

# **TWO OF HEARTS**

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# **TWO OF HEARTS**

**Torn**

By

Venerable Acariya Thoon Khippapanyo

Translated by

Neecha Thian-Ngern

# Copyright Information

Original Sermon

*Ven. Ācariya Thoon Khippapañño*

Wat Pa Ban Kho

Udon Thani, Thailand

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## Editor's Preface

Throughout his nearly fifty years as a monk, *Venerable Ācariya Thoon Khippapañño* gave more than five hundred sermons. Out of those, we have hand selected sixteen sermons, to be transcribed and printed as books, in hopes that they may be of the utmost benefit.

The reader may notice that the subject matter and tone of each book in this series differs. This is because *Venerable Ācariya Thoon Khippapañño* adapted his teachings to fit the situation and audience. A sermon given at a funeral, a celebration, for a group of monks and novices, a group of professionals, or those who desire enlightenment are each unique in and of themselves.

This ten book collection entitled, "The Heart Series," is comprised of sermons given to monks and novices during rains retreats between the years 1994 and 2000. Some may be slightly puzzled by the uncommon name given to this *dhmma*



series. We invite those readers to take a look inside and discover the meaningful connection. We believe these books may provide a benefit not only to those in saffron or white robes, but also to those who desire simple happiness as well as those who seek enlightenment. The doubts that we encounter during each of our journeys can be dispelled with the wisdom contained in this series.

Though *Venerable Ācariya Thoon Khippanyo* is no longer with us, he has bequeathed unto us countless tricks and techniques that can be applied in our *dhamma* practice. As such, his disciples and followers have been able to continue and advance their practice, even in his absence.

I would like to thank those involved with this series:

Organization: Phra Nut Taesombut, PhD

Concept & cover designs: Tanawat Pisanuwongse

Illustrations: Nattawat Naovaratpong

Printing logistics: Soratya Suriyamorn, MD

May all those involved, whether expressly named here or not, achieve their aspirations as they contribute to the auspicious merit of realizing *Venerable Ācariya Thoon Khippapañño's* intention of providing the Buddha's *dhamma* to the world's citizens. May you achieve that which you desire, may your *dhamma* progress accordingly, may you be self-reliant, may the path to enlightenment be illuminated for you, and may you achieve final enlightenment in this lifetime.

Mae Chee Yo  
Chief Editor

## Translator's Preface

Some believe *dhamma* teachings are complex enough. Not only must a translator understand the language, but also the *dhamma* concepts presented in the teaching.

The Thai language style can prove quite tricky to translate. At times, there are two meanings for a single Thai word, posed in a context that isn't readily translated over to English. Other times, English pronouns must take a firm stand in a sentence in which *Venerable Ācariya Thoon Khippapañño* never specified the person or object.

Not only is the language a challenge, but the subject matter itself can also prove difficult. With many of the *dhamma* concepts presented here, I had to stop and consider which of the various meanings *Venerable Ācariya Thoon Khippapañño* intended. For that, I am grateful to have had Mae Yo as my mentor and editor.

To have been a pupil of *Venerable Ācariya Thoon Khippapañño* since the age of 16, and to be tasked

with translating his works for the English-speaking public is a honor and responsibility I take very seriously.

For those seeking answers, rest assured that the Buddha has provided us with a path that will lead us there. And our great teacher, the enlightened *Venerable Ācariya Thoon Khippapañño*, has illuminated that path for us during a time in which many of us have lost our way. May the ten books in this series be the shoes you will need as you journey towards your goal.

I would also like to express my gratitude to those who contributed their ideas and helped to edit these sermons.

Neecha Thian-Ngern

# Introduction

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October 12, 1994  
Wat Pa Ban Koh  
Udon Thani, Thailand

***Torn***





**Wise Enough to Listen**

**I**n seven days, the rains retreat (*vassa*) will come to an end. Why not jump on the saddle and practice at a full gallop within these seven days? That way, during this rains retreat you will have at least one period of serious results. If you don't fully apply yourself, *dhamma* practice can be difficult. Merely practicing in a general manner will not necessarily produce results. Sometimes you accelerate your practice and at other times you decelerate; just make sure that there's more acceleration overall.

During the Buddha's time, many people were able to understand the truth (*dhamma*) during the final days of the rains retreats. Many had not intended on listening to Buddha speak, but benefitted from being within earshot nonetheless. As Buddha gave a sermon meant for a particular person, someone else listening from the back of the room was still

able to become a holy individual (*ariya-puggala*: someone who attains a stage on the path to enlightenment).

Those people were smart. People in contemporary times are not so smart. If a teaching is not directly given to them, people these days do not react. Even if they can hear the sermon, they are unmoved if the teachings don't seem to apply to them. Someone who is smart does not think like this.

Take, for example, *Venerable Sāriputta* at the *Sukarakhātā Cave*. Buddha expounded *dhamma* to a layperson with long nails named *Dīghanakha*. As Buddha preached about suffering and impermanence, *Venerable Sāriputta* was fanning him. He listened purposefully, following along and internalizing the teachings. Though Buddha had intended the sermon for *Dīghanakha*, *Venerable Sāriputta* was able to become fully enlightened (*arahant*: one who has attained nibbana, or enlightenment) right on the spot, with the fan in his hand.

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This is what happens when an individual possesses wisdom. So long as the sounds of *dhamma* being heard, all other distractions can be ignored, and the lesson can be internalized and applied beneficially.

Buddha was preaching to a layperson at that time. Yet, a monk was able to internalize these very teachings and attain ultimate enlightenment. The *dhamma* that is taught to a layperson or a monk is the same kind of *dhamma* because both groups possess defilements (*kilesa*), desire (*taṇhā*), and ignorance (*avijjā*). The only difference lies in the status of being ordained. As such, when Buddha preached to a layperson, *Venerable Sāriputta* was still able to apply that *dhamma* to himself and become enlightened.

I have been to many religious functions, both small and large. After the ceremonies conclude, it is time for the sermon. At that point, all the monks disappear and only the laypeople remain. Why is this? Are the monks who leave already wise? Why don't they stay and listen to the teaching? When

they leave, they just end up chatting away about nonsense.

At some functions not a single monk remains to listen to the master giving his sermon. This is characteristic of fools. The monks believe that the teaching does not concern them. Rather, it is specifically for the laypeople. They think the teachings for monks and laypeople are separate. They are wrong.

When it comes to *dhamma* practice, we are all the same in being afflicted by defilements. Fools do not understand this and must be forced to listen to a teaching. They do not wish to listen because their interest in *dhamma* has withered and their minds are closed.

We must be able to listen to *dhamma* from anyone, anywhere. After internalizing the teachings, we must apply them in our own practice. We should also practice by reading and writing. In contemporary times, why are many novices and monks so foolish? Their arrogance from holding

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more precepts than others or believing they are more virtuous than others hinders them from listening to teachings from masters.

While wearing commoners' threads these men have no inclination to act this way. But once they don saffron robes it is an entirely different story. Take *Ācariya Thue*. As a layperson he acted normally. Only a few days after he ordained, he began teaching others with an intense zeal. Alas, he couldn't endure as a monk and had to disrobe.



**Ploughing the Soil**

**N**ow, truth (*dhamma*) can be garnered from both masters and our peers. The behavior and speech of our peers can be used to show us the truth about reality. Yet, we are unconcerned with using those models for contemplation. Because we may not feel intense emotions, we continue to practice in a general manner. We repeat meditative phrases as prescribed but there is no fervor for practice. There is no true dedication or serious investment in *dhamma* practice.

For example, in tending a garden, we cannot fix unattractive crops with only fertilizer. We will also need to add water and plough the soil. Why must we plough the soil? So that the fertilizer and water can be properly absorbed. If the soil is too dry, the water will flow past the surface and straight down to the drain. With soil that has run its course, you can water the plants for



an entire day to no avail. And the more the soil has deteriorated, the more we keep sprinkling fertilizer and watering in vain.

In *dhamma* practice, what does the ploughing of soil symbolize? It represents the digging up of personal issues. Upon laying them out in the open, we must then analyze these issues until their relative truths are known. In addition to digging, we must also imagine and simulate situations in order to get our analytical juices flowing. Imaginative thoughts are required for contemplation, whether be it for a fantasy or wisdom-related goal.

Now, although we are amateurs when it comes to applying make-believe situations in the wisdom sense, we are exceptionally skilled in the whimsical sense. We are specialists in composing ballads invoking feelings of love or sympathy, strengthening our ties to this world. And we are so inebriated by our imaginative thoughts that we lose ourselves in the fantasy and become excited or shed tears. Simply put, we believe the volitional thoughts and fantasies we create.

For example, suppose we put our thoughts to work in a way that pleases us. When it comes to thinking about riches, status, praises, happiness, or any other favorable topic, the entire day or night's time proves insufficient. In order to initiate these thoughts, we must first suppose or cook up a scenario. Absent the constructed concept, we will be unable to apply and steer our imaginative thoughts. We are especially skilled at suggesting concepts from which our volitional thoughts launch. Yet, when it comes to thinking in the wisdom sense, we can't even cook up a single hypothetical situation.

Worldly, conventional notions (*sammuti*) provide the foundation and infrastructure for both wisdom and imagination. These worldly conventions are precisely what chain people to this world as well as what unshackle them. The instant someone knows the ins and outs of worldly conventions, they will be immediately freed from the chains of this world.

Similarly, those who are intoxicated by conventional notions will continue to be slaves to

this world. From ancient times to the present, we are still entranced by these worldly conventions, and we will continue to be fooled by them far into the future. There are no bounds to being misguided by our imagination and lost. Those who are wise and can clearly see these conventions for what they are will break free from the chains of this world.

The very same worldly conventions can lead us down two separate paths. On the imaginative path, we create pleasing notions of love and contentment. Meanwhile the wisdom path frees us from that enchantment. There are no worldly conventions to which we can truly entrust ourselves. Those who are enraptured by the world are fooled by these worldly conventions. We must unmask them and realize them for what they truly are.

It is important to excavate and analyze these worldly conventions on a frequent basis, so that we can see and understand their real nature. Ask yourself why you are still attached to and pleased by these conventional notions. Use these

worldly conventions as the basis of your *dhamma* practice. The instant someone stops pretending and creating hypothetical notions, their practice will have reached a dead end.

In the Buddha's era, people become holy individuals upon penetrating the truth according to worldly conventions. There is no need to open a book and study up on worldly conventions. That which we experience via our eyes, ears, nose, mouth, and touch on a daily basis are entirely worldly conventions. We suppose an identity and define these worldly conventions for the sake of communication. This world is made up of supposed forms. When someone penetrates the truth, they realize and understand corresponding to the world's conventions, according to these supposed forms.



**Nurture Your Garden**

**T**he understanding of worldly conventions has to be reached on one's own, via one's own wisdom. True, manuals are important in that they provide structure to our practice. However, an understanding of the truth according to manuals, or that echoes your teachers, is merely borrowed knowledge. Our own wisdom has not yet emerged, and that is why we are marching in place, unable to shed any fetters. To march forward, we must establish a new foundation built from our own wisdom. If there is no change from the norm where all knowledge stems from learned sources, then wisdom gained through individual reasoning will never arise. Without the harmony of learned knowledge and wisdom through reasoning, we will never see the emergence of wisdom resulting from mental development.

If you know the framework for *dhamma* practice, your journey will not be difficult. There are three main concepts used to contemplate the truth: impermanence, suffering, and cessation of existence. You can contemplate how these three aspects are woven into whatever situation you experience or find yourself in. *Dhamma* practitioners must know their prominent characteristics in order to provide direction to their journey.

If we follow our natural lazy inclination, we will sit back and do nothing. Yet, we want good results to be granted unto us, and to penetrate the truth and shed attachment. Thus, our dreams are impossible to achieve as we haven't put in the effort.

In growing fruits and vegetables, we have to apply fertilizer, nurture, water, and protect them. If you do not invest in nurturing the plants, if something happens to them or if the fruit produced is unhealthy, it will all have been a waste. Or even if the fruit matures, it will not be worth much. If the

fruit isn't enough to feed yourself, how could you expect to sell it to others? *Dhamma* practice is the same. If we cannot teach ourselves, if we lack diligence and focus, our sole option is to remain on this earth and continue to cultivate virtue.

*Dhamma* practice is very important. If we practice with the aim of breaking free from the cycle of rebirth, though we may not have successfully shed attachment in this lifetime, at least we will have put in practice for our next rebirth. We will have searched for the right escape route. If we cannot effectively escape in this lifetime, will we be able to in the next? And if not in the next, how about the rebirth after that?





**Pour It Out**

**W**e must be diligent in our contemplations and *dhamma* practice in order to break free from rebirth. The key that unlocks the chains that bind lies in clearly realizing the harmful consequences and impending perils inherent in all that surround us. Our minds have been clinging and attached to this world for countless lifetimes. If we cannot undo this bond, we stand no chance of liberation. Thus, it is imperative that we do some digging and analysis. All these worldly items we are attached to, are they really who we are? Do they truly belong to us?

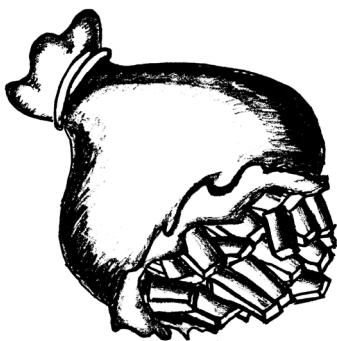
If you do not dig, you will not be able to discern what is buried inside. Just as with a bag of money, you know there is money inside. But do you know precisely how many bills of each denomination are in there? You don't. You don't possess this comprehensive knowledge. All you know is that

there is money in the bag. You have to pour it out, spread and examine the contents, and then organize the bills according to each denomination. Only then will you be able to state exactly how much money there is. Similarly, a blind man has difficulty using money, as he must wonder precisely what bill he holds in his hand before handing over payment. When we cannot see clearly or accurately, doubt and uncertainty arise.

We must practice in order to eliminate these doubts. How can that be achieved? Through wisdom. If we contemplate to a point of complete and comprehensive understanding of a particular topic, that doubt will be wiped out. Comprehensive understanding comes in three levels. Forget about the intermediate and advanced for the time being. Can we even attain a beginner's level of comprehensive understanding? If you can develop simple understandings, you will have at least eradicated your basic doubts. You may not have penetrated deep *dhamma*, but you will have a wide and comprehensive understanding of elementary topics.

Even the most basic level of understanding is quite difficult to achieve because, for the most part, we only know what we have been told. Thus, we should apply ourselves in excavation and analysis more frequently and regularly. If we can realize a basic level of comprehension, we can graduate to intermediate and advanced levels. The determining characteristic that authenticates our comprehension at each level will be the elimination of doubt. And wisdom is the very tool that erases that doubt.

Imagine you are walking somewhere and encounter something, but it is too dark for you to see it clearly. You are uncertain as to whether it is a person, female or male, old or young. You wonder. But, if you shine a flashlight and can see the face clearly, all doubt will have been erased. Light will be the deciding factor. We must build up our illuminator, our own individual wisdom, in order to realize and understand according to the world's conventions.



**Seeing Gold**

**W**e have been so consumed with doubt and ambiguity over the world's conventions that we haven't been able to see things clearly for ages. Although we see with our eyes, our mind has remained blind. If you had two metal bars in your hand, you wouldn't know which was made of gold or mercury. They share the same shape and weight. If you can't see, you can't make a decisive statement. But if you could, you would discern the gold from mercury with certainty. Doubt is eradicated by true understanding, which is gained through our own wisdom.

However, understanding on its own is not sufficient. It must be coupled with realization in order to be a complete and whole understanding of reality. The duty of all practitioners is to contemplate the world's conventions to a point of clarity. We must be able to explain to ourselves precisely why and

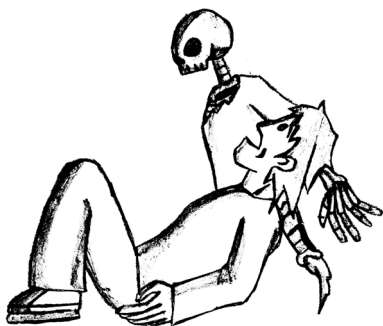
how, since incalculable ages up to the present, we have been so enchanted with the world. Why haven't we had enough yet? Why haven't we been able to see the mundane truth about the world's conventions? Our minds have never experienced a true realization and understanding of reality according to the world's conventions. If only the truth could be illuminated, all of our doubts would vanish instantly. We would see things for what they really are. These are basic principles of practice.

Developing wisdom in this manner can be carried on in any posture, so long as we apply focused determination and effort to our contemplations. You don't necessarily have to sit or walk to get started, because employing diligence in sitting or walking meditation is merely a minor application. The major use of our diligence comes through focused wisdom.

If a practitioner is ready and has enough focused wisdom to begin with, contemplations can occur in any and all postures, so long as the practitioner

is awake. The posture is irrelevant. The duty of the practitioner is only to direct all energy and focused wisdom towards a constant contemplation of the truth about reality.





**Eyes Wide Open**

In these analyses, the contemplations must be coupled with genuine experiences related to the understandings. To separate authentic feelings from developed understandings is incorrect. For instance, the use of wisdom in analyzing a topic like filthiness of the tangible form can result in a detailed and comprehensive understanding. However, if after the analysis has concluded, the emotion of love still remains, the analysis is inaccurate and incomplete. If filthiness of the human body were contemplated in a complete manner, there would be no place for the emotion of love. You can't bring yourself to love a body you truly see as filthy and repulsive.

Many practitioners contemplate filthiness of the tangible form. In fact, many couples have come to me, talking their high level *dhamma* at me, boasting that they have conquered this topic. But

in a short while, their claims prove to be crazy and quite disparate with the baby they've just conceived. If their conclusions about filthiness were true and authentic, they would be revolted by the human body. But no, these people have only contemplated the skeleton of the topic as shown to them by other people. They've overestimated themselves.

Filthiness of the tangible form is no easy topic. For someone to comprehensively realize and understand this topic they would be a non-returner (*anāgāmi*, penultimate stage of enlightenment) or even fully enlightened. These people will have no spouses, no partners, nor sexual contact with anyone. They are too repulsed by the filthiness of the body to have any.

Some laypeople continue to partner up, have spouses, and conceive many children, yet they still have the audacity to boast that they have mastered the concept of filthiness. They have no business doing so. These people are not sane, they are crazy. Notwithstanding, is filthiness a

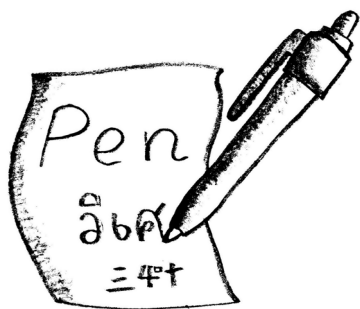
topic that should be considered? Yes. But keep it to yourself. Don't discuss it with others. And whenever you can really, genuinely conquer the topic, then you can talk about it.

Contemplating filthiness is a method by which to reduce lust. It doesn't eliminate lust all together, it only diminishes the magnitude. For some, it is not capable of helping much. Even for contemplations that are supplemented with images of filth, a face to face encounter can prove too challenging for a practitioner who isn't strong enough. That is because only a basic level of filthiness has been experienced. Claims of a more exhaustive understanding are misguided.

Once meditators close their eyes and see visions of gruesome images, skeletons, and corpses, they think they have successfully taken in the topic of filthiness. That is not how the topic of filthiness is conquered. Understanding doesn't arise from meditative imagery; those are only visions. True realization arises from your individual wisdom, with your eyes wide open. An understanding

generated while you are fully awake, conscious, and capable is the real deal, not one that only arises once your eyes are shut.

Those images are merely meditative visions and omens. Simply seeing them does not automatically eradicate our delusions. Without meditation, these visions cannot be regenerated, and with dull wisdom, they will arise and pass without much attention. In contrast, with sharp wisdom and focused concentration, those visions can be used as a resource in contemplations.



**360 Degrees**

**F**or a person with a strong grasp on languages, a single pen can be used to write in Thai, Japanese, English or any other language. Similarly, one with strong wisdom will be able to apply that wisdom in a full 360 degree spectrum.

Wisdom is understanding and realizing the world's conventions in a manner that is both encompassing and comprehensive. It is a whole and complete understanding of the world's conventions, whether they are internal or external, basic or complex, or related to the past, present, and future. All the world's conventions that we are infatuated with are understood in a comprehensive manner.

They are dug up, spread out in order to be viewed more clearly, and analyzed to the point doubt is extinguished. The absence of doubt or wondering

about the world's conventions occurs at differing degrees. At times it stems from an understanding of the world's conventions that is basic, other times, intermediate or advanced.

To train our wisdom, we have to pretend. We have to mentally build up situations in order to use the hammer of truth to quash them. In other words, it is the game of using thought to eliminate thought. In one corner is imagination, in the other is wisdom. If imagination has its way, an object can be pleasing, beautiful, and adorable. If wisdom has control, it can perceive the very same object's physical form as filthy, undesirable, causes suffering, ever-changing, and unable to be sustained.

It is a fight over the same object or issue, a tug of war in our minds. Imaginative thoughts are cooked up for the sake of accumulation; add a touch of love, a dash of lust, a pinch of desire. If wisdom is at the helm, the name of the game is elimination; nothing is truly ours, they cease to exist. Both aspects exist in the same mind.



Thus, we must constantly work to generate disillusionment in our minds. How it happens is individually known. It cannot be passed from one person to another. Once the disenchantment happens to you, you will know. It cannot be described and is too complicated to convey. Similarly, everyone is sitting here eating the same food; does anyone ask another person how the food tastes? No. The flavor of food that each person consumes is individually known. After everyone eats from the same curry pot, there is no need to ask others if the food we have eaten is salty, sweet, or spicy.

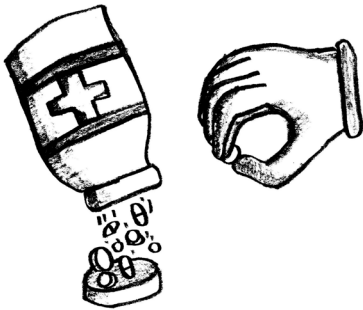
In the same vein, the disenchantment that occurs for each person also does not need to be confirmed with others. It is independently known. Now, disillusionment itself is high level. How about we attain a basic level first; how about tasting just three percent of that disenchantment? All that which we are lured by, long for, and are attached to cannot be eliminated in one fell swoop. The only exception is those who leap from zero to enlightenment.

First level stream enterers (*sotāpanna*) cannot shed defilements like second, third, or final level practitioners (*sakadāgāmī*, *anāgāmī*, and *arahant*, respectively). Defilements are shed according to corresponding levels. The fetters a first level practitioner can shed correspond to their basic level. Similarly, more advanced level practitioners like the *anāgāmī* eliminate fetters according to their respective level. And ultimately, the enlightened earn their title by extinguishing defilements and desires in their entirety.

Stream enterers (*sotāpanna*), despite being able to recognize the characteristics of higher level fetters, remain unable to eliminate them. The stream enterers in Buddha's time, whether male or female, recognized the suffering derived from sexual desire and lust. Yet, they still ached and yearned for sexual pleasure. Despite knowing their inherent consequences, they remained unable to relinquish these desires. It is evident that stream enterers still wed and had children, just like normal people.

This is characteristic of having true knowledge, but that knowledge is limited to an elementary

level. It is understanding the theory, but not having realized it personally. That is why the desires could not be extinguished. Stream enterers do eliminate desires, but very few and only that which pertains to their basic level. That is why, when we research and study, we should pay attention to the reality of the situation, as we have here.



**Selecting the Right Cure**

**T**ake the world's conventions for example. All of the *dhamma* that Buddha taught stems from the world's conventions. Those with dull wisdom are neither able to realize the implications of that truth nor expand on it. To illustrate, take someone who only knows to use papaya for papaya salad. Does this person know how to stir-fry or cook it in curry? No. Without broad knowledge of how to cook, they will be unable to use papaya in its countless other incarnations.

Similarly, when it comes to contemplating the world's conventions, those with limited wisdom are unable to stray from the monotonous style of analysis to which they are accustomed. If they've habitually analyzed the impermanence factor, they will hold fast to that approach. Yet, impermanence can be expanded upon. Specifically, how does inconstancy manifest? What are the factors and

causes that contribute to change? What causes suffering? How are they related?

We must do more analysis and seek our own individual rational answers. You don't have to delve into detail and approach every single *dhamma* topic out there. More substantial is the capability to choose and apply a personally relevant topic. An inability to discern this can be harmful and dangerous.

Suppose there is a medley of pills and capsules contained in a single bottle. Can you discern which pill will cure your ailment? If not, will you elect to take all of the pills? There are laxatives, fever reducers, and many other types of remedies. How can you figure out which pill you should take? You can't just swallow the first pill you pick up. You should only consume that which relates to your illness in order to achieve desired results. Don't take the other pills. You need to know your disease before you can select appropriate medication.

Similarly, out of the wealth of *dhamma* topics out there, can you extract the ones that are personally relevant? Or should you take them all? If you

consume everything at once, consider whether the topics are a fit with your accumulated virtues, character, and style of thinking. If they are a mismatch, results will be unfavorable. Though it is a cure, it isn't the antidote to your particular ailment. You can keep taking it until the day you die and it won't cure you, because the medicine doesn't correspond to the illness.

In practice, you can contemplate a topic but if it doesn't match your personality, there will be no results. Your prominent characteristics are related to a different model. If you don't understand this, you are essentially stepping on the accelerator with the parking brake on.

While I was a layperson, I healed people with herbal remedies. Once, a patient was stricken with typhoid. I asked him whether he had taken any typhoid medicine. He said yes, but that the medicine was ineffective, that he didn't have typhoid. It was glaringly obvious to me that he had typhoid fever. I said, take this medicine, it is the remedy, you will be cured. He refused, saying he had already taken it to no avail.

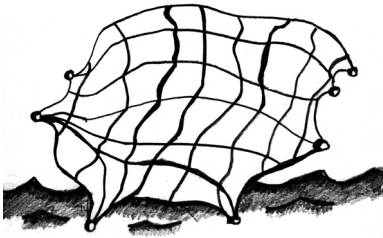
What he failed to realize was that under the single umbrella of “typhoid medicine,” there exist a variety of cures. He thought there was only one distinct cure for each ailment. There are many cures for typhoid, each differing based on the healer’s ability to procure quality ingredients.

Similarly, if a person can find a topic of *dhamma* that matches their personality traits, their practice will excel rapidly. Just as when the cure matches the ailment, you can be completely cured within days or a few months. There’s no need to wait for years if you take the right medicine. When the selected model of *dhamma* matches your personality and cultivated virtues, your practice will progress swiftly.

Take Phillips screwdrivers and screws for example. Can they all be used interchangeably? If the screwdriver is large but the screw head is small, will you be able to make headway? Despite both being of the Phillips variety, incongruence can stall any progress. Only when the screwdriver and screw match can you move forward.



Selecting a model of *dhamma* complementary to our accumulated virtues is no easy feat. It is quite difficult or even impossible for people to know what merits and values other have cultivated in past lives. The Buddha is the only individual who can know what virtues others have developed from past lives. Even the disciples did not possess this insight.



**Casting the Net**

**I**n the Buddha's era, countless individuals achieved various stages on the path to enlightenment. This was because the Buddha handed to them *dhamma* that was perfectly customized to fit their past virtues. Thus, they plunged into the stream to enlightenment quite quickly.

In contemporary times all we can do is guess. Because we are taking stabs in the dark, we must do it often. When we fail, we have to release what we have and take a stab at something new. It is like casting a net in any old direction and pulling it in to see if you have caught any fish. When the net returns empty, you cast it again.

Our wisdom must also be cast out often, in search of models of *dhamma* for contemplation. If we do this frequently, we may be lucky enough to

encounter a model that is perfectly aligned with our accumulated virtues. When you reach that point, it will be like when you randomly cast the net as usual and finally catch fish. You will know the difference. It won't be like the other times. You will know that the model of *dhamma* fits. It is individually realized on one's own.

The feeling of realization and understanding is clear. There is thorough, detailed understanding when the puzzle pieces fit together. When the model is incompatible with your character, comprehensive understanding can't ever emerge. It is like the medicine and screws that I mentioned earlier. Any mismatch will not produce results, while a perfect match enables quick and easy results.

Let us be diligent in frequently applying ourselves in the digging up and analyzing of the world's conventions. We cannot allow for our lives to progress while our wisdom remains stagnant. Don't allow for a lag to develop. As we mature with the passing days and nights, our wisdom must develop accordingly. We must constantly

see the world for what it truly is. Those with enough concentration and wisdom who are able to realize and understand according to the world's conventions will unequivocally break free from this world within this lifetime.

And now, I have provided a brief model of *dhamma* for you all to apply in your own practice. One day, you may realize and understand according to the truth that I have put forth here.