully. Whether the food is good or not good doesn't matter. Even eating porridge we also must be happy.

Even if you don't like the food, you also must be happy. Then only your *mettā* is real *mettā*, everything you feel is good. You don't get unhappy feeling from the food. Never mind if you don't like. When you go back, you may cook and eat as you like, but the crocodiles will have bitten you.

If you are angry and decide to disrobe to go back home, this is like being bitten by the crocodiles. This is the second type of danger.

Third Danger: Whirlpools

Now there is a third type of danger. Some *bhikkhū* will wear the robes early in the morning and go for *piṇḍapāta* at the village.

When they go to the village, they do not take care of their six sense faculties. The Buddha always mentioned that the monks and nuns must take care of their *indriya*. The eyes cannot be looking here and there.

The *bhikkhū* also cannot be listening out for pleasures. Sometimes, when they are going for *piṇḍapāta*, they may need to pass by many houses. And sometimes they may hear some kind of music or other sounds. They should not go and listen to the music. You should not carry the music inside of you. Meditators need to take care of that.

The same is true for smell as well. Sometimes when they go, they may smell some fried chicken. You should also not become attached and think, "Oh, if I can eat this, how good it may be." You cannot, you know. You are vegetarians.

In this way, we have to take care of our bodily actions also. We have to do like this.

For some *bhikkhū*, they don't take care and so as they are looking around, they may see some very rich families or houses of their family

members. They may see them enjoying their food, or enjoying their family lives and other luxuries, all these situations may cause them to have attachments.

These attachments will make them recall their lives before they ordained, “Last time, I was also in this kind of situation. I had a wife. I had a car. I had a house and other properties. Whatever I wanted, I could have. Now, *bhikkhu* life is suffering, different from my previous life.”

When you were at home, whatever you wanted to enjoy, you could. Now do you want to watch TV? But here there is no television.

After one week or two weeks of retreat, you start to feel bored; you want to go home, also cannot do so. You have already promised *Sayalay*. This is also suffering.

Because of the desire for that kind of attachments, The Buddha explained that this is also one kind of danger. It is dangerous for your life.

In the end, the *bhikkhū* don't want to practise continuously because of that desire. They want to disrobe and they want to go home. Who wants to go home before the retreat ends? This is being fooled by your attachments. This is dangerous also.

You need very good *pāramī* and very strong determination. Only for those with strong determination will their practice be easier.

Especially for some who ordained in the *Buddhasāsana*, owing to their family background, if they come from rich or comfortable families, when they come into the monastery life, it will be really suffering and not easy for them.

We cannot stay like when we are at home. We have the duty to do many things. We need to serve people. We need to serve in the monastery. This is our duty and we really need to practise.

We must be strong enough. For sure, when we go back home it is

very comfortable. There is no need to do anything, no need to clean the room. Everything is well taken care of. When we come to the monastery, everything has to be done. It is so tiring.

Duty

That is why when you go back home, your mind should also not be shaken. You should still want to practise. You still want to stay in this kind of suffering in the monastery life because of the *Dhamma*. Only those who can practise the *Dhamma* can accept this.

If not, it is not easy. You may see that even after many years of ordination, ten to fifteen years in the monastery, it is also not easy. There are a lot of problems too. Then you may start to get confused, and not sure whether to go back home or to stay on to continue.

In the beginning it is ok. The initial few years of ordination, we want to practise and we can let go of everything. After many years shaken with suffering, if your practice is not strong, after ten year's time, you may really want to change your lifestyle again.

That is the reason the *Dhamma* is very important. If you have the *Dhamma*, the mind is unshakable. You are not shaken by any kind of external environment or whatever you may see. You are really stable. You can stick to the *Dhamma*. Never mind about the suffering. This is what we have to do.

We have to take care of our mind. Only in this way your mind will be strong. It is not an easy thing to do. Most people always like luxury things and all the sensual things. Without the *Dhamma*, it is very difficult to control when you see your mind shake.

So we need to check ourselves all the time. When you go to a rich country, people take care of you and everything is perfect. You have to check your mind to see if you are really attached to this kind of environment or this kind of situation or not.

If you are still attached, then better not go out. If you are ok with all

good or bad conditions, everything you can accept, then that's ok.

Everything is impermanent, you know. So in your mind, you always need to be mindful of impermanence, impermanence. Everywhere there is really just impermanence only.

For me, after ten days, I have to move to another country. And in another ten days time, I have to move to yet another country. Sometimes after waking up, I didn't know where I was. I didn't know which country I was in, needed to recall to know where I was. So sometimes I didn't know where I was.

Everywhere is like my home. For me, it has been nearly twenty-five years since my ordination. It is quite tough. The beginning was also tough. I tried to be strong, and stay strong. I didn't want to disrobe.

When I started to teach, the situation was better; still I was attacked by other people. So I also needed to be strong, stay strong, simply strong. If not, I could become crazy. So I needed to be strong. And we are always trying to practise the *Dhamma*.

Patience

The Buddha taught us to be patient, be patient, let go, let go, be patient, *khanti, khanti*. I am not yet an *arahant*, so I don't know also if I will disrobe. But now I am still ok. Now I don't want to disrobe but the future is difficult to tell.

I just want to explain that ordained life is not easy. That is the reason why I respect all the monks and nuns who can practise. It is not easy to be in the monastery life for a long time.

I just want to share that it is also very dangerous for those who want to go home because of following their desires and attachments. If you go home because of that, it is not easy to practise the *Dhamma*. It will be lost if you do not practise.

How can we create happiness from all these sufferings? The

intention to take care of our mind is very important. We should try to spread more *mettā* to all beings, and try to take care of our precepts.

Taking Care of Precepts

Thinking about taking care of our precepts can give us a lot of happiness. And it is also good to think that we are trying to spread more *mettā* to everyone, for example to all the meditators. For me, I always need to associate with many meditators.

Some of the meditators are new. I treat all of them equally. From my heart, I have always tried my best to send *mettā*. I don't have any bad thoughts or negative energy for anybody.

So for me, every day I feel very happy from that kind of practice. This is truly how we can make happiness.

We can even practise when we look at the dogs. The dogs are animals, not meditators. But we still think of them with *mettā*. What they want to eat, we will feed them and they are happy. Looking at them, we can feel the *mettā* from our hearts for the dogs. This also makes me very happy.

This is true. I feel very happy to be with them. Although they are animals, they are just dogs; we don't mind associating with them. I feel equally towards them. It is a similar situation for our workers too. Every time, I eat together with the workers, they are happy.

Although I would like to be very strict with the way of eating, I know they may feel uneasy if I am too strict. And I don't want them to feel uneasy because they are very tired. So when I am with them, I also try to be like them, with happiness.

There are the only workers in this compound; the rest are all foreigners. So, I don't want to look down on the workers. I need to take care of their feelings and take care of them also.

If you try to take care of your mind with *mettā* feeling every day,

you don't feel suffering and you can let go of your feeling of suffering. Although physically tired, you will feel more benefits, and the feeling that you are doing more meaningful things will arise. This is also a way of practising the *Dhamma*. So I want you to try doing this.

And you will not have any enemies. Everything is OK. Every corner you look at, it is ok. If you see rubbish also OK, you will pick it up and throw it away. When you see some corners with rubbish, or whatever, you will see with *mettā*.

You may think, "Oh, I will take care and clean up, so that when anyone looking at the place being clean will feel happy. I will take care using *mettā* feeling." Yes. Similarly in this way, you may think, "In the room, if the others don't clean, never mind, I will clean so that they will be happy."

So, this is how we train, train, and train. It is the same for me. "Oh never mind, we just take care of it ourselves, this is our duty. It is not only our duty, but it comes from our hearts, full of *mettā*." That is the reason for us to feel happy.

Fourth Danger: Big Fish

Some of the *bhikkhū*, when they go for *piṇḍapāta*, same as mentioned just now, they don't control their eyes and their *indriya* (faculties). So they may see a very, very beautiful girl who may sometimes offer food in the village.

Because of this, attachment may arise in them. That attachment can cause him trouble; it is very dangerous. This is like being bitten by the fish, the big fish. At the time of The Buddha, many incidents like these happened.

Many people have the problem with their attachments. That is because they have yet to practise until the stage of *arahatta*. Only those who have practised until *arahant* will be safe. Otherwise, they can still get attachments.

So because of these attachments, they do not want to continue with the monks' or nuns' life. Initially, they want to ordain, they want to renounce; but then they also want to go home and want to get married.

So like coming here to meditate, many feel the meditation objects are not interesting and they want to go home.

This is the fourth kind of danger. Sitting beside you now, there are big fishes. Behind you, behind your back also, there are more fish. So be careful!

Anyway, it is very important for meditators to beware of these four kinds of danger. This is true not only for monks and nuns, but also for all meditators.

asubha Meditation

This is the reason why during the time of The Buddha, when many young people would come and renounce and ordain in the monastery, The Buddha would always like to protect His disciples.

He would always like to teach *asubha* meditation to many *bhikkhū*. Only through practising *asubha* meditation, you can cut out your attachments.

And He would always encourage all the monks and nuns to practise such that when they looked at other people, they must be thinking about skeletons, skeletons, skeletons.

And when sitting down here, everybody is just skeleton sitting here, and only skeletons listening and skeletons walking. From practising this way, they can attain first *jhāna*. They can practise until first *jhāna*.

Based on this first *jhāna* they can also practise *vipassanā*. At the end of the practice, you can become an *arahant* too. When attachments come to you, you may know that. For example, during meditation time, you may miss your family members; you may miss your husband, or wife or children. Whenever any kinds of attachments or thoughts related to attachments come up, think about *asubha* meditation.

Contemplate on a dead body, or someone that has already died, and contemplate that we will also die like this. Life is uncertain. One day I will surely have to die. So when we think about dying, we know one day we have to die.

You know already as you have *Dhamma* knowledge. When we die, we cannot carry anything with us. We cannot carry all our family members. All these we have to cut away, all these we have to let go of. So when we have this understanding, and when this kind of understanding arises in our minds, we can temporarily reduce our attachments and desires.

Anyway, I am very grateful to all of you for your patience. And I hope that all of you will understand me and can forgive me. Actually I don't like to control people. I really want all of you to have freedom. I want all of you to be happy here.

Actually I want to make this like a holiday. But even if that is my intention, I cannot do so. I still need to stick with the *Dhamma*, and need to respect The Buddha's teachings.

I do these things in order to protect the *Dhamma* and to have respect for The Buddha's teachings. I hope that all of you can understand me and forgive me too.

*Pictures
of
Sayalay Dīpaṅkara
with
Teachers & Students*



Young Sayalay in 1998



Dhamma Talk at Shuanglin Si, Singapore Jan 2004



■ Sayalay in Germany 2013 ■



■ Sayalay in Taiwan 2010 ■



Sayalay in Germany 2013



Sayalay in Germany 2013



■ Ariyadhamma Mahāthero visits Brahma Vihārī
2010 March Retreat ■



■ Sayalay Dīpaṅkara with German Sayalays,
near Munich 2010 Retreat ■



Sayalay with China bhikkhunī 2009 Feb Retreat



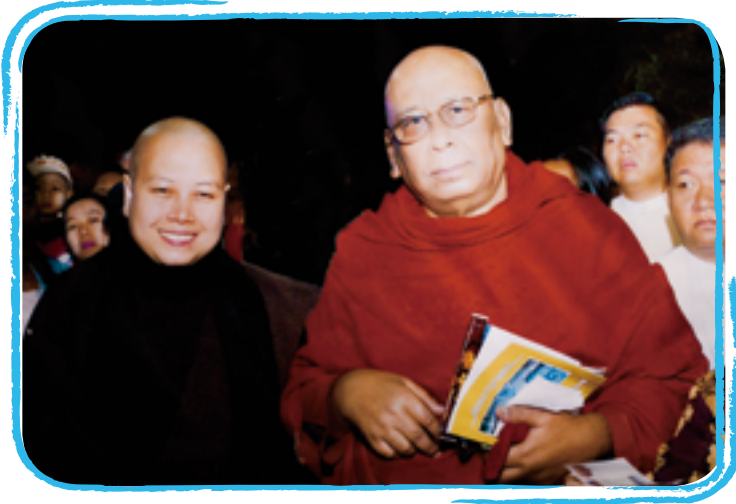
Sayalay walking with Sayalays from Sri Lanka
2010 March Retreat



■
PaAuk Sayadaw giving Blessings
on 1 Feb 2006 at Brahma Vihārī
■



■
Sayalay with her mom and Mahātherā
at dānasālā 1 Feb 2006
■



■ Sitagu Sayadaw (Right) with Sayalay
(2012, Sagaing Myanmar) ■



■ Pa Auk Sayadaw (seated) and Sayalay Susilā (left),
性廣法師 (Middle), and Sayalay Dīpaṅkara (Right). ca. 1999 ■



■ Brahma Vihārī 2006 Retreat ■



■ Brahma Vihārī 2007 Jan Retreat ■



Brahma Vihārī 2008 Retreat



Brahma Vihārī 2009 Retreat



■ Brahma Vihārī 2010 Retreat ■



■ Brahma Vihārī 2013 Jan Retreat ■



..... Tokyo 2003 Retreat



..... Tokyo 2011 Retreat



Shuanglin Dec 2003 Retreat



Poh Ern Shih Singapore 2007 Retreat



Cakkavala Meditation Centre, Bekok 2013 Retreat



■ Dharma Talk At BuddhasWeg Germany 2013 Retreat ■



■ Munich Germany 2010 Retreat ■



Indonesia Malino 2013 Retreat



Sayalay with Indonesian devotees
at Bodhgaya late 2011



Sampoh Temple, Cameron Highland 2013 Retreat



Sampoh Temple, Cameron Highland 2012 Retreat



Frankston Nov. 2003 Mornington Retreat



Sydney 2012 Retreat



Korea 2013 Retreat



Xiangguang Si, Taiwan 2009 Retreat



■ Sri Lanka 2011 Retreat ■

Pāli Glossary

A

- Abhidhamma* one of the “three baskets” of the Theravāda Buddhist Canon; deals with the psychology of the mind and the refined states of experience in meditation.
- Aṅgulimāla* name; a bhikkhu name and/or A robber who was converted by The Buddha and later became an arahant. As a robber, he killed his victims and took a finger from each of them, wearing them as a garland hanging from his neck, thus his name Aṅgulimāla.
- Ahiṅsaka* Aṅgulimāla’s name before his ordination, meaning ‘Not harming’.
- Ānanda* name; commonly referring to One of The Buddha’s principal disciples, His first cousin and attendant for twenty-five years.
- ākāsa* the element of space; the sky.
- ānāpānasati* mindfulness on in-and-out-breathing; subject for samatha meditation and later, vipassanā.
- adhiṭṭhāna* determination; one of the ten perfections.
- akusala* unwholesome; defined as minds accompanied with greed, hatred and delusion.

<i>anicca</i>	impermanence
<i>anatta</i>	non-self
<i>anāgāmi</i>	non-returner; a noble disciple who has attained the third level of holiness.
<i>appamādena sampādetha</i>	Last words of The Buddha: “Strive on with diligence, you must fulfill mindfully!”
<i>arahant</i> (sing.); <i>arahantā</i> (pl.)	a person who has attained ultimate in meditation, i.e. enlightenment and has eradicated all defilements; at his/her death (parinibbāna), there is no more rebirth.
<i>arahatta</i>	stage of arahant; 4th or final state of sainthood
<i>ariya puggala</i>	a Noble Disciple of The Buddha who has attained any of the four levels of holiness.
<i>asaṅkheyya</i>	incalculable, innumerable (length of time)
<i>asubha</i>	unpleasant; ugly; dead corpse
<i>averā hontu</i>	“may they be friendly”; a phrase from a popular loving-kindness (mettā) chant.
<i>avijjā</i>	ignorance; (avijjā, ignorance; taṇhā, craving; upādāna, clinging)

B

(The) *Buddha* mainly referring to Gotama Buddha in Theravāda tradition.

Buddha: Buddhō (sing.); *Buddhā* (pl.)
one who has attained enlightenment and is superior to all other beings, human and divine, by his knowledge of the truths. Being also an arahant, by His death, no further rebirth.

- Buddhānussati* Recollections-of-the-Buddha meditation
- Buddhasāsana* the teaching of The Buddha; the Buddhist religion
- Bāhiya Dārucīriya*
name of an arahant, whose name means the one born in Bāhiya who wears a bark-garment (Dārucīriya)
- Brahma Vihārī* meditation centre established by Sayalay Dīpaṅkara in Myanmar; its name takes the meaning of ‘brahma vihāra’
- Bodhgayā* (Hindi Language)
Present name of the place in India where The Buddha gained enlightenment.
- bhante* reverend sir
- bhavaṅga* subliminal consciousness or subconscious life-continuum; continuity of identical consciousness, broken only when cognitive-processes occur.
- bhāvanā* mind development; samatha and vipassanā meditation practice.
- bhikkhu* (sing.); *bhikkhū*; *bhikkhavo* (pl.)
a Buddhist monk
- bhikkhunī* (sing./pl.)
a Buddhist nun with higher ordination.
- bodhi* (tree) the tree named after which Gotama (Sakyamuni) Buddha meditated to Enlightenment.
- bodhi* Four Noble Truths
- bodhisatta* a person who has vowed to become a Buddha; the ideal in Mahāyāna tradition; he is a bodhisatta for innumerable lives prior to his enlightenment, after which he is The Buddha, until He in that life attains parinibbāna.

brahmā (sing./pl.)

a celestial being(s), an inhabitant(s) of one of twenty in thirty-one realms very much higher than human realm; invisible to human eye, visible in light of concentration.

brahma vihāra

the four ‘sublime’ or ‘divine abodes’, also called the four boundless states of loving-kindness (*mettā*), compassion (*karuṇā*), altruistic joy (*muditā*) and equanimity (*upekkhā*).

C

cetanā

‘volition’; will, intention, purpose

cetasika

mental concomitants

citta

mind, consciousness

D

Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta

The first sermon preached by The Buddha to the first five disciples; it literally means the discourse that set rolling the the wheel i.e the doctrine of The Buddha.

Dhamma

(capitalized) The liberating law discovered and proclaimed by The Buddha.

dhamma

phenomenon; state; mind-object

Dīpaṅkara

The one who lit the lamp.

deva: devo (sing.); *devā* (pl.)

a divine being, divine beings; heavenly god

devaloka

the sphere of the *devā*, heaven just above human realm; there are six divine worlds according to the Theravāda tradition.

<i>ditṭhi</i>	view, belief
<i>dukkha</i>	the Buddhist understanding of life as being essentially ‘painful’, ‘suffering’ or ‘dissatisfactory’ due to it being constantly subject to change
<i>dāna</i>	the giving of gifts, an act of generosity; one of the ten perfections.
<i>dānasālā</i>	the dining hall; a hall giving offerings to the monks.
<i>dāyaka</i>	a donor or benefactor

E

<i>ehi</i>	Come, come here
<i>ekaggatā</i>	tranquility of mind; one-pointedness; one of the five jhāna factors.

H

<i>hadaya-vatthu</i>	Heart-base
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I

<i>Itipi so bhagavā arahañ</i>	The beginning phrase of the “salutation to The Buddha” verse, starting with “Such indeed is the Blessed One, the arahant...”
<i>Idañ no ñātīnañ hotu, sukhitā hontu ñātayo</i>	The verse for transference of merits to departed ones, meaning “Let this (merits) accrue to our relatives and may they be happy!”
<i>indriya</i>	five spiritual faculties as well as six sense faculties.

J

- Jetavāna* a monastery donated by lay devotee Anāthapindika to The Buddha located outside of ancient city Sāvattthī.
- javana* the active phase of the cognitive process whereby kamma is produced.
- jhāna* absorption; eight increasingly advanced and subtle states of concentration on a specific object, with mind aware and increasingly pure.

K

Karaṇīya Metta Sutta

the discourse on the practice of loving-kindness.

- kalāpa* ‘group’, ‘unit’; smallest unit of materiality seen in conventional reality; invisible to human eye, visible in light of concentration.
- kaṣiṇa* meditation object for developing concentration, of which there are ten, including four elements, four colours, space and light.
- karuṇā* compassion, one of the four sublime abodes (brahma vihāra); main mental state of a person who aspire to be The Buddha-to-be or bodhisatta.
- khanti* patience or forbearance; one of the ten pāramī perfections.
- kusala* wholesome, minds accompanied by non-greed, non-hatred or non-delusion.
- kuṭi* any single-roomed abode or hut; in this case referring to accommodation for meditators in the meditation centre.

L

- laksa* (Singapore Language) a type of spicy local food in Singapore, Malaysia.
lobha greed

M

- Maṅgala Sutta* the discourse on what constitutes ‘blessings’ or auspiciousness in the world.
Mahāsatiṭṭhāna Sutta the great discourse on the foundations of mindfulness
Mahāyāna ‘the Great Vehicle’; it is one of the Buddhist traditions which arose one hundred years later after passing of The Buddha.
Migadāya the deer park, where the first discourse by The Buddha was preached
Moggallāna one of the two chief disciples of The Buddha, foremost for his mastery of psychic powers.
magga and phala path and fruition.
mahāthero (sing.); *mahātherā* (pl.) a great elder; a senior monk who has spent ten years from his ordination day.
mettā loving-kindness; one of the four sublime abodes (brahma vihāra), one of the ten perfections.
moha delusion
muditā altruistic joy or unselfish joy; one of the four sublime abodes (brahma vihāra).

N

<i>Nibbāna</i>	the goal of all Buddhist. Freedom from greed, hatred, delusion and future rebirths; it is non-self and uniquely permanent and peaceful: not a place.
<i>nāma rūpa</i>	mind (mentality) and matter (materiality)
<i>nekkhamma</i>	renunciation; one of the ten perfections.
<i>nimitta</i> (sing.); <i>nimittāni</i> (pl.)	a sign or mental image obtained in meditation when concentration deepens depending on perception and level of concentration.

P

<i>parinibbāna</i>	death of a Buddha, a paccekabuddha, and all other arahantā; the complete extinction of mind and matter with no possibility of future rebirth.
<i>paritta</i>	a recitation of truthfulness for protection..
<i>paññā</i>	understanding, wisdom, knowledge; one of the five powers, one of the ten perfections.
<i>passaddhi</i>	tranquillity
<i>paṭisandhi</i>	rebirth-linking
<i>paṭicca samuppāda</i>	dependent origination, the workings of cause and effect.
<i>pāramī</i> (sing./pl.)	perfection referring to the ten perfections; a quality developed for the attainment of enlightenment or sainthood.
<i>peta</i>	inhabitant of realm lower than human realm, but higher than animals; invisible to human eye; visible

in light of concentration.

pīti joy, rapture; one of the five jhāna factors.

piṇḍapāta the act of alms-gathering.

puggala an individual, a person.

R

rūpa materiality

S

Saṅgha the assembly of Buddhist ariya puggala or Enlightened persons, past, present and future.

saṅgha the assembly of Buddhist ordained persons, past present and future.

Sahampati Brahmā

Mahabrahma, one of the most senior brahmā, who appeared before The Buddha at Ajapāla-banyan tree after His enlightenment and invited Him to preach the Dhamma.

Sāriputta one of the two chief disciples of The Buddha, foremost for wisdom.

Sāvathī capital town of Kosala in India at the time of The Buddha.

sacca truth or truthfulness; one of the ten perfections.

saddhā faith, confidence, devotion; one of the five powers.

sakadāgāmī once-returner; a noble disciple who has attained the second level of holiness.

samatha serenity; practice of concentration of the mind on an object to develop higher and higher states

	of concentration, whereby the mind becomes increasingly serene.
<i>samādhi</i>	concentration; one of the five powers.
<i>sammā vāyāma</i>	right effort
<i>sammā samādhi</i>	right concentration
<i>saṅkhāra</i>	mental formation
<i>sati</i>	mindfulness; one of the five powers.
<i>Sayadaw</i> (Myanmar language)	an honorific title for monk who is a dhamma teacher in Myanmar Theravāda Buddhist Tradition.
<i>Sayalay</i> (Myanmar language)	an honorific title for nun who holds ten precepts in Myanmar Theravāda Buddhist Tradition.
<i>sādhu</i>	good, thoroughly virtuous.
<i>sāmaṇero</i> (sing.); <i>sāmaṇerā</i> (pl.)	a novice monk.
<i>sīla</i>	morality; moral factors of the Noble Eightfold Path: right speech, right action, right livelihood; to be cultivated by Buddhists to varying degrees. One of the ten perfections.
<i>sotāpanna</i>	stream-winner; a noble disciple who has attained the first level of holiness.
<i>sukha</i>	happiness; one of the five jhāna factors.
<i>sutta: suttan</i> (sing.); <i>suttāni</i> (pl.)	the discourses of The Buddha.

T

<i>Tipiṭaka</i>	the Three Baskets of the Pāli Canon.
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Theravāda the doctrine of the Elders; Buddhist tradition prevalent in Sri Lanka, Thailand, Myanmar, Laos, Cambodia.

taṇhā craving

U

Uruvelā a place in the neighbourhood of the Bodhi-tree at Bodhgayā (or Buddhagayā at the time of The Buddha.)

upādāna clinging

upekkhā equanimity, non-discrimination; one of the four sublime abodes (brahma vihāra); one of the ten perfections.

V

vicāra sustained thought; one of the five jhāna factors.

vihāra an abode.

vinaya discipline, code of monastic discipline.

vipassanā insight meditation; discernment of specific characteristics of materiality and mentality, causes and results, in ultimate reality, and their general characteristics of impermanence, suffering and non-self.

vīriya effort; one of the five powers; one of the ten perfections.

vitakka applied thought; one of the five jhāna factors.

Y

yoniso manasikāra reflection with wisdom.

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May all merit gained by the editing, organizing, transcribing, practising, arranging, publication, printing, distributing of this Dhamma Dāna be dedicated to all our past and present: Parents, Teachers, Brothers, Sisters, Spouses, Children, Relatives, Friends, brahmā & devā & all sentient beings.

May all sentient beings, all creatures be free from suffering and attain the ultimate Bliss of Nibbāna

sādhū! sādhū! sādhū!

Puññānumodanā

ākāsaṭṭhā ca bhummaṭṭhā devā nāgā mahiddhikā
puññaṇ taṇ anumoditvā ciraṇ rakkhantu sāsanaṇ.

ākāsaṭṭhā ca bhummaṭṭhā devā nāgā mahiddhikā
puññaṇ taṇ anumoditvā ciraṇ rakkhantu desanaṇ.

ākāsaṭṭhā ca bhummaṭṭhā devā nāgā mahiddhikā
puññaṇ taṇ anumoditvā ciraṇ rakkhantu maṇ paraṇ.

ettāvatā ca amhehi sambhataṇ puñña sampadaṇ
sabbe devā anumodantu sabba sampatti siddhiyā.

ettāvatā ca amhehi sambhataṇ puñña sampadaṇ
sabbe bhūtā anumodantu sabba sampatti siddhiyā.

ettāvatā ca amhehi sambhataṇ puñña sampadaṇ
sabbe sattā anumodantu sabba sampatti siddhiyā.

bhavagg'upādāya avācietiṭṭhato etth'antare sattakāy'

upapannā

rūpī arūpī ca asaṅgā saṅgino

dukkhā pamucantu phusantu nibbutiṇ.

sādhū! sādhū! sādhū!

Rejoice in the merits

(Dedication of merits)

May the powerful devas & nāgas dwelling in the sky and on earth
rejoice in this merit and long protect the Sāsana.

May the powerful devas & nāgas dwelling in the sky and on earth
rejoice in this merit and long protect the teaching.

May the powerful devas & nāgas dwelling in the sky and on earth
rejoice in this merit and long protect me & others.

To the extent that we have acquired any merit,
may all devas rejoice in it for achieving all success.

To the extent that we have acquired any merit,
may all spirits rejoice in it for achieving all success.

To the extent that we have acquired any merit,
may all beings rejoice in it for achieving all success.

From the peak of existence, down as far as avīci hell
may all beings reborn here--

with form, without form, with and without perception,
all be freed from suffering;

may all attain nibbàna.

Good, good, good!

Mahārāhulovāda sutta

(Majjhima Nikaya Sutta 62)

18. mettaṃ Rāhula bhāvanaṃ bhāvehi. mettaṃ hi te Rāhula
bhāvanaṃ bhāvayato yo vyāpādo so pahīyissati.
19. karuṇaṃ Rāhula bhāvanaṃ bhāvehi. karuṇaṃ hi te Rāhula
bhāvanaṃ bhāvayato yā vihesā sā pahīyissati.
20. muditaṃ Rāhula bhāvanaṃ bhāvehi. muditaṃ hi te Rāhula
bhāvanaṃ bhāvayato yā arati sā pahīyissati.
21. upekkhaṃ Rāhula bhāvanaṃ bhāvehi. upekkhaṃ hi te Rāhula
bhāvanaṃ bhāvayato yo paṭigho so pahīyissati.
22. asubhaṃ Rāhula bhāvanaṃ bhāvehi. asubhaṃ hi te Rāhula
bhāvanaṃ bhāvayato yo rāgo so pahīyissati.
23. aniccasaññaṃ Rāhula bhāvanaṃ bhāvehi. aniccasaññaṃ hi te Rāhula
bhāvanaṃ bhāvayato yo asmimāno so pahīyissati.

Mahārāhulovāda sutta

18. Rāhula, develop meditation on loving-kindness; for when you develop meditation on loving-kindness, any ill will will be abandoned.
- 19 Rāhula, develop meditation on compassion; for when you develop meditation on compassion, any cruelty will be abandoned.
20. Rāhula, develop meditation on altruistic joy; for when you develop meditation on altruistic joy, any discontent will be abandoned.
21. Rāhula, develop meditation on equanimity; for when you develop meditation on equanimity, any aversion will be abandoned.
22. Rāhula, develop meditation on foulness; for when you develop meditation on foulness, any lust will be abandoned.
23. Rāhula, develop meditation on the perception of impermanence; for when you develop meditation on the perception of impermanence, the conceit 'I am' will be abandoned.

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“Develop meditation on loving-kindness;
for when you develop meditation on loving-kindness,
any ill will will be abandoned.

Develop meditation on compassion;
for when you develop meditation on compassion,
any cruelty will be abandoned.

Develop meditation on altruistic joy;
for when you develop meditation on altruistic joy,
any discontent will be abandoned.

Develop meditation on equanimity;
for when you develop meditation on equanimity,
any aversion will be abandoned.

Develop meditation on foulness;
for when you develop meditation on foulness,
any lust will be abandoned.

Develop meditation on the perception of impermanence;
for when you develop meditation on
the perception of impermanence,
the conceit ‘I am’ will be abandoned.”



MAJJHIMA NIKAYA

– *Sutta 62 “Mahārāhulovāda-sutta”*