

**BEYOND THE STREAM OF  
THE WORLD**

# Beyond the Stream of the World

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## Translator's Preface

Often when there is widespread interest in a subject, there are also widespread misunderstandings. This is certainly true regarding current interest in Buddhist meditation. Many different – and sometimes contradictory – methods of meditation are presently available, and the beginning meditator often finds it difficult to know which methods are beneficial or unbeneficial when viewed in terms of the Buddha's path, and which are balanced and complete.

The purpose of this book is to give the reader enough background in the Buddha's path to make an informed choice in deciding which method of meditation to pursue. It emphasizes Right View – the first step of the path – as being of crucial importance, for without the development of Right View through reasoned investigation of physical and mental processes, no amount of concentration or mindfulness, bare awareness, or “going with the flow” can lead to absolute freedom from suffering.

Included is an appendix which suggests a number of beginning techniques in walking and sitting meditation for use in conjunction with the approaches for developing Right View, discussed in the body of the book.

The author, abbot of a forest monastery in northeastern Thailand, has written several Dhamma books, and is frequently invited to Bangkok to teach.

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## Beyond the Stream of the World

I would like to start out by making one point. You may have read many Dhamma books and heard Dhamma from many teachers. Each teacher has a different mode of expression. You must contemplate, analyze, and investigate critically and reasonably what you have read with wisdom (*paññā*) until you are sure of it. Your contemplation must be based on Right View (*sammā-diṭṭhi*), which is the important principle to guarantee the correct practice. It is like computer programming. A badly written program will put out bad results regardless of what you put in. If the mind is programmed with wrong views (*micchā-diṭṭhi*), misunderstanding is hidden in the mind, and subsequent reasoning is all wrong. So improper use of wisdom may lead to wrong understanding, and the mind may begin to perceive the true Dhamma as false.

## Wisdom in Conviction

The practice of mind development is very delicate. It involves all-round knowledge to avoid possible misunderstandings. It is not the case that all realizations which arise in the course of the practice are true, because these realizations can arise from two different sources - Right View and Wrong View. The two lead to completely different ends. The knowledge gained from right views teaches the mind and raises it to a higher level of Dhamma practice in line with the Noble Path (*maggā*), which leads to the Final Goal (*Nibbāna*), the cessation of all defilements and suffering. In contrast, knowledge from wrong views leads the mind in a wrong direction forever, and the chance of returning to the right line of Dhamma is very remote.

Therefore, Dhamma students must be aware of the two paths at an early stage and understand them well enough to correct any wrong view over time. Nowadays those who practice Dhamma argue about the various realizations gained from their practice. Each is very confident that his is correct. May I congratulate those whose views are in line with Right View. But if one's realizations are derived from a mind imbued with wrong views, it is difficult for anyone to guide another in the right way, for wrong minds are also very proud of their knowledge. The person with wrong views does not listen to others. He is overconfident and stubborn and acts arrogantly and openly as if he were an expert on Dhamma who knows the whole Truth. This is difficult to correct.

Conviction (*saddhā*) and self-confidence without wisdom can be dangerous. Wrong convictions become implanted in the mind

without one's knowing it. If the mind (*citta*) has a false view, false knowledge follows and has in many cases caused abnormal perception in the minds of meditators. Therefore, one must carefully base one's practice on Right View, which is just like a compass that points in the right direction.

## Selecting One's Teacher and Dhamma

If you are uncertain about your own method, you should look for help from a teacher. If you find the right teacher with Right View, your practice will surely progress through the Noble Path towards the Final Goal in this life or in the near future. On the other hand, if one is led by a person with a wrong view, his practice goes nowhere and drifts pointlessly.

Selecting the right teacher is therefore a very important first step. You are lucky if you have chosen the right one. It is just like driving in the right lane of traffic, and you will surely reach your destination without delay. But if you drive in the wrong lane without knowing it, you are wasting your time and will never reach the destination. So, use your wisdom to analyze whether you are in the "lane" of Right View or Wrong View. This is the start. If you begin wrongly, the practice that follows will be wrong and difficult, perhaps impossible, to change in this lifetime. There were many examples of right and wrong practices in the Lord Buddha's time. Each leader had many followers who had faith and firm belief in him. The followers practiced continuously and were ready to believe their leader. This is conviction - thoughts that fool the mind. If one lacks wisdom, one's delusion and misunderstanding can be so bad that any wise man cannot help, just like a doctor unable to cure a patient with terminal cancer. This is what happens to a person dominated by self-regard, thinking that his mind development is superior to others. Even if a teacher wants to help, his good will may be refused. The person with Wrong View thus becomes like a sick person who refuses to take his doctor's medicine.

## Study the Noble Path Thoroughly

A Dhamma student must study and understand the Noble Eightfold Path according to the original principles taught in perfect order by the Lord Buddha. Do not modify or change them, because the Lord Buddha knew best which step of the Noble Path should come first and which should follow.

To practice according to the Noble Path, one must start with the first step, *sammā-diṭṭhi* - Right View or Right Understanding. From Right View develops Right Thought (*sammā-saṅkappa*, the second step) and then the other steps of the Noble Path. Right View is therefore chief among the steps of the Noble Path. It supports the development of the whole Noble Path. Without it, the Noble Path can become easily distorted.

So, discernment, or wisdom, based on Right View is the major principle of Dhamma practice. One's practice will not be aligned with the truth if there is no wisdom to contemplate things in relation to their causes. A person without wisdom in Dhamma practice is like an illiterate to whom pen and paper are useless. Even though they try to write something, no one can understand it. Dhamma students must be aware of the importance of wisdom, without which it is impossible to practice the Noble Path to reach *Nibbāna*.

The core of Dhamma practice is to use wisdom to contemplate things in a comprehensive manner. For example, if one intends to observe the Five-, the Eight-, the Ten- or the 227-Moral Precepts (*sīla*), one must have wisdom to be able to practice each precept successfully.

*Sammā-vācā*, or Right Speech (the third step of the Noble Path), also requires wisdom to contemplate carefully how one's words will affect oneself and others. With wisdom, one speaks only good words, for one realizes that words, once spoken, can never be taken back. Wisdom is used comprehensively to avoid wrong speech and makes the practice of Right Speech possible.

*Sammā-kammanta*, Right Action or Right Activity (the fourth step), involves any physical act. Before one does anything, one must use wisdom to contemplate the effect of that action. A responsible person must think before acting so that they can be efficient and obtain good results. They don't suffer from their actions, and the results are in general beneficial for themselves and others. Both worldly activity and Dhamma require wise preemptive investigation, as stated in Pali:

***“Nisamma karaṇaṃ seyyo”***

“One must contemplate comprehensively with wisdom before acting.”

By doing so, one can expect very few mistakes or none at all. A wise man must think and reason carefully, and select only useful work to do. To be selective is in fact the process of wisdom and should be used in many different scenarios, be it physical work like construction, administrative work of business or government, or any social activity. An action without prior contemplation with wisdom often yields foolish results.

*Sammā-ājīva*, Right Livelihood (the fifth step), is also based on wisdom. One must use wisdom to acquire living requirements, such as food, by honest means without violating the moral

precepts (the Five-, the Eight-, the Ten-, or the 227-Precepts) that one has pledged to observe. Laymen obtain food within the limit of their precepts, as monks and novices do within theirs.

Right Speech, Right Action, and Right Livelihood are in fact the practice of the moral precepts in the Noble Path. Those who intend to observe the moral precepts in order to purify their minds must have wisdom. Otherwise, they tend to adhere merely to the rules and rituals of the precepts, the so-called act of *sīlabbata-parāmāsa*. Purity of virtue without wisdom is impossible. One must discern the reasons existing since the Lord Buddha's time to properly practice Dhamma.

*Sammā-vāyāma*, Right Effort (the sixth step), again requires wisdom. There are two kinds of effort: worldly and Dhamma. I will only discuss the latter. One must use wisdom to tell right from wrong effort, then attempt the right and avoid the wrong.

Any physical or verbal effort is an expression of mental effort. Thus, all outward efforts originate from the mind. Right Effort arises from the mind that has Right View and Right Thought. Without wisdom to discern things in the right way, an effort could be wrong without knowing it. Wrong efforts accumulate defilements, craving, pride, arrogance, and ignorance in the mind. The mind is therefore absorbed in greed, anger, delusion, sensual pleasure, jealousy, torpor and depression. The foolish mind does not know the Truth and drifts blindly in the stream of sensuality.

So, one must be comprehensively wise in order to free their mind from the sensual desire that has been controlling the mind for so long. Only through wise contemplation can the effort of Dhamma

practice, meaning the effort to relinquish evil and to develop virtue, lead one towards the right direction. Effort also means correcting one's view; effort is therefore the heart of Dhamma practice. If effort is not based on wisdom from the beginning, it is wasted. On the other hand, if wisdom underlies the effort in the practice, it is the ladder to the Final Goal. When practicing Dhamma, one must try to contemplate the reasons according to the original Right Effort that the Lord Buddha taught His disciples in His time.

*Sammā-sati*, Right Mindfulness (the seventh step), is the use of wisdom to contemplate what the mind is focused on. Mindfulness (*sati*) alone cannot cope with problems of the mind. It is merely the awareness of any past, present, or future mental object. In other words, it is the awareness of what the mind thinks, but it cannot eradicate the cause of thinking. Some preoccupations (*ārammaṇa*) due to defilements and desires can be so powerful that the mind is already infiltrated by defilements and sensuality before mindfulness has a chance to begin working. When the mind is not free from defilements, desires and ignorance arise all the time. Mindfulness may sometimes be strong enough to know what the defilement-inflicted mind is up to, and so, in that moment, can free the mind from defilements. But it can do so only temporarily. When mindfulness becomes weak, defilements and desires resume with full strength as before.

Therefore, mindfulness alone cannot completely eradicate defilements, desires, and ignorance from the mind. The true power is wisdom, which teaches and enlightens the mind by



means of contemplation. It is the tool for digging out the roots of defilements and desires. The mind cultivated in this way becomes wise and able to solve problems. The Pali word for this is “*paññāya parisujjhati*” meaning “the mind is purified by wisdom.” For this reason, wisdom arising from Right View is the center of the Noble Path. Right Mindfulness is thus mindfulness in line with Right View.

*Sammā-samādhi*, Right Concentration (the eighth step), is based on Right View. The concentration of the mind (*samādhi*)<sup>1</sup> as a process toward the enlightenment of the Truth must depend on wisdom as its foundation. Right View enables the mind to concentrate in the right way, and so it can support *samādhi* very well.

You cannot expect to attain wisdom from practicing concentration. You all have wisdom and use it in your worldly lives. But you may not have used it in discerning the truth of Dhamma. Now you are a Dhamma student. You must train yourself to contemplate things all around in the Dhammic way, using your worldly wisdom in the beginning. By practicing this, you will gradually become accustomed to the process of thinking and contemplating according to the Truth. Even though your wisdom may not be sharp in the beginning, it will become sharper with repetition over time, and you will develop considerable concentration. However, for most beginners, concentration can happen only in tranquil moments during the act of *samādhi*.

Concentration by itself does not create any wisdom. It is merely

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<sup>1</sup> Some translate “*samādhi*” as “meditation.” Here “meditation” is regarded as *jhāna*, a more absorbed state of mind in *samādhi* practice.

the tool for the mind to halt its restlessness temporarily. Wisdom must be developed from contemplation of causality according to the Truth. To sharpen one's wisdom, one practices concentration until the mind is calm, then withdraws from that tranquil state to work on contemplation. By alternating concentration and contemplation, wisdom develops and can support concentration better, and the power of a tranquil mind from concentration, in turn, promotes more and more wisdom.

Practicing concentration according to this method is called Right Concentration in the Noble Path and leads to progress in Dhamma practice. Concentration without Right View is deluded concentration. It does not help develop sharpness of wisdom, even if the mind has some attentiveness. A hermit who is very skillful in meditation can concentrate his mind to the level of deep trance for a long period of time, but cannot attain wisdom from it. There has not been any example of a hermit who could obtain the fruition of the Noble Path by practicing *samādhi* alone. So those who try to develop their minds by the same method as a hermit with a misunderstanding that tranquility of the mind in *samādhi* can generate wisdom must realize that wisdom develops by means of training oneself in contemplation, not by mere *samādhi* practice alone.

## Wrong *Samādhi* Causes Unwitting Deviations

To practice concentration without correct understanding may lead to wrong concentration, from which a person develops abnormal perceptions, the so-called *vipassanūpakilesa*. You may have heard that *samādhi* can cause mental abnormality. When this happens, all perceptions arising from the wrong *samādhi* are abnormal. This is the case in which practice is without wisdom, bringing about misunderstanding in the mind.

I would like to give three suggestions to prevent such abnormality:

1. *Samādhi* practice according to the Noble Path must always be based on Right View (*sammā-diṭṭhi*). After each concentration exercise, one must always use wisdom to contemplate things to know and see the truth about them. If during the practice you should perceive any new knowledge, do not believe it right away, for it may be merely tricks of defilements to delude the mind. There must always be wisdom in your practice.
2. For those who do not yet have wisdom in the Noble Path, I would suggest they not aim at the enlightenment of the Truth, *Nibbāna*, while practicing *samādhi*. They should not wish to employ *samādhi* as the means to eradicate suffering. But they should simply practice *samādhi* by fixing their minds on certain *Parikamma* words, knowing that any calmness and happiness of the mind are the consequence of the still mind in

*samādhi*, as happens with hermits. In this way, mental abnormality will not occur.

3. Some people practice *samādhi* without wisdom regarding the Noble Path, but with very strong intention and determination, and with firm belief that they will become enlightened in the Truth and reach the final Goal, *Nibbāna*, in this life. They then practice *samādhi* with perseverance while walking and sitting with no time for wisdom to develop at all. They think that they can force defilements, desires, and ignorance out of their minds by practicing mindfulness and concentration seriously. The mind without wisdom as mentioned will be deluded by defilements and compounded thoughts. The delusions may appear as sights, sounds, or smells. New knowledge may arise very clearly in the mind. In that situation, the unwise mind believes what it perceives wholeheartedly, and the formation of defilements continues. First, there are some right things mixed with the wrong knowledge, but later on there are only wrong views. The mind is full of wrong knowledge and wrong views and deviates from the line of truth easily.

In some cases, knowledge arises clearly from the calm mind in *samādhi* to answer all Dhamma questions in the mind. The response seems so real as if Dhamma arose in one's mind. One then thinks that one is a wise and well-rounded man of Dhamma. One believes firmly and confidently that it is the knowledge of the Noble Truth. When the mind questions about the Dhamma

of *sotāpanna*, *sakadāgāmī*, *anāgāmī*, or *arahant* (the four stages of Buddhist Nobles or holiness), one gets clear answers in the mind. At this stage, one thinks that he has attained such and such level of holiness. So, he appears in public and preaches daringly and shamelessly and answers Dhamma questions according to his own understanding without knowing about his departure from the right path. Even though some wise men try to give him advice, he does not accept it at all.

The deviant practice described above is due to Wrong View in the beginning. It happens to the person who has focused on concentration only and has paid no attention to wisdom development based on Right View. No matter how much he wishes to become enlightened in the Truth or how persistently he practices *samādhi* hoping to get rid of defilements and to reach *Nibbāna*, he can never attain the Noble Attainments (*ariya*) in Buddhism merely by practicing concentration. If anyone wants to argue this point, can you think of an example of a person who killed defilements, desires, and ignorance with *samādhi* alone?

The Lord Buddha sent His disciples to teach the world about the Truth. He had given them the best tool for teaching, the Noble Eightfold Path. It starts with Right View as the important principle to assure that Dhamma students become wise all around in the principles of the Truth and its causal factors, able to understand the truth about the body and mind and to analyze them as they really are. Wisdom based on Right View is in fact the basis for the establishment and the existence of Buddhism. It is the foundation of Dhamma practice directing toward the fruitions of the Noble Path, *Nibbāna*.

## Listen to Dhamma With Wisdom

In the Lord Buddha's time, those who listened to the Lord Buddha's or His *arahant* disciples' teachings did so attentively and analytically in order to understand the Dhamma while listening, whether the Dhamma was about suffering (*dukkha*) and its cause or the way to end suffering. In so doing, some who used wisdom while listening and were gifted with quick learning (*khippābhiññā*) became enlightened in the Truth at that moment. Others who were the *dandhābhiññā* type could not be enlightened as quickly. Nevertheless, they could recall the Dhamma they had heard and reconsidered it over and over again until they attained the fruition of the Noble Path later on.

So, Dhamma must be listened to with full attention, wisdom, and intelligence in order to absorb it into the mind. It is just like having a container to store rainwater for use all year round. The Dhamma that you have heard must be memorized and recalled wisely at the right time. Without wisdom, it is difficult for a person to understand the fine points of Dhamma no matter how often he hears it or how many Dhamma books he reads. At best he can merely remember and discuss the blatant aspects of Dhamma.

## Know the Value of Dhamma With Wisdom

Nowadays many people are interested in practicing mental development. They organize big or small groups or set up centers for Dhamma practice both inside and outside Buddhist temples. The leaders may be monks or laymen. All centers and groups are led by competent leaders, and all aim at the same goal, *Nibbāna*. Many followers practice seriously with strong determination. But most of them emphasize the practice of concentration (*samādhi*) for a tranquil, tension-free, and one-pointed mind. They may be able to concentrate their minds sometimes but not all the time, because the original nature of the mind is restlessness. It likes to drift along the stream of pleasant and unpleasant thoughts. In the minds of these people there develops the idea that wisdom can arise automatically from a calm mind in *samādhi* practice. They do not realize that not a single person in Buddhist history has ever attained *Nibbāna* in this way. To whom and where did the Lord Buddha and His disciples teach that way? Who attained wisdom from *samādhi* practice? Who reached *Nibbāna* by practicing *samādhi* alone?

There is much evidence in the Buddhist Scriptures about how monks, nuns, male and female novices, and male and female lay devotees had practiced until they became the Noble Ones (*ariya-puggala*). Before they attained the fruition of the Noble path, they all had had Right View. Without wisdom based on Right View it is impossible to follow the right path of practice, for one is like a blind man who is lost in the middle of a jungle or falls in the sea. How can practice without wisdom progress?

## Understand the Noble Ones

We must study the stories of the Noble Ones in the Lord Buddha's time to understand how they had practiced before attaining *Nibbāna*. The Threefold Training (*sikkhāttaya*) of moral precepts, concentration, and wisdom is the path as stated in theory. In practice, however, one starts with wisdom to contemplate things right from the beginning. There are different levels of wisdom: the elementary, the intermediate, and the ultimate. How can one wait for wisdom to occur only on the final level?

If one practices the moral precepts without wisdom, how can one know that one's practice is correct? How can one refrain from physical, verbal, and mental misconduct if one does not have wisdom? If there is wisdom involved in the observance of the precepts, it is meaningless regardless of how many times one requests the verbal precepts from the monks, for the purity of one's virtue does not depend on formally taking the precepts. It would be like throwing a lump of gold to a monkey. The monkey would pick it up, look at it and then throw it away. Monks and laymen who observe the moral precepts without wisdom usually violate them.

The same thing applies to *samādhi* practice. Whether *samādhi*, *jhāna* (meditation), or *samāpatti* (meditative attainment), it is merely a volitional activity that is impermanent and uncertain. It arises and degenerates in a cycle. This sort of practice, if done without wisdom, is like chasing one's own shadow, pointing a flashlight toward the sky, or remaining on vacation for too long. It is a waste of time. If one does not have wisdom in Dhamma



practice, one may be forever caught up in chasing after the states of mind that spin around – arising, remaining and deterioration – without ever being able to find one’s way out.

## Right Interpretation of the Noble Path

*Samādhi* is merely a means to ease suffering temporarily. It cannot eradicate suffering absolutely. It cannot prevent the mind from wrong understanding. If it could, why do some people cling to *samādhi*, thinking incorrectly that wisdom could arise from the calm mind in *samādhi*? Is such understanding right? Is it Right View or is it Wrong View? You must decide this for yourself, for this is the major fork in the road. If one chooses the right way, it will bring one to *Nibbāna*. If one chooses the wrong road and never changes one's mind, it is like falling into a rapid stream while refusing to hold on to the shore. The man will surely flow downstream.

So, the practice for reaching *Nibbāna* relies greatly on wisdom to contemplate things all around. This is a very narrow channel, a precise maneuver, for once one gets into this channel, *Nibbāna* can be expected. Going through a wrong channel makes it impossible to reach *Nibbāna* unless one realizes it and changes in time. There is only one path towards *Nibbāna*. The Lord Buddha and all the Noble Ones in the past passed through this Noble Eightfold Path and taught it to us. The Lord Buddha and the Noble Ones guaranteed the practice according to the Noble Path, and anyone who does not stick to this path can never reach *Nibbāna*.

## Do Not Understand Unreasonably

There are different teachings nowadays, and the method of Dhamma practice mentioned so far is for you to consider. Even though I say that this is the middle path (*Majjhimā Paṭipadā*) directing towards *Nibbāna*, it could be merely words from my own understanding. All teachers of Dhamma practice claim that their ways are right. Therefore, I leave it to you to consider and use your own judgment to decide whether what I say is reasonable or not. The teachings of the Lord Buddha are reasonable and truthful. Every sentence spoken by Him is the truth, be it about worldly or spiritual matters. If the Lord Buddha said that something is wrong, it is always wrong. If He said it is right, it is right. The Lord Buddha said that good causes bring good results and bad causes create bad results. This must always be true. The Lord Buddha preached about happiness, suffering, Hell, Heaven, and *Nibbāna*. They are all true.

Not only the Lord Buddha, but also the *arahant* disciples who followed His teachings, were enlightened in the Truth. The Truth of the Lord Buddha and His disciples was written in the *Tipiṭaka*, the three Divisions of the Buddhist Canon. In it there are truths about wholesomeness in the Sense Sphere (*kāmāvacara-kusala*); for example, giving, practicing the moral precepts, working for the public. There are truths about physical, verbal, and mental unwholesomeness causing beings to exist in the States of Misery (*apāyabhūmi*) – beings in *niraya* (Hell), *peta* (hungry ghosts), *asurakāya* (demons) and *tiracchāna* (animals). The Lord Buddha preached about those proven things so that we will try to abandon evil, to develop virtue, and to practice Dhamma in the right way.

Every Dhamma student should be confident in their own ability. Do not expect any praise or any prediction from others. Even though you may seek help from some teachers, they can only teach you the theory. The practical part is your own responsibility. You must rely on yourself. Nobody can help you get rid of the accumulating defilements (*āsāva-kilesa*) in your mind. You have to develop your wits for Dhamma practice and understand Dhamma clearly, for the Noble Path, the Noble Fruitions, and *Nibbāna* are taught only in Buddhism. A Buddha does not always appear on this Earth. Once a Buddha is born, it will be a long, long time before the coming of the next Buddha. The teachings of all Buddhas in the past, present, or future are the same. The Buddhas taught beings to refrain from all sins, to do good deeds, and to purify the mind. The Lord Buddha had effective teaching methods to suit different personalities.

The Lord Buddha's teachings can be classified into two major categories:

1. The teachings about *kāmāvacara-kusala*.
2. The teachings about *yogāvacara-kusala*.

*Kāmāvacara-kusala* can be explained extensively. But here it is briefly described as any good deed or virtue performed physically, verbally, or mentally. It gives desirable results for those who are still pleased with the Sense Spheres – for example, rebirth as human beings or gods. The effect of their wholesomeness in the past will help relieve their suffering wherever they may be born.

## Don't Be Careless in Life

The Lord Buddha taught about the *yogāvacara* at the higher level of Dhamma. *Yogāvacara* is the one who seeks the way out of the Three Spheres of Beings: the Sense sphere (*kāma-bhava*), the fine Material Sphere (*rūpa-bhava*), and the Immaterial Sphere (*arūpa-bhava*). He will try every way to get out of the Three Spheres. A *yogāvacara* can be a man, woman, monk, novice, nun, or *sīla*-practicing layperson. A *yogāvacara* behaves like a bird or an animal in captivity that restlessly searches for its way out. A caged bird uses its beak to peck at its cage over and over again each day hoping that someday it will be able to escape.

So, a Dhamma student who is a true *yogāvacara* never indulges himself in life. He tries not to attach himself to the materialistic pleasures that the world seems to enjoy. On the contrary, he always finds ways to escape from the “worldly cage”. He uses wisdom to contemplate suffering (*dukkha*) in life and realizes that he has been reborn on this same Earth for so many times, so many aeons in an endless cycle. Each life was different. In some lives he was a very rich man surrounded by abundant sensual pleasure. In others he was but a hopeless poor man who survived by begging for leftover food from kind people. When you give something to a beggar, think about it and think further that you surely had the same miserable experience in your past lives and could have it again in future lives.

## Teach Your Mind With Wisdom

Think often about how you would feel if you were in others' shoes. This is a good reminder for the mind to accept the differences in the state of human beings. Train your mind to see the truth of the world comprehensively, to realize that the world has been like this for a long time, and will be this way forever. Use your wisdom to think about human beings, and you will gain understanding of the inequality of the human state. Some are very rich and have a surplus of wealth. Others are very poor and miserable. Even though they do not wish to be in that situation (i.e., *vibhavatanhā*), they still are because there was the prior cause for it.

It is human nature to do and take whatever one is pleased with without an understanding that it is the cause of further suffering. But when suffering comes as a result, nothing can change it, and one must bear it. So, a Dhamma student must teach his mind until he is perceptive with regard to the cause-and-effect relationships of all activities. The well-trained mind is wise and knows all around. Before one believes in anything, one must think it over, as stated in the Pali:

***“Nisamma karaṇaṃ seyyo”***

**“One must think carefully before believing anything.”**

It is the original nature of the mind to reach out indiscriminately for all sense objects, pleasant or unpleasant. If the object is unpleasant, the mind suffers. It is just like an innocent baby who grasps everything, even dirt, and puts it into its mouth. If one's mind does not have wisdom to control it, one will think, say, and

do according to what desires and defilements direct them to with no sense of right and wrong. Later on, when bad results occur, one may realize it but it is often too late to use wisdom to cope with it.

So those who want to train their minds in the *yogāvacara* way must be highly responsible persons who have a meticulous and sophisticated strategy. When the mind suffers from depression or anxiety, wisdom must be used to reflect on the cause of the suffering. Teach the mind with wisdom and train it to be prepared not to repeat the same cause again. Wisdom must be ready to solve the problem in time before feelings of greed, passion, hatred, and delusion ever get a chance to intrude in the mind. Those feelings, once arisen, subside only with difficulty if you do not have enough intelligence to cope with them. However, when a feeling does happen, you must try to look carefully into its cause with wisdom before *sāṅkhāra-citta* (compounded thinking of the mind) expands and elaborates on the cause, just like quickly extinguishing a fire before it spreads. So, if a feeling of love and passion begins to form, you must quickly use wisdom to stop it, for if you let the feeling become too intense, the mind will sink deeply in sensuality, and feelings of greed, hatred, passion, and delusion will follow. The mind suffers and is caught up in defilements and desires 24 hours a day. One becomes attached to, dreams about, and longs for more sensual pleasure.

## Intelligence Comes From One's Own Wisdom

The use of wisdom to teach the mind is the important principle. If wisdom is not sharp, it is not powerful enough to destroy the old views in the mind, because the mind has been attached to sensuality for a long time. It is just like very dirty clothes that cannot be washed clean by a small amount of detergent. So, weak wisdom is inadequate for developing the mind that has been covered densely with defilements and craving. Even though one may memorize the knowledge and the wisdom of the teachers, others' wisdom cannot be used to clean defilements and desires out of one's own mind. One must develop wisdom of one's own, as in the story of *Phra Pōthila* in the Lord Buddha's time.

*Phra Pōthila* had studied the Dhamma of the Lord Buddha and the Noble Ones extensively until he was very proficient in "borrowed" Dhamma and was a great Dhamma lecturer in that time. *Pōthila* had a close friend who also entered the monkhood. His friend studied the practical side of the Dhamma and went out in the woods for austere practice. Not too long afterwards he became an *arahant*. Later on, *Pōthila* heard the news about his friend coming out of the woods. *Pōthila* arrogantly thought, "My friend is stupid. Why did he not acquire knowledge for himself from studying? How can he ever gain knowledge from sitting and closing his eyes in the woods? I must go to see him and test his knowledge." He then left for his friend's place. At that time the Lord Buddha knew by insight (*ñāṇa*) about *Pōthila's* idea, and he knew beforehand that *Pōthila* would ridicule his friend when the *arahant* could not answer *Pōthila's* questions about studied knowledge (*pariyatti*). The Lord knew that *Pōthila's* act would be



so sinful that it would lead him to Hell, and so He intended to stop it. The Lord then went and arrived at the same time as *Pōthila*. After the two monks paid homage to the Lord Buddha, He started to ask the *arahant* questions. The *arahant* answered the Lord's questions very fluently, correctly, and completely, and the Lord praised him and said, "My son, you have finished all the work that needs to be done."

*Pōthila*, listening to the Lord Buddha's profound questions and his friend's sharp answers, became very worried. If similar questions were directed to him, he would not be able to answer them. Then came his turn. *Pōthila* almost fainted because of his shame at not being able to answer the Lord's questions. He sweated heavily in panic, just like a rain-wet baby bird, paid respect to the Lord Buddha and said, "I cannot answer the questions, my Lord." The Lord Buddha said then, "*Pōthila*, knowledge from studying without practicing is knowledge that cannot demolish defilements, desires, and ignorance in the mind, and so it cannot purify the mind. Such knowledge is simply a book that you carry with you."

Having heard the Lord Buddha's words, *Pōthila* was aware of his mistake and decided that from then on, he would not teach Dhamma, but would attentively practice Dhamma to reach *Nibbāna*.

*Pōthila* traveled on to search for a teacher who would teach him the practice of Dhamma, but no one accepted him as his student. Eventually he met an *arahant* novice and asked if he could be his student. Being an *arahant*, the novice knew well how to get rid of *Pōthila's* egocentric pride. He did so by forcing *Pōthila* to wade

in the pond several times until *Pōthila* abandoned all his pride. After that the novice taught him the Dhamma practice, and soon *Pōthila* reached the state of *arahant*. This happened in the Lord Buddha's time.

*Pōthila's* story is a good example. I am in no position to say whether there are any "Phra *Pōthilas*" nowadays, but it is not difficult to find "Mr. *Pōthilas*" or "Mrs. *Pōthilas*" whose egocentric pride not only comes from too much studying, but also from status, wealth, rank, and position. There are many other ways that egocentric pride can develop. Without sharp wisdom one can expect that acquisition, rank, praise, and happiness can all give rise to egocentric pride.

## Confusion in the Methods of Practice

Many Dhamma students are not sure about the methods of practice. They all want the method that is correct and goes straight to *Nibbāna*. None wants to waste time on any curves. When you ask ten teachers, you may get ten different “direct” ways and become confused about Dhamma practice. You may become unsure about which is right and which is wrong, or which is direct and which is indirect. This confusion and uncertainty can deter one from exerting all one’s effort and patience into the practice. One dares not decide which method to follow strictly and so practices Dhamma on and off with a doubtful mind. This delays the practice, and perhaps defilements may mislead one to believe that one has not accumulated enough wholesome causes in the past to practice Dhamma successfully, and so gives up completely. Instead of entering the Dhamma stream in this present life, one is satisfied just to do wholesome things now for better future lives.

So, a Dhamma student must use their own wisdom and reason to decide about the method of practice for himself. He must understand the steps in Dhamma practice. Even though he may not be strong enough to attain the Final Goal – the cessation of suffering – now, at least he is holding on to the right thing and continuously practicing it with perseverance. Therefore, the wise path is to analyze the methods of practice to select the right way to build up self-confidence. At first you must study the way wise men have followed and understand the basic steps until you are confident that they are right. Then practice accordingly, always using your own reason wisely. You must rely on yourself and your

ability and reason to avoid mistakes, to get rid of indecisiveness, and not to waste time on practicing on and off.

A Dhamma student must look at things within and without in all aspects. They must use wisdom for critical reflection in accordance with the Truth, because the Truth lies in everything. No one can change it, neither can anyone have control over it. For example, aging, illness, and death occur naturally. Nothing can stop them or keep them unchanged forever. It is beyond anyone's capacity to change them. No matter how much one does not want them, one cannot get what one wishes. There is nothing in this world that can go on as one wishes. On the contrary, one is always disappointed regardless of how hard one tries to have one's wishes come true. The Lord Buddha said, "Suffering comes from not getting what one wishes." So, you must use wisdom to think critically about your needs. Even if some needs are met, how can you maintain the joy of having them met? Soon suffering will follow.

When you acquire and possess anything, don't be sure yet that it is really yours. In the worldly sense, it is. But a wise Dhamma student will reflect critically about what happens to him or what he gets and what effect can be expected. For each cause, there is always an effect, and one must use wisdom to plan ahead and to prepare for the way out. This helps ease suffering as we live on Earth. Those who suffer either physically or mentally and lament strongly are the ones who have latched on to this world. Those who intend to go beyond the stream of the world must know the world in all its aspects. They must learn that they can take nothing in the world as their own. Everything is an illusion. Worldly objects

change according to the law of impermanence (*anicca*). It is natural that people are disappointed about what they lose, for they do not know that suffering is the result of attachment: the greater the attachment, the greater the suffering which follows.

You live in this world, and you must know it well with your wisdom. Think analytically about it. Is there any object in this world that is really yours, that you can take with you forever? You must consider causal relationships and see clearly that everything is merely for use temporarily. Nothing is yours forever. Those who misunderstand things as being theirs attach to that idea firmly without any insight into the truth of the impermanence and “not-selfness” (*anattā*) of all things. When “their” things degenerate with time, they lament uncontrollably.

## Live in the World Without Getting Lost in the World

A Dhamma student must be a careful person who discerns things reasonably to decrease the suffering of the mind. It is like going into the jungle. One must mark the way in so that one can find the way out. Otherwise, one will get lost in the jungle. We have been lost in this world for a long time. Even though we have passed through the gate of this world many times already, we are not wise enough to realize that the gateway out of it is in fact the Three Characteristics (*tilakkhaṇa*), which are the guarantee of the truth. These are the signposts for those who want to leave the wheel of rebirth (*vaṭṭa-samsāra*). They are the center of the Three Spheres of Being: the Sense Sphere, the Fine Material Sphere, and the Immaterial Formless Sphere. All of these spheres follow the rule of the *tilakkhaṇa*. Among the three spheres, the Sense Sphere should be most emphasized because we are most interested in it.

The Sense Sphere is subdivided into many levels: heavenly beings, human beings, animals and hungry ghosts. Each is further subdivided into many groups, but all are under the rule of the *tilakkhaṇa*. Life in the Sense Sphere is full of suffering (*dukkha*) in body and mind. There is no freedom of the mind and body and this makes life hard to endure. One must struggle for a living from day to day. For human beings and animals whose bodies are composed of visible and rough materials, the struggling is evident physically.

As for those who are considerably clever, they can acquire the physical requisites to nurture their bodies. For them, money may not be the problem, but still their lives may not always go smoothly. They may have other problems: family quarrels, infidelity, problem children, etc. Suffering from family affairs is certain to happen. Even if one does not experience it in this life, one will in future lives. Or if one does not suffer from family problems, one will suffer due to other issues like illness. There are so many rich people lying ill in the hospitals. You must contemplate all of this to let the mind realize the hardships of life, both yours and that of others.

## Unavoidable Suffering

Unavoidable suffering is the suffering that comes with the aggregate of body and mind (*khandha*). It occurs to even a wealthy person replete with sensual pleasures. The body that is occupied by the mind experiences this kind of suffering because the body and mind are themselves the site and the source of suffering. Although no one wants to suffer and everyone tries to stay away from suffering by, for example, resorting to sensual pleasure in form, sound, smell, taste, and touch, one can never succeed. No one can avoid this suffering because it is the truth of the *khandha*. It appears openly all the time whether we are standing, walking, sitting, or lying down. One changes one's bodily posture to avoid suffering, but this succeeds only temporarily. Not one single posture can be regarded as a pleasant posture. One suffers from standing too long. One also suffers from walking, sitting, or lying down too long.

Where can one find happiness from the aggregate of body and mind? Pleasant forms, sounds, smells, tastes, and tactile sensations are merely temporary retreats from suffering. But they are not good, because they intensify suffering even more. Instead of extinguishing the fire, they add more fuel to it. Therefore, it is unwise to extinguish the fire this way. One must realize that one's pleasure in forms, sounds, smells, tastes, and tactile sensations is merely a means to put the suffering out of the mind temporarily. Eventually the external senses become good sources of suffering. From these sensory receptors arise delight or sadness that increases passion, hatred, and delusion. The Lord Buddha said that if the six sense receptors – eyes, ears, nose, tongue, body,



and mind – were not controlled, and instead were allowed to latch on to forms, sounds, smells, tastes, tactile sensations, and mental objects, suffering would surely result. These things also invite other suffering into the mind. So, try to use wisdom to contemplate the truth of suffering so as to comprehend it fully.

Aging, illness, and death are also unavoidable suffering. No matter how much one is afraid of them, one cannot escape them. Their cause is being and birth. Aging, illness, and death are the result of being of the Three Spheres of Existence. So, a Dhamma student, not wanting suffering, must contemplate birth to understand clearly the state of his present life so as to get rid of attachment (*upādāna*) to future lives. With sharp wisdom, one can cut across the stream of attachments that cause the cycle of birth. One then becomes *anālayo*, no more clinging to any worldly object. At this stage one is ready to destroy the cause of birth, as stated in the Pali:

***“Samūlaṃ taṅhaṃ abbuyha”***

“One who has pulled out the desires and their roots completely.”

This is the end of the practice. To reach this end, one must have the right start – that is, Right View. One must stick to the Truth firmly. Although the worldly stream is taking you downstream, you must try to go against it. Do not let your mind drift along with the flow of defilements and desires. Use wisdom to contemplate suffering and its cause all the time. The Lord Buddha regarded suffering as the main and important principle in Dhamma practice. In Enlightenment, the Lord Buddha discovered the Four Noble

Truths (*ariya-sacca*): suffering (*dukkha*), the cause of suffering (*samudaya*), the cessation of suffering (*nirodha*) and the path to cessation of suffering (*magga*). As Dhamma students, you should already know the meanings of these words. If you take each of them to contemplate, you will come to see clearly the techniques of the practice.

## Extinguish Suffering and Its Cause With Wisdom

The Lord Buddha took suffering as his first point because it is something that appears blatantly in the body and mind. It has occurred continuously since birth and as a result of birth. Always use wisdom to think analytically about suffering. If you are not aware of the suffering happening to your body and mind, you will never know the cause of suffering. And if you do not know the cause of suffering, the suffering due to birth will surely happen to you again and again. A Dhamma student must try to understand this point because it is the point of returning to the state of being. The word “*vaṭṭa*” means, “cycling.” Each being recycles at this point; its ignorance is the cause for the cycling of lives. The result of the ignorance is that one is cycling endlessly in the wheel of rebirth. So, the cause of suffering is the important turning point, the very subtle one that can be understood by the refined insight of wisdom. The cause of suffering, when known, can be destroyed with sharp wisdom, and the cycle is torn apart.

To know and see the Noble Truths requires sharpness of wisdom to discern and analyze the truth in terms of cause and effect. One must think analytically about suffering, its cause, and the techniques to eliminate its cause. *Nirodha*, or the cessation of suffering, is the final result that one needs not be concerned about. It is the Dhamma known only for oneself when one’s practice reaches a point of fullness. When one reaches that point, *nirodha* will be the Dhamma that destroys defilements completely. Even though one has never learned the meaning of *nirodha* before, at that point it will not be a problem. *Nirodha* is the

destination at the end of the road. When walking along the road there is no need to worry about the destination. One needs not anticipate what it is like. As long as one follows the right way, one will see the end of the road for oneself, with no need to ask anyone what the end is like, what freedom from suffering, defilement, craving, and ignorance in the mind is like, or how purity with no states of being and birth will be experienced. These are things that should not be conjectured about. In the very second that one reaches the level of the Noble Ones, one knows for oneself with no need to ask anyone at all.

The important thing is to practice the Dhamma in accordance with the Noble Path. The Four Foundations of Mindfulness (*satipaṭṭhāna*): body, feeling, mind, and Dhamma, are also incorporated into the Noble Path. Right Thought, Right Speech, Right Action, Right Livelihood, Right Effort, Right Mindfulness, and Right Concentration in the Noble Path are controlled by Right View. Right View is like the airplane captain or the automobile driver who alone knows where to go can take all of his passengers to the destination safely. Right View is therefore the “compass” of the Noble Path, followed by Right Thought in contemplating causality in line with the Truth. So, wisdom based on Right View is the most important step.

With wise contemplation, any pain or suffering – headache, toothache, aching of other parts of the body, of yourself, of others or of animals – is narrowed down to only one cause – that is, the state of being born. One must use wisdom to discern suffering due to birth and use it often as the technique to teach one’s mind

to see things as they really are. In doing so, one will be awed by the suffering due to birth.

If you rely on what I write or what I understand, you will not be able to reach the state of *paccattam* (knowing for oneself). So, I want you to rely on your own wisdom. Knowing and seeing suffering clearly with your own wisdom will make you feel dispassionate about being born again. When this happens there is a way to cut across the stream of rebirths easily.

## Sharpen Wisdom To Kill Defilements and Craving

There are many causes of birth, but I will give brief explanations only of three: craving for sensuality (*kāma-taṇhā*), craving for existence (*bhava-taṇhā*), and craving for non-existence (*vibhava-taṇhā*). Apart from these I will leave it up to you to develop your own wisdom by contemplating things on your own. I have given you a knife and a knife sharpener. It is your own work to sharpen your knife and to use it to cut things by yourself – that is, to sharpen your wisdom for the contemplation of the causes of rebirth. I have given you a pen and paper. You must try to write by yourself. At first your handwriting may not be pretty, the spelling not all correct, and the style not smooth, but you should keep trying until you eventually become skilled. The same analogy holds for reading or doing anything. Firm intent is what matters.

Craving for sensuality (*kāma-taṇhā*) is subdivided into two categories:

1. Sensual objects (*vatthu-kāma*)
2. Sensual moods (*kilesa-kamā*).

The first is any object or physical property that one is attached to. You must contemplate only the objects for which you crave because your purpose is to reduce the craving and attachment, which are based on those objects. You must analyze the objects down to the truth - that is, *dukkham* (the state of being hard-to-endure or suffering), *aniccam* (the state of impermanence) and *anattā* (the state of being not-self). To contemplate the *dukkha*

of an object, try to see that the object does not really belong to you. If you are very pleased with it and your mind becomes attached to it, you will suffer a great deal when you happen to lose or damage it. Some may cry uncontrollably or faint. This is the suffering one will get if one does not contemplate it beforehand.

## There Is No Happiness in Sensual Pleasure

Sensual moods are the condition in which the mind is pleased and attached to sensual pleasure in form, sound, smell, taste, and touch. The mind enjoys the mood of affection, love, and sexual desire and tries to seek more. Minds deluded in this way are common in the world. The Lord Buddha and his *arahant* disciples also had desires for objects and sensual pleasure before they reached *Nibbāna*, but with sharp wisdom they were able to cut the attachment to those desires.

You must therefore be prepared. Try to use your wisdom to analyze things down to the truth in order to get rid of your old understanding about them. Try to uproot the mind's attachment to such desires by teaching it until it knows and sees clearly the harmful consequence of sensual pleasures. This is the simple means of contemplation that helps develop wisdom more and more elaborately. One must use one's own wisdom that has been built up as a weapon to kill defilements and desires in one's mind. One cannot borrow others' wisdom. If you have sufficient wisdom to fight against your enemy – defilements and desires – you are wise in terms of Dhamma practice.

Craving for the state of existence is the state of mind that is satisfied with its present state of being and does not want to change. One craves to be in the same state forever. For example, one likes being a human being and so craves to be born in the human world again. It does not interest them at all when people talk about how happy Heaven or the Brahma world is. One is pleased with the present world and becomes very attached to it.



When one dies, one's mind is still attached to one's worldly objects, including one's beloved descendants and belongings. One wishes to be reborn in the same family line again. One's mind is attached to the acquisitions, social status, praise, and happiness one has (*suvaṇṇatā susaratā susaṅghānaṃ surūpatā adhipaccarṇaṃ parivāro*) and wishes to have the same things always.

Another example is an angel in Heaven who enjoys heavenly happiness and wishes to be in the same state forever. Nevertheless, the state of being an angel is not maintained by wishing. It is maintained by one's past virtues. The truth about impermanence operates all the time, and no one can always have their wish come true. They are forced to depart from what they like or where they like to be. Since one's mind is smothered with delusion and ignorance, wherever one is reborn one tends to be attached to one's new state of being and forgets about one's past lives. One is always content with the present state. So, one must use wisdom to contemplate the present state of being to which one has fallen in order to develop the mind to know and see clearly the truth about that state of being.

## Craving Always Causes Suffering

Craving for non-existence is the craving not to be born in an undesirable state. For instance, an angel in the heavenly state does not want to be in the human state. Rich people enjoying sensual pleasure do not want to be born in poor families. They do not want to be handicapped or be reborn in the four lower worlds: Hell, *peta*, *asurakāya* or the animal state. Nevertheless, one must be born in the state in accordance with one's past actions. Bad deeds exert their effect as rebirth in a state of misery. No one can demand the state they wish. We are just like prisoners who cannot demand the living conditions – food, bed, etc. – we like. The same thing applies to human action. One has to experience the result of one's bad actions until their effects are exhausted. Those who are not wise enough to see this causal relation indulge themselves in sensuality, and do unwholesome things. When the time for the bad effects come, they can hardly endure the suffering.

So, a Dhamma student must use wisdom to contemplate the causes of the suffering. Craving for sensuality, existence, and non-existence are the three sources from which all beings – human, animal, etc. – build up the causes of suffering during their lives. Craving is the cause of the cycling of birth in the Three Spheres of Being. If the cause is abolished, the Three Spheres no longer exist. This brief description of the three types of craving – *kāma-taṇhā*, *bhava-taṇhā* and *vibhava-taṇhā* – should give you some understanding of the way of practice. These three forms of craving are a turning wheel, which keeps us spinning in circles.

Most people misunderstand that craving brings happiness. Just think carefully. Who gets true happiness from craving? Contemplate things with wisdom to let the mind realize that the craving, which directs your life, can never bring happiness. At present we lack wisdom and so are dragged along by craving.

Defilements and craving have pulled us around the Three Spheres of Being for a long time and will go on endlessly. Do you want to leave your life in the hands of defilements and craving? Why do you not use wisdom to contemplate the past, present, and future of your existence? What things of value did you ever get from your past lives?

Once in existence, beings must busy themselves with the day-to-day struggle to stay alive. Before long, their bodies age, become ill, and die, and the dead bodies accumulate in the soil. No one can ever take any possession with them. This happened in our past lives, is happening now, and will happen again in future lives. Things are changing. There is nothing certain enough to cling to. They change according to the principle of *anicca*, and lead only to despair. To believe that the four elements (*dhātu*) and the five aggregates (*khandha*) comprising one's body and mind are one's own is only a misunderstanding coming from delusion and ignorance. Neither is in any way one's own. Knowing of this truth will make one abandon attachment and possessiveness. As a matter of fact, *anattā* (not-selfness) announces itself openly. One can witness it in the cemeteries and the crematoriums, where everybody ends up. Where then is one's self (*attā*)? Although one is alive now and still has a living body, soon this "self" will be

meaningless. So, try to use wisdom in examining the truth to develop the mind until it knows and sees in terms of the Four Noble Truths.

## Seeing Through Conventional Truth

A Dhamma student must understand the principles of *sammuti* (meaning convention, conventional truth, supposition) so that he is not deluded by it. Life depends on *sammuti*. So as long as we are alive, we should try to understand these things for what they are. Things in life are interrelated and temporary. Soon, they will depart no matter how much you cry and regret their departure. A Dhamma student must therefore be prepared to face this situation. When it comes, he will not suffer excessively.

We must take care of our belongings with responsibility and acquire them by honest and moral means. At the same time, we must always realize that our possessions are merely a supposition or *sammuti*. We ourselves are our own *sammuti*, and others are theirs. Everyone has the right to make use of *sammuti* for his own benefit in honest ways. One should use wisdom to contemplate *sammuti* in the world and understand it clearly as it is. In so doing there is a way to terminate delusion. If we know and understand how the stream of the world cycles, we are seeking the channel to get out of the Three Spheres of Existence. We are contemplating the very point in which the mind has been deluded to see which aspects of the world we still do not understand, which forms of *sammuti* we are still using to obscure the truth, keeping ourselves in a world of dreams and infatuations. As long as worldly *sammuti* obscures the truth, the truth cannot appear to the mind and the mind will be blind about the world forever.

Therefore, Dhamma practice must have a good foundation. One cannot eradicate defilements, craving, ignorance, and attachment

by unreasonable understanding. Many say irresponsibly that when the mind attains tranquility in *samādhi* practice, it will be purified. Both the teachers and the followers of this school of thought misunderstand the matter. The misunderstanding of one teacher leads to the misunderstanding of thousands of people. The teaching that the mind becomes purified by *samādhi* is against the Lord Buddha's teachings. The Lord taught "*paññāya parisujjhati*," meaning "The mind is purified by wisdom." The mind is not purified by *samādhi*.

It is often said that *samādhi* frees the mind from sensation, defilements, desires, ignorance, and all compounded thoughts. Those who say so forget about the hermits who are very skillful in *samādhi* practice to such high levels of tranquility as *rūpa-jhāna* (absorption of the Fine Material Sphere) and *arūpa-jhāna* (absorption of the Immaterial Formless Sphere). But no hermits attain purity of the mind by *samādhi*. Such a principle does not exist in Buddhism, and there is no reason it should be taught so as to mislead people. Purity of mind happens only to an *arahant*. Even the *sotāpanna*, *sakadāgāmī*, and *anāgāmī* (the three lower levels of the Noble Ones) do not yet have absolute purity of mind. A Dhamma student must understand this, which is the right view in accordance with the Noble Path, in order to attain the Noble Fruitions in the future.

## Concluding Remarks

Nowadays the Noble Path and its fruitions are interpreted differently. When the mind of a person reaches a tranquil state in *samādhi*, his mind is free temporarily. At this point they may think that they have reached a certain stage of Dhamma or attained definite insight in line with what they studied before. They compare their mind with what they have studied about the *arahant* or other Noble Ones. The word “*paccattam*” (knowing for oneself) is meaningless for him. He wants the teacher to proclaim his Dhamma level. In fact, this is not the behavior of a Noble One.

Dhamma students must understand clearly what it means to attain the level of the Noble Ones. If not, they may misunderstand the brightness or tranquility of the mind as a result of *samādhi* as a Noble Attainment. Or when a mental image appears to them in *samādhi*, they may think that they have attained certain insight knowledge.

The differences in Dhamma practice are due to different interpretations of Dhamma. In many places, signs are put up such as “*Vipassanā* School” (meaning school for insight or wisdom development), but in reality, they do not practice insight development at all. They practice concentration by means of fixing the mind on certain themes to reach a tranquil state of the mind. This is a misuse of words. There is a difference between “*vipassanā*” and “*samatha*,” the latter means concentration development. The two have different means of practice.

To practice *samatha*, one uses mindfulness to fix the mind on certain *parikamma* words or on the breath. Mindfulness of breathing (*ānāpāna-sati*) is the means to keep the mind with the present to avoid thinking about other things. When the mind withdraws from tranquility, one then practices *vipassanā*.

To practice *vipassanā* one uses wisdom to contemplate things all around in accordance with the truth – the *tilakkhaṇa*, consisting of *dukkhaṃ*, *aniccaṃ* and *anattā*; or the truth about one’s own birth, aging, illness and death, and that of others; or the truth about the foulness of one’s own body, and that of others. The practice is for the mind to see all things as having the same basic nature. The techniques of the contemplation must make use of memory, supposition, and compounded thinking about the past, present, and future. These tools are a double-edged sword. If used in the wrong way, they can be harmful. For example, memories about forms, sounds, smells, tastes, and tactile sensation can invite defilements and desires into the mind giving rise to sexual desire, passion, and attachment.

When there are sights that we love and sounds that appeal to us, our memories of them will be hard to forget. If we are infatuated with a sight, the memory of it will be firmly impressed on the heart. When this is the case, *sammuti* will arise concerning where you saw that beautiful form, what sort of complexion she had, what sort of figure, or what you said to each other. Once these *sammuti* arise, *saṅkhāra* expands on and elaborates them, imagining that you said things which you didn’t or made contact when no contact took place. Your mind, which is already imbued with passion, delusion, and ignorance, feels even more longing



and attachment for that form. What has actually happened is that the mind has simply been painting pictures and falling for its own pictures, so that it becomes caught up in its dreams and attachments, while its sensual desires grow deeper and deeper day by day, becoming more and more difficult to uproot.

A Dhamma student must use wisdom to find a deft way to eradicate harmful memories, suppositions, and fabricated thoughts from the mind, using mindfulness to restrain the heart and wisdom to contemplate the negative side of sights, sounds, etc., at all times.

You have seen so many deaths in your life. Why do you not contemplate the death of others and refer it to your own impending death, so that your mind can gain a sense of the awesomeness of death? We enjoy bodily pleasures because we do not think about our own death. From now on use *sammuti* to think about death in order to decrease defilements and craving. This is the technique of using *sammuti* to eradicate *sammuti*.

We are used to letting *saṅkhāra* fabricate our thinking about form and sound until the mind is full of passion and desire. From now on, change your thinking. See it from the other side. Think against the stream. You have thought about beauty that fills your mind with passion and desire. From now on you will think about the foulness of the body and the suffering of the body and mind. Think about the impermanence of everything. Think about *anattā*, the lack of self. Nothing really belongs to you, not your property, nor even your body. Let the mind realize this not-selfness. Soon it will depart. You depend on it only while you are alive. This is the technique of thinking in the Dhamma way to

counteract *saṅkhāra*. Use thinking to counteract thinking. Those who want to get away from this world must know it in all aspects so as to make the mind awed and weary of being born, as stated in the Pali:

**“*Natthi loke raho nāma*”**

“There are no secrets in the world.”

Use wisdom to unmask completely the secrets of the world.

This is to suggest a way to practice *samatha* (concentration) and *vipassanā* (insight) using the words of conventional truth to talk about or to teach Dhamma practice in the right way, so that those who follow the teaching will not misunderstand. Do not be like a blind man leading the blind. There is some hope of success if those with good eyes lead the blind, but at any rate if you do not make it to the goal, make sure at least that you do not let the blind lead you back to where you came from. Many people still misunderstand Dhamma practice. They think that wisdom arises from calmness of the mind in *samādhi*. If it were true, why is it that the non-Buddhist hermits have never attained wisdom?

In *vipassanā* practice, one uses wisdom to contemplate, think, and review causality reasonably and intelligently in accordance with the Truth. You already have wisdom and mindfulness, but you have not used them in Dhamma practice. You use them to think in the worldly sense all day without knowing that this brings sadness and sorrow to the mind. You think actively about sensual pleasure in line with your defilements and compounded thoughts. Why can you not do the same thing in the Dhamma sense? You

have tied the knots and so must learn how to untie them. You have coated yourself with dirt, and so must know how to clean yourself. You know that you are drifting along in the stream of the world, so you must turn around and go against the stream. Do not let your mind flow downstream to the lower places.

Teach yourself to contemplate things with wisdom over and over again. When you do so, wisdom gradually increases, as in learning to read and write a foreign language. You develop skill by reading and writing often. You may stumble when beginning your contemplations; for instance, you may contemplate in fits and starts, pondering for a while and then forgetting about it, without any technique for expanding on your insights. In the beginning it is bound to be like this, but after you have contemplated again and again, you are sure to become skilled. The wisdom of Right View that is developed in this way is the important basis. If you do not have it, you cannot develop your mind after you withdraw from concentration. But if you do, then after each concentration exercise you can discern things with wisdom. When you are tired of contemplation, you shift to concentration again.

This is the principle of wisdom supporting concentration and concentration supporting wisdom. The two support each other. Crude wisdom supports crude concentration. Intermediate wisdom supports intermediate concentration. In turn, crude concentration supports crude wisdom; intermediate concentration supports intermediate wisdom; and subtle concentration supports subtle wisdom. So *samatha* and *vipassanā* connect in practice. Whichever comes first depends on yourself.

You should observe yourself to see what is right for you. Remember that you must develop your own wisdom in Dhamma practice.

In this book, I have not explained what happens as the result of Dhamma practice, for I have already done so in my other books: “Going Against the Stream,” “Cutting Off the Stream” and “Crossing the Stream.” I am ready to answer any questions you may have from reading my books. Both the writer and the readers aim principally at having Right View. So, may I bless you and my Dhamma students who have contributed to the printing of this book. May you be able to know the Truth with sharp wisdom by relying on your own ability, in line with the truth that one must be one’s own mainstay. Remember that others can merely guide you, but serious practice is your own duty.

Even if you have only a little intelligence, let it be intelligence of high quality, which is better than a great deal of intelligence which you cannot use properly. The techniques in Dhamma practice must be specifically used to eradicate defilements and craving. Do not blindly follow the Dhamma learned from books to the point where you forget about your objective to fight against defilement and craving attack, use wisdom to destroy them right there immediately. Do not allow them to gain strength. In so doing, you will become a real Dhamma student. May whatever Noble Fruition you are capable of attaining in this life be yours to know for yourself.

## Appendix: Methods of Concentration Development

### Walking Meditation (*Caṅkama*)

#### Preparation for *Caṅkama* Walk

The path for *caṅkama* walk should be about 1 meter wide and 15 meters long. It should be smooth so that the walker is not worried about stumbling while walking. To get started, stand at one end of the path facing the other end; the two palms are joined at the chest or forehead as a token of reverence to the Lord Buddha. Then make the following commitment:

“I now intend to practice a *caṅkama* walk as a tribute to the purity of the Lord Buddha, Dhamma, and the Noble Ones; also to the virtues of my parents, teachers, and those who have been kind to me. May I be able to develop mindfulness, calmness, and the ability to know and see the Truth clearly. May the wholesomeness of my act inspire all beings to forgive one another and be happy.”

Then put your hands down, the right hand grasping the back of the left in front of the body as when one stands in a solemn manner. Keep the mind in a neutral mood. Do not let it incline to any pleasant or unpleasant thought. Think, “From this moment on I will set aside all other thoughts but the intention to practice a *caṅkama* walk.” Then follow these steps:

1. Mindfully breathe in slowly, thinking “*Bud*”

Mindfully breathe out slowly, thinking “*dho*”

Mindfully breathe in slowly, thinking “*Dham*”

Mindfully breathe out slowly, thinking “*mo*”

Mindfully breathe in slowly, thinking “*Saṅ*”

Mindfully breathe out slowly, thinking “*gho*”

2. Do 1. 3-7 times or more to bring *Buddho, Dhammo, Saṅgho* together into the mind.
3. Then do only the “*Bud*” – “*dho*” part and start walking according to one of the following methods.

### **First Method of *Caṅkama* Walk**

Mindfully take a step, thinking “*Bud*” then another, thinking “*dho.*” Do this over and over as you walk along the path. At any time, your attention is not on your step, you know that you have lost *sati* or mindfulness, and you must start again until your mind is fixed firmly on every step. Do not walk too fast or too slow. Walk at your regular speed.

This is a method of concentration development in which the act of walking is used as the object of attention. When you reach one end of the walking path, turn around by always making a right turn, and walk back and forth.

### **Second Method of *Caṅkama* Walk**

In this method, one uses breathing instead of walking as the object of attention. Think “*Bud*” as you breathe in, and “*dho*” as

you breathe out. In this way, you concentrate on your breath and *parikamma* word – “*Bud*” – “*dho*” as a practice of concentration. When you get tired of walking, simply stand still, but continue fixing your mind on “*Bud*” – “*dho*” as before.

### **Third Method of *Caṅkama* Walk**

In this method, one concentrates on a part of one’s body. Pick any part that you feel is easy for you to concentrate on. This body part will be used as the object of attention, at which mindfulness and the “knowing” nature of the mind will stay together.

For a beginner, first practice by imagining the physical appearance of the body part: for example, its color, texture and location. By doing this over and over again, you can fix your mind on that part more quickly, either with or without closing your eyes. When you gain enough skill for one part, you can then move on to do the same for other parts. Seeing all body parts as having the same basic characteristics by this method provides a good foundation for wisdom or insight development (*vipassanā*). This method does not depend on walking steps as the object of attention. Instead, it uses the name of the body part – for example, “*taco*” meaning “skin,” “*aṭṭhi*” meaning “bone” – as the *parikamma* word.

### **Fourth Method of *Caṅkama* Walk**

In this method, one concentrates on the mental objects – crude or delicate, pleasant or unpleasant – that arise in one’s mind. Just be mindful of the arising of mental objects, but do not think about

their source, because in doing so you will intensify that feeling even more. Any mental object has its cause. Therefore, you must be mindful enough to know and see clearly the cause of a mental object and watch how it can expand.

The cause here means the inner cause that already resides in the mind. There is fuel ready in the mind; that is, craving for more sensual objects and sensual moods. The mind has been craving for its food in terms of forms, sounds, smells, tastes, and tactile sensations for a long, long time – for innumerable past lives. Similarly, in one’s present life it craves for “hot” mental objects through the eyes, ears, nose, tongue, and body. This has been impressed profoundly in the mind and serves as the inner cause of all mental objects. Forms, sounds, smells, tastes, and tactile sensations merely trigger the inner cause. When one perceives anything from the senses, one’s mind tends to hold onto the perception and think about it until it is fastened in the mind.

The mental object is where the mind is. Therefore, when one concentrates on a mental object, one is actually watching one’s mind. While watching it, one should be aware when greed, anger, passion, or delusion occur in the mind. One must be mindful enough to spot any “invader” of the mind and tone it down until it fades away. It is important, however, that you not let the mind think about the source of the mental object, which could be form, sound, smell, taste, touch, or jealousy, because the feeling will be more intensified and can do more harm to the mind. The right way is to concentrate exclusively on the mental object as it arises in the mind. Fix your attention on it until you see clearly what it



is really like. Soon it will lose strength and die down. This is the “inner war” or the confrontation between mindfulness and mental objects. Whether you will win or lose depends on the strength of your mindfulness.

At the end of a *caṅkama* walk, stand at one end of the path facing the other end. Again, put the two palms together to pay respect to the Lord Buddha as when you start, and say:

“I have finished a *caṅkama* walk as a tribute to the purity of the Lord Buddha, Dhamma and the Noble Ones. May this practice of mine be a blessing to myself as well as my parents, my teachers, and all who have been kind to me. May heavenly beings, small and large animals, and those who dislike me also be blessed by this wholesome act.”

Then walk away from the path mindfully to continue concentration practice by sitting.

## **Sitting Meditation**

### **Preparation for Sitting**

The seat for sitting practice should be neat and clean so that one has no worry about it while sitting. To start, one pays respect to the Lord Buddha by repeating some chants, either briefly or lengthily as one wishes. At the end of the chants, bless oneself and other beings. For a layman, make a commitment to observe the Five Moral Precepts. This is to assure the purity of one's mind during concentration practice. It is a means of removing worry about physical or verbal unwholesome deeds in the past.

At this moment, one should be confident about the purity of one's precepts and forget about evil acts in the past. Instead, one should recall one's past wholesomeness, such as giving, precept observance, thoughts of benevolence for others, etc., to put the mind in a happy mood.

If one cannot formally make a resolution to a monk to observe the Five Moral Precepts, one can make his own commitment anywhere, because essentially the intent to relinquish physical and verbal misconduct is what counts in precept observance.

### **Commitment to Observe the Five Moral Precepts**

One commits oneself to observe the Five Moral Precepts by reciting the following Pali:

*Namo tassa Bhagavato Arahato Sammā-sambuddhassa*  
*Namo tassa Bhagavato Arahato Sammā-sambuddhassa*  
*Namo tassa Bhagavato Arahato Sammā-sambuddhassa*

*Buddhaṃ saraṇaṃ gacchāmi*  
*Dhammaṃ saraṇaṃ gacchāmi*  
*Saṅghaṃ saraṇaṃ gacchāmi*

*Dutiyam-pi Buddhaṃ saraṇaṃ gacchāmi*  
*Dutiyam-pi Dhammaṃ saraṇaṃ gacchāmi*  
*Dutiyam-pi Saṅghaṃ saraṇaṃ gacchāmi*

*Tatīyam-pi Buddhaṃ saraṇaṃ gacchāmi*  
*Tatīyam-pi Dhammaṃ saraṇaṃ gacchāmi*  
*Tatīyam-pi Saṅghaṃ saraṇaṃ gacchāmi*

*Pāṇātipātā veramaṇī sikkhā-padaṃ samādiyāmi*  
*Adinnādānā veramaṇī sikkhā-padaṃ samādiyāmi*  
*Kāmesu micchācārā veramaṇī sikkhā-padaṃ*  
*samādiyāmi*  
*Musāvādā veramaṇī sikkhā-padaṃ samādiyāmi*  
*Surā-meraya-majja-pamādaṭṭhānā veramaṇī sikkhā-*  
*padaṃ samādiyāmi*

Those who cannot recite the above Pali can simply say the following:

1. I shall not kill any life.
2. I shall not steal.

3. I shall not commit adultery.
4. I shall not lie.
5. I shall not take alcohol or other intoxicants.

You must be true to yourself and your own commitment, and this is the correct way to observe the precepts.

After that, say the following Pali three times:

*Imāni pañca sikkhā-padāni samādiyāmi, cetanāhaṃ sīlaṃ vadāmi*

Then bow to the ground three times to pay respect to the Lord Buddha, Dhamma, and the Noble Ones. For monks and novices, make sure about the purity of your precepts and *vinaya*. Do not let this point worry you while practicing concentration.

Now you are ready for the sitting. Remember that *samādhi* sitting can come either before or after a *caṅkama* walk. Or, if it is inconvenient to practice *caṅkama* walking, you can practice concentration simply by sitting.

For men, put your right leg over the left as you sit. For women, sit in the same way as men, or you can sit with both legs folded to one side (a typical posture for a Thai lady sitting on the floor). The important point is to choose a comfortable sitting position. Now relax and join both palms in front of your chest or forehead as a token of reverence to the Lord Buddha, and make the following commitment:

“I now intend to practise *samādhi* sitting as a tribute to the purity of the Lord Buddha, Dhamma, and the Noble Ones; ... etc.” just as in a *caṅkama* walk.

Then put your hands on your lap, the right hand on top of the left, both palms up. Keep the upper body straight up. Be mindful inside. Do not let your mind wander outwards, for it will invite sensual desires, resentment and ill will, etc., into the mind, causing depression, frustration, and restlessness. Think instead, “At this moment, I shall stop thinking about external things and keep my mind with the present only.”

### **First Method of *Samādhī* Sitting**

1. Mindfully breathe in slowly, thinking “*Bud*”  
Mindfully breathe out slowly, thinking “*dho*”  
Mindfully breathe in slowly, thinking “*Dham*”  
Mindfully breathe out slowly, thinking “*mo*”  
Mindfully breathe in slowly, thinking “*Saṅ*”  
Mindfully breathe out slowly, thinking “*gho*”
2. Do 1. 3-7 times or more to bring *Buddho*, *Dhammo*, *Saṅgho* together into the mind.
3. Then do only the “*Bud*” – “*dho*” part. Breathe normally. Fix your attention on the *parikamma* words and your breath. Be mindful all the time. Do not let your attention slip away. Remember this: breathe in thinking “*Bud*,” breathe out thinking “*dho*.”

At any moment you do not breathe attentively – for example, you think “*Bud*,” ahead of an in-breath – you lost mindfulness. At any

time you do not exhale together with “*dho*” with full attention, your mindfulness has been disrupted. Therefore, you must fix your mind firmly on breathing with the appropriate *parikamma* word. Repeat this until you become skilled. A skilled meditator can keep his mind on breathing and *parikamma* words for a long time. This is a good method. One knows when one loses mindfulness. It is difficult in the beginning, but will get easier as one practices often. This is a means of strengthening mindfulness and the “knowing” nature of the mind, using breathing as the object of attention. A skilled meditator can omit the *parikamma* words and keep mindful of breathing along. The mind trained in this way will experience more and more tranquility, and mindfulness will get stronger and stronger.

## **Second Method of *Samādhi* Sitting**

In this method the *parikamma* words “*Bud*” – “*dho*” are omitted. Fix your mind on breathing alone. Know when breathing is heavy and watch it until it gets softer. Know when breathing is soft and watch it still until it gets even softer – extremely soft. At this point one has attained *ekaggatārammaṇa*, one-pointedness of mind. The soft breath is a sign of a subtle mind. When the mind reaches this stage, one may experience many manifestations of the calm mind: for example, the body, the limbs, or the head may seem enlarged. If this happens, don’t be frightened. Keep on being mindful of your soft breath – nothing else but the soft breath. In about 5 minutes, the sensation of the enlarged body will disappear. In other cases, some meditators may feel taller, some shorter, some spinning around, some bending towards one side

or another. Just be mindful of the breath. Ignore various expressions of the mind. These arise and will soon go away.

Sometimes your breath may be so soft that it seems to disappear. Those who are afraid of dying will withdraw from *samādhi* at this point. Actually, this is an indication that the mind is fully concentrated. Don't be afraid. Just keep on watching the soft breath – nothing else – until finally you do not breathe at all. Here is the point at which the body does not seem to exist. There remains only the “knowing” nature of the mind. Sometimes a little or a lot of brightness appears all around even without the body. This brightness reveals the true nature of the “knowing” mind. The brightness and lightness of mind at this moment will be the most miraculous experience in one's life. There is nothing in the world to compare. Such tranquility lasts for about 10 minutes, and then breathing resumes. The happiness and lightness of the body and mind that one has experienced have no ordinary things to compare. The tranquility is so great that those who do not have enough wisdom will tend to long for it again. But those who have had enough discernment training before will contemplate it with wisdom and use it as a basis to develop more and more wisdom. They do not attach to the happiness of the tranquil mind in *samādhi*, but use *samādhi* as a tool for more efficient wisdom development.

I would like to suggest one point to readers who have practiced concentration with firm intent, hoping that wisdom will occur in the tranquil mind. If you have never developed discernment into various aspects of the Dhamma, even though your concentration is developed to the absorbed state of *samādhi-samāpatti* or

meditative attainment – it merely results in happiness of the body and mind. As concentration progresses, some may develop supernormal powers (*abhiññā*): for example, the power to know past and future events, the ability to see things at distance with “inner eyes” or to hear with “inner ears” from afar, the power to do extraordinary things or to read peoples’ or even animals’ minds. Having gained such supernormal powers, they may easily claim that they have become arahants.

In the Lord Buddha’s time, there were 30 monks who had practiced concentration until their minds reached full tranquility. They experienced happiness of the body and mind that lasted for several days, until they were certain that they had demolished their defilements, craving, and ignorance, and become arahants. They then wanted to tell the Lord Buddha about it. When the Lord knew about their coming, he sent *Phra Ānanda* to meet them at the entrance to tell them not to see the Lord yet, but to remain in the cemetery first. Getting the Lord’s message, the 30 monks entered the cemetery. At that time, in the cemetery lay a naked body of a beautiful lady who had just died. The dead body looked like a woman asleep. The monks looked at it, first with curiosity, but then they were filled with passion and sexual desire! At this point they realized with embarrassment that they were not yet *arahants*, for their minds still had passion, desire and ignorance. They then contemplated what happened over and over again until they all became enlightened right there in the cemetery.

You can see how tranquility in *samādhi* can deceive you. In the Lord Buddha’s time, there were many cases similar to the 30 monks. If it happened nowadays, the 30 monks would have had



no chance of correcting their mistake, and would have been false arahants all their lives. Today there are no fresh corpses lying in the cemetery for the same thing to happen. So, those who patiently practise concentration waiting for wisdom to occur by itself from the tranquil mind should pause to think a little. Was there any monk in the Lord Buddha's time who became an arahant by practicing concentration alone? The fact is that all *arahants* in the past had first practiced contemplation for the sake of wisdom development.

Nowadays some good teachers are still around. They practice contemplation alternating with concentration. After withdrawing from tranquility, they investigate things down to the Truth of all things: that is, suffering, impermanence, and not-selfness. They do not wait for wisdom to occur by itself. So, you must realize the difference and practise accordingly. Without a coconut seed it is impossible to grow a coconut tree, regardless of how well you have prepared the soil for it. One gets the right tree only from the right seed.

### **Third Method of *Samādhi* Sitting**

In this method, one fixes attention on a part of the body. Choose any part that is easy to visualize. This will be used as the site where mindfulness and the "knowing" nature of the mind will rest. The breath and *parikamma* words play only supporting roles. The focus is on the body part until one sees that part clearly and closely with one's mind. If one is worried about breathing and *parikamma* words, the attention will be distracted, and one cannot see the body part clearly. The chosen part can be a scar.

It can be in front or at the back of your body. Or it can be any part at all that feels right to focus on. At first think about its location, color, and texture. If you cannot see it clearly, that shows that your intent and mindfulness are not firm enough. It is best to choose a small part so that one can focus on only a small area, similar to when one concentrates on a needle hole to thread a needle.

You first imagine the picture of the small area of your body. Do it over and over until your mind can see that part instantly and naturally. Now you can reflect on it in any way you like: for example, seeing it rot, separating it from the bone, etc. This is a good basis for contemplation to develop wisdom. The method of fixing the mind on a body part is to give the mind a place to rest. It is just like a bird that needs a branch to rest on after flying. A body part is taken as a resting place for a straying mind.

### **Fourth Method of *Samādhi* Sitting**

In this method the mind concentrates on mental objects arising in the mind, just as in the fourth method of *caṅkama* walk, only this time it is done in a sitting position, which is better because there is no movement of the body. The mind can concentrate on mental objects much better. Be aware when the mind is happy, suffering, or in a neutral mood. Know when passion and desire arise. Know the rise and fall of feelings. Know which are causes and which are results. Notice that all continue in cycles, from past to present to future. They alternate in being causes and results and continue to roll on endlessly. Some old feelings are mistaken for new ones because of one's unawareness of the on-going cycle.

Thus, one is actually driven in the wheel of the world by these deluding mental objects. Defilements, craving, and ignorance are the causes of the love and hatred that arise and persist in the mind.

Therefore, developing mindfulness by using mental objects as the object of attention is a good practice for promoting discernment into the causality of all events. Knowing how a mental object arises, one can find ways to cut off the stream or the bridge of defilements or craving. If one does not know the causes, one does not know how to prevent the results. To get a sharp knife, one sharpens it. To eliminate heat, one extinguishes the fire. So, to get rid of suffering, one must demolish its causes.

The mind is where the mental object is, as heat is with fire. So, if you want to see your mind, see it through mental objects. Be mindful of an arising mental object. Keep watching it long enough until its cause is revealed. Then stop watching, and analyze it instead. Just as in a battle – when a soldier is able to spot his enemy, he stops searching and quickly fires at him. When a hunter finds game, he shoots it right away. When one sees that something is on fire, one puts it out immediately.

This is a method of discernment in trying to kill defilements and desires causing craving for sensuality. It allows wisdom to destroy the vicious cycle. This practice enables one to discover the “headquarters” of defilements and desires. Wisdom, conviction, and effort can then be pooled to bombard and destroy the headquarters completely. In boxing, a boxer looks for a target to knock the other out. If he loses this time, he will try to win next time. In Dhamma practice you must have firm intent to develop

wisdom; otherwise, defilements and desires will be perpetual winners.

To be a strong Dhamma student, you must aim at the destruction of your chief enemy – the defilements. Direct your practice inwardly towards mental objects, and plan to clean all impurities out of your mind.

## Glossary of Terms

<b><i>ācariya</i></b>	a teacher; regular instructor
<b><i>anāgāmi</i></b>	non-returner; one who has attained the third stage of holiness
<b><i>anattā</i></b>	adj. no soul; soulless; not-self; not-self
<b><i>anicca</i></b>	impermanent; transient
<b><i>apāyabhūmi</i></b>	(the four) states of loss and woe; (the four) states of misery; (the four) lower worlds; unhappy existence
<b><i>arahant</i></b>	worthy one; perfected one; one who has attained <i>Nibbāna</i>
<b><i>ārammaṇa</i></b>	sense-objects; an object of consciousness; preoccupation
<b><i>ariya-sacca</i></b>	Noble Truth
<b><i>arūpa-jhāna</i></b>	the (four) Absorptions of the Formless Sphere
<b><i>asurakāya</i></b>	demons
<b><i>attā</i></b>	self; soul; ego; personal entity
<b><i>bhava</i></b>	becoming; existence; process of becoming; state of existence
<b><i>bhava-taṇhā</i></b>	craving for existence; craving for rebirth
<b><i>brahma</i></b>	a divine being of the Form Sphere or of the Formless Sphere

<b><i>caṅkama</i></b>	walking up and down as a method of concentration development
<b><i>citta</i></b>	thought; mind; a state of consciousness
<b><i>dhamma</i></b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. the Doctrine; the teachings of the Lord Buddha</li><li>2. the Norm; the Law; nature</li><li>3. the Truth; Ultimate Reality</li><li>4. the supermundane, esp. <i>Nibbāna</i></li><li>5. righteousness; virtue; morality; good conduct; right behavior</li><li>6. tradition; practice; principle; rule; duty</li><li>7. justice; impartiality</li><li>8. thing; phenomenon</li><li>9. a cognizable object; mind-object; idea</li><li>10. mental state; mental factor; mental activities</li><li>11. condition; cause; causal antecedent</li></ol>
<b><i>dhātu</i></b>	an element; natural condition; that which carries its own characteristic mark
<b><i>dukkha</i></b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. suffering; misery; woe; pain; ill; sorrow; trouble; discomfort; unsatisfactoriness; problematic situation; stress; conflict</li><li>2. physical or bodily pain</li></ol>

<b><i>ekaggatā</i></b>	one-pointedness of mind
<b><i>jhāna</i></b>	meditation; absorption; a state of serene contemplation attained by meditation
<b><i>kāma</i></b>	sense-desire; desire; sensuality; an object of sensual enjoyment; sensual pleasures
<b><i>kāma-taṇhā</i></b>	sensual craving; craving for sensual pleasures
<b><i>kāmāvacara</i></b>	belonging to the Sense Sphere
<b><i>khandha</i></b>	aggregate; category
<b><i>kilesa</i></b>	defilements; impurities; impairments
<b><i>magga</i></b>	the Path; the Way; the Noble Path; the Noble Eightfold Path; the Path leading to the Cessation of Suffering
<b><i>micchā-diṭṭhi</i></b>	wrong view; false view
<b><i>ñāṇa</i></b>	knowledge; real knowledge; wisdom; insight
<b><i>nibbāna</i></b>	<i>Nirvāṇa</i> ; the extinction of the fires of greed, hatred and ignorance; the unconditioned; the final goal; the supreme goal of Buddhism
<b><i>nirodha</i></b>	the cessation or extinction of suffering
<b><i>paññā</i></b>	wisdom; knowledge; intelligence; insight; discernment; reason
<b><i>parikamma</i></b>	recitation; mental repetition

<b><i>pariyatti</i></b>	the scriptures; study of the scriptures; the teachings to be studied
<b><i>peta</i></b>	the ghost of the departed
<b><i>rūpa-jhāna</i></b>	absorption of the Fine-Material Sphere
<b><i>sikkhāpada</i></b>	the Threefold Learning
<b><i>sīla</i></b>	1. morality; moral conduct 2. a precept; rule of morality; training rule
<b><i>sacca</i></b>	the Truth; truth
<b><i>sakadāgāmī</i></b>	a once-returner; one who has attained the second stage of the Path and will be reborn on the earth only once before attaining final emancipation
<b><i>samādhi</i></b>	concentration; one-pointedness of mind
<b><i>samatha</i></b>	calm; tranquility; quietude of heart
<b><i>sammuti</i></b>	convention; agreement; supposition; conventional truth
<b><i>saṃsāra</i></b>	lit. faring on; the Round of Rebirth; the Round of Existence; the Wheel of Rebirth; the Wheel of Life
<b><i>samudaya</i></b>	the cause of suffering; the origin of suffering
<b><i>saṅgha</i></b>	Buddhist monks; Noble disciples



<b><i>saṅkhāra</i></b>	1. compounded things; component things; conditioned things; the world of phenomena; all things which have been made up by pre-existing causes  2. volitional activities; mental formations; mental predispositions; volitional impulses; impulses and emotions; volition; all the mental factors except feeling and perception having volition as the constant factor
<b><i>sati</i></b>	mindfulness; attentiveness; detached watching; awareness
<b><i>sotāpanna</i></b>	a stream-enterer; one who has attained the first stage of holiness
<b><i>taṇhā</i></b>	craving; desire; thirst
<b><i>tilakkhaṇa</i></b>	Three Characteristics; the Three Signs of Being; also called the Common Characteristics
<b><i>Tipiṭaka</i></b>	lit. the Three baskets; the Three Divisions of the Buddhist Canon, viz., Vinaya, Sutta and Abhidhamma (generally known as the Pali Canon)
<b><i>vaṭṭa</i></b>	the round of rebirth; the of existences; the cycle of rebirth
<b><i>vibhava-taṇhā</i></b>	craving for non-existence
<b><i>vipassanā</i></b>	insight; contemplation; insight development
<b><i>yogāvacara</i></b>	one who practices spiritual exercise; meditate



## About the Author

*Venerable Ācariya Thoon Khippapañño* (Thoon Nonruecha) was born May 20, 1935 at Nong Kho village, Bua Kho sub-district, Mueang district, Maha Salakam province, Thailand. He was the fifth of Uddha and Chan Nonruecha's ten children.

At the age of twenty-seven, Thoon Nonruecha left his family to ordain as a monk in the Dhammayut Order. On July 27, 1961, he took ordination at Wat Photisomporn in Udon Thani, with *Ācariya Dhammachedi* (Joom Bandhulo) serving as his preceptor.

In his early years, *Venerable Ācariya Thoon* set out on *dhūtaṅga* to various forest destinations and practiced Dhamma until he profoundly realized and understood according to the truth. He studied under *Venerable Ācariya Khao Analayo* of Wat Tham Klong Pen in Nong Bua Lam Phu province. In his eighth vassa, *Ācariya Thoon* attained arahantship at Wat Aranya Wiwek in Pa Lan village, Doi Luang district of Chiang Rai.

*Venerable Ācariya Thoon Khippapañño* dedicated his life to the proliferation of the Buddha's original teachings, both in Thailand and abroad. *Ācariya Thoon's* teachings were distinctive in that he emphasized the importance of starting Dhamma practice with right view (*sammādiṭṭhi*) and wisdom (*paññā*). His style of Dhamma practice was also unique in that it enabled laypeople to effectively practice in everyday settings and achieve a level of enlightenment, as he himself had attained the first level (*sotāpanna*) as a layperson. *Ācariya Thoon* also stressed the importance of developing both a comprehensive understanding

and a true realization of the suffering, harmful consequences, and perils associated with each issue.

In 1975, *Ācariya Thoon* established Wat Pa Ban Koh in Ban Phue district, Udon Thani province. Today, the temple serves as a Buddhist landmark for devotees to honor and venerate the Buddha's teachings and holy relics housed in the majestic pagoda. The temples founded in *Ācariya Thoon's* name in the metropolitan cities San Francisco, New York, Hong Kong, as well as the countless Dhamma retreat centers in America and throughout Thailand that train in *Ācariya Thoon's* style of cultivating wisdom (*paññā*) continue to grow, to this day.

Over the course of his lifetime, *Ācariya Thoon* authored over twenty books, including his own autobiography, and produced various forms of media (mp3, VCD, DVD, etc.) so that Dhamma practitioners from any walk of life could easily access Dhamma. In 1990, the Thai Royal Princess Phra Thep Ratanarachasuda honored *Ācariya Thoon* with the *Saema Dhammacakra* award for his outstanding literary contributions to the Buddhist religion.

On November 11, 2008, *Venerable Ācariya Thoon* passed away at the age of seventy-three due to pneumonia and lung tumor complications. Unique to only the greatest arahants, *Venerable Ācariya Thoon Khippapañño's* relics formed the day of his cremation ceremony.

