

Amata Dhamma

SIX TALKS ON DHAMMA



Ajaan Mahā Boowa Ñāṇasampanno

“The Gift of Dhamma Excels All Other Gifts”

—*The Lord Buddha*

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Ajaan Mahā Boowa Ñāṇasampanno

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A Forest Dhamma



Publication

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A Forest Dhamma Publication

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Introduction

Five of the talks in this book were given for the benefit of Mrs. Pow-panga Vathanakul, who began staying at Wat Pa Baan Taad in early November 1975. The other talk “The Middle Way of Practice” was given to an assembly of *bhikkhus* in 1962. It was a talk which Mrs. Pow-panga found especially useful. Before arriving at Wat Pa Baan Taad, she had just been released from the hospital where she was diagnosed with terminal cancer. Although she was given only six months to live, she in fact lived another eleven months, largely due to the spiritual strength she gained through the practice of meditation and the help she received in Dhamma. During the four-month period she lived at Wat Pa Baan Taad, Ācariya Mahā Boowa gave her about 130 talks on Dhamma.

Ācariya Paññāvaḍḍho

Wat Pa Baan Taad

Udon Thani, Thailand



— O N E —

Endeavoring for the Realization of Nibbāna

20th January, 1976

*T*he Dhamma of the Lord Buddha was expounded correctly and properly. It was not hidden or obscure but was presented according to the truths existing on every level of Dhamma. It proclaims, for example, that virtue and vice, hell, heaven and *Nibbāna* really do exist, that *kilesas* are true, that they are real and that they prevail just like the other more apparent things. There are no contradictions, so why are these things a problem for us?

The Dhamma was openly presented. There was nothing esoteric and mystical about it. It was expounded entirely in accordance with truth—the facts that actually exist. It was presented on every level of truth, and yet we cannot understand it. It is as if the Lord is saying, “Look here! Look at this!” to the blind and deaf. Apparently we are like the blind, who can grope but cannot see. Wherever we go we always bump into *dukkha*, although the Lord already told us what *dukkha* was like. Though we might understand it, we still keep running into it. He told us that *dukkha* is harmful but we are constantly caught by it because our motives—and

the way we follow them—are entirely for the amassing of *dukkha* which only burns us.

Concerning the virtue of Dhamma, the Lord has shown that it is *Sanditṭhiko* (visible here and now). *Sukha* and *dukkha* can both be seen and experienced within ourselves. Take death, for example. It is also *Ehipassiko* and *Opanayiko*—very important principles. *Ehipassiko* means ‘calling us to come and see’ the truthful Dhamma. It is not for us to beckon others to come and see the truthful Dhamma. *Ehi* means teaching the person himself—who listens to Dhamma and then practices it—to turn his heart round and look right here where the truth is. In worldly terms the truth is constantly proclaiming itself, constantly inviting and challenging. Because of its veracity, it challenges us to look here. *Ehi* means ‘look here’. It doesn’t mean we should call others to come and look. How could they see when they don’t look and have never known the truth? The truth is in them, but if they do not look at it or know it, how can they come and see the truth within us? *Ehipassiko*—the Lord taught us to look at the truth, the truth about ourselves which is right here.

Opanayiko means to ‘bring within’. Whatever we see or hear or touch, we should bring inside and make good use of. Whatever comes into contact with the eyes, ears, nose, tongue and body, or appears in the heart, must all be *opānāyiko* (brought inward). Whether it is concerned with virtue or immorality, whether satisfactory or not, internal or external, past or future, it is all *opānāyiko*—drawing into the heart, which is the principal cause of all internal affairs.

The *citta* is pre-eminent. Nothing surpasses the *citta* in importance. The business of the *citta* is therefore extremely pressing and imperative. *Mano pubbarāgamā dhammā* (all *dhammas* originate from the heart). Just this much is enough to shake the entire physical world. Even the slightest motion must originate in the heart. All *dhammas* have the heart as their basis. Nothing but the heart can discern all the various phenomena. Nothing else is capable of this.

What are the various kinds of *dhamma*? Where are the *kusala* (wholesome) *dhamma* and the *akusala* (unwholesome) *dhamma*, if not in the heart? The *kusala dhamma* arises due to the ingenuity of the heart. It nurtures the heart with wisdom and enables it to cope wisely with all the various events that arise out of our ignorance though we may be totally unaware. *Akusala dhamma* also arises in the heart. We must use the *kusala dhamma* which is the way of *paññā*, investigating and correcting our ignorance—which we call *akusala dhamma* so that we can totally eliminate it from the heart.

Opanayiko means drawing inward. We must draw the wisdom or foolishness of others, whoever they might be, into ourselves. The Lord taught us to ‘bring it inward’. *Ehipassiko* is to look right here at the origin of all causation, the heart, which is in a perpetual state of activity. This activity is much more incessant than any machinery which only operates according to its time schedule. The heart is never shut down but goes on until the last day of life and because it never ceases, we grumble and complain that it is *dukkha*.

But no matter how much we snivel, it is of no practical value because we are not rectifying it at the root cause. This is where the remedy should be applied. When we have corrected the cause, *dukkha* will gradually, cease in proportion to our ability, our wise judgment and our circumspect wisdom. Thus the Lord never taught about other things because it would be teaching one to chase after shadows—like saying, “Look over there! Look over there!”—which is just looking away from the real culprit, the original cause. Of paramount importance is to teach the principal cause, because that is where the *kilesas* originate.

What are we going to do? How are we going to cope? What is the origin of *dukkha* and the hardship which all beings must suffer? What is the origin of birth, ageing, illness and death? These are caused by the *kilesas* which are the source and the prime-mover. Where could they arise other than in the heart? They are right here. And that’s why the Lord didn’t teach about other places. Where do we

seriously investigate the principle of reason (cause and effect) so as to gradually see the truth and steadily uproot the *kilesas*? We must do it here. This is where we bind ourselves and accumulate the *kilesas* because of our ignorance and stupidity.

And so when we uproot the *kilesas*, with the means of *satīpaññā* (mindfulness and wisdom)—which increase in their depth and discernment—we must also do that here. We have to maintain mindfulness at this place. This is the spot at which we must be extremely careful and vigilant. This is the point which we must closely protect and support. The point is the heart. This is what we nourish with mindfulness, with the practice of *bhāvanā* (mind development). We can increase our present mindfulness by careful cultivation. Protect it well. We must not allow this *citta* to go out and become involved with the external affairs and to then bring them back to burn ourselves with. This is the protection.

Eradication comes by probing and reasoning into the basis of truth. Whatever is detrimental we must try and correct with reason and analysis into its fundamental nature, so that we can put it right at the point where it arises and gradually ceases. The true principal culprit is the *citta*. It is the *citta* that takes up birth and ceaselessly wanders in *samsāra vaṭṭa* (the cycle of birth and death) for an unaccountable length of time. The accumulated corpses—through repeated births and deaths of just one person—are enough to fill the whole world. But we can neither comprehend nor account for them; they are beyond reckoning. We don't know how to add it all up because of our blinding ignorance which totally conceals all the truth about ourselves. What remains is just deception and delusion, where no essence of truth can be found.

The Lord therefore taught to correct it here. We should try to develop well our mindfulness so that it can catch up with our thoughts and imaginings. They are conceived in the *citta* and then agitate it constantly. Given that we already have mindfulness, as soon as there is the slightest rippling of the *citta*—when it begins to conceive—both *sati* and *paññā* (mindfulness and wisdom) will also in turn be

aroused simultaneously. As we sit and watch right at the place where all the developments originate—right at the heart—we will notice it as soon as it begins to set in motion. We will then gradually see it. Truly, this is where the deception of the *citta* takes place.

The way the *citta* can understand the truth is, by the means of *paññā*. We must investigate into the nature of the *dhātu khandha* (body) until the truth of it is fully embedded in the *citta*. This is when the truth about each different part of the body becomes distinctly clear within the *citta*. We must investigate many, many times and then we will be fully impressed. Each time we investigate, we will learn and understand more, until with many repetitions the understanding will accumulate and become extremely profound until we become totally convinced.

Rūpa (form)! Listen! What is *rūpa*? Hair of the head, hair of the body, nails, teeth, skin, flesh, sinews and bones are all *rūpa*. This includes every internal part and organ which is on the physical and material side. The Lord called this the form aggregate, or simply the body. Alright! Look here! While exploring and probing we must have *sati* (mindfulness) following our perception of any part or organ of the body. Let *sati* direct the work of investigation and *paññā* screen it. As the knowingness is aware of the body, *paññā* should correspondingly screen the information for true understanding and *sati* should constantly acknowledge. This is our work.

We have done enough of the work of drifting and wandering, of thinking and imagining—without *sati*. They have been enormously harmful to our heart and have afflicted it severely. This sort of thinking and imagining has been of no benefit or practical value to us. But this other work is the way of totally uprooting the *dukkha* and peril that are within us. This work should be carried on with *sati* directing, with *paññā* doing the work of reflection and reasoning, and with the knowingness following the cognition of each bodily condition—by taking each particular condition as a guideline for the heart to follow. *Satipaññā* must con-

stantly follow closely, as writing follows the ruled line. *Sati* must be constantly supporting and observing. This is the '*kammaṭṭhāna* sight-seeing trip' to the cemetery found within ourselves.

We must not let over-eagerness for a speedy realization—following our heart's desire—take over the truth under investigation. Keep our understanding to what we have already comprehended and continually keep on with our contemplation. We just want to differentiate and penetrate into the nature of the body, which is merely covered with a thin membrane of skin that deceives the eyes of the world and everyone of us. It's not even as thick as a palm-leaf. That's the skin. Whichever way we investigate will always be for the overcoming of our delusion. It can also be rather absorbing.

Alright! Let's look up to the top and down to the bottom, and outside and inside the body. Let's become engrossed in this sight-seeing trip. Don't merely go along, but have *sati* follow right behind, and *paññā* to scrutinize the perception of each particular part of the body. Then looking up or down or at any part will always be in accordance with the *Sacca dhamma*. This is exerting to the utmost; this exertion is the work of removing and eradicating the poison of *upādāna* (attachment) that possesses and clings to every part of the body.

This is the reason why *dukkha* is everywhere. It is this *upādāna* which is the principal culprit. This universal *dukkha* refers to the *dukkha* in the heart caused by attachment, and not the *dukkha* of the body. As for bodily *dukkha*—which arises due to illness—the Lord Buddha and the *Sāvakas* also had to experience it because the *khandhas* fall under the laws of *anicca*, *dukkha* and *anattā*, and must obey them. But the *citta* that has transcended *anicca*, *dukkha* and *anattā*, or that is in a position to do so, must investigate these things so that it will not be affected through being unmindful. This is because visualizing what we are made up of is done for seeing the truth. It is of paramount importance because it will prevent all things from affecting the heart. In other words, this will keep *dukkha* from arising

within us caused by our fabricating and imagining the fantasy that the body is ours and belongs to us. Investigate it. Probe right into it.

Alright! What is the nature of skin? What about the animal hides that are made into handbags and shoes?

Alright! Let's look at the whole lot: the flesh, sinews and bones.

Look! Both animal flesh and human flesh are alike. Look into it! What's the nature of bone? What's the difference between animal and human bone? Look right at the complete truth within yourself! Keep on looking! Just look at this body, which is the object that's inherently inviting and challenging. Why can't your heart comprehend it? Why isn't it bold and courageous? Once we have seen the truth, this is enough to begin challenging the deception. The truth, realized with *paññā*, is extremely powerful and capable of gradually wiping out those false views until they are entirely eliminated.

The truth that appears within the heart can arise by means of *satipaññā*. This truth is valid in two respects. In one respect, all the truth of *rūpa*, *vedanā*, *saññā*, *sankhāra* and *viññāṇa* is real—their very existence is a challenge itself. When *paññā* has fathomed and realized the truth of these conditions, it will then become the truth—the truth within the heart. Such is the way of uprooting the *kilesas*. Once these two truths merge, they are no longer harmful but are capable of totally eradicating all the poison and peril out of the heart.

While we were on the *kammaṭṭhāna* sight-seeing tour of the body, we have examined and contemplated its various organs, both large and small. Now we must continue with this *kammaṭṭhāna* trip to see how this body ends in transformation and dissolution. We must fix our attention at this place to see in what way it will decay and rot away until it's completely disintegrated and dispersed. The body must definitely go this way, though the method we use to fix our attention can vary following our own inclination and preference. Suppose that we wish to fix

our attention at a particular object so as to see it clearly within the *citta*. Whatever object we take—skin, for instance—must be firmly held so that it appears in the field of perception. We must make that image appear in the *citta*, with *sati* pinpointing and concentrating at that point.

Alright! Whether that image appears, high or low, we must not speculate on its position. The object under investigation must be taken as the most important target to set our awareness on, with *sati* directing our attention.

Alright! Should that object undergo any change, let it be clearly perceived right here and now—at the time of the investigation. Whether high or low, let us just be aware that it is so.

Don't imagine that it's too high or too low or has already left the body. At first we think we are investigating inside the body: "This particular object is supposed to be inside the body, so why is it now outside?" We must not think like that. If we don't let go of the awareness that is being focused on the target of our investigation—even if it may be high or low, inside or outside—we will come to experience something unusual and marvelous from that object. For instance, if we concentrate on 'flesh', be it of any part of the body, we must do it so as to see it clearly within ourselves. Then it will gradually transform and break apart.

With *sati* firmly established—which is when we have undivided attention firmly fixed in front of us—the *citta* will know that it is doing the work and that *paññā* is doing the analysis. In a short while that object begins to transform, meaning it begins to decay and decompose.

Alright! Let's get to see it very clearly, without fear of death. Why should we be afraid—we are looking at the truth and not our own demise.

Alright! Disintegrate! This is how I investigated. Each of the different parts simply broke-up. It was really absorbing doing that investigation—this investigation of my own body. Yet, while being absorbed in the investigation, it seemed

that the body had completely vanished. Awareness of the body was not apparent even though I was investigating the body.

Alright! The body decomposes. The head falls off and an arm breaks off right in front of our eyes. The other arm falls off exposing a piece of bone. Then everything inside ruptures and bursts out.

Alright! Keep on looking! Keep absorbed with this perception! It keeps on breaking up! Some of the liquids seep into the ground and some evaporate into the air. That's the way it goes, some of the fluids percolate into the ground and some escape into the atmosphere.

Once all the liquids have either permeated into the ground or vanished into the air, the body parts dry out. They gradually dehydrate until they finally turn into earth. Then both the earth and the bones of the body merge, coalescing together to become one and the same substance. We see it clearly.

The more solid parts, like the bones for instance, can then be steadily focused on; sometimes burning them with fire, at other times letting them slowly decompose and crumble to dust, until you can vividly see that they have completely merged with the earth, becoming one with it.

In my investigation the earth and water elements appeared the most distinct, but the earth element was especially profound and impressive to the heart. The water element appeared just as water, and both the air and fire elements didn't pose a problem. They were not the weighty objects of investigation and didn't appear so profoundly within the heart, as did the investigation of the body, which is rather a gross object. Once everything had entirely disintegrated and dispersed into the earth, the *citta* became peaceful and tranquil. Everything at that moment became serene and at peace. This can happen.

But while doing the investigation, don't speculate or fantasize. You should take only the truth within you as your possession, and as your living testimony.

Don't take speculation and fantasy as your evidence and mode of practice, for they are others' possessions and do not belong to you. Your own possessions are what you have realized by yourself, and whatever they are, let them happen within yourself. In other words, let your genuine possession be what you have realized and practiced for yourself. Such is the way you should practice.

At other times, the results were not always like that, though they still happened following natural principles. When the body had disintegrated and dispersed into the earth, some skeleton parts still remained in a partial state of decomposition. Then an anticipation appeared in the heart predicting that even these remains would also eventually turn to earth. So even though at that time there was absolutely no awareness of the body, there was still some thinking and conceiving in the *citta*. Shortly after that, the ground suddenly swelled up out of nowhere and swallowed up the rest of the remains, transforming them all into earth. When all of the skeleton remains had completely turned into earth, the *citta* for some unknown reason reacted in another way and caused all of them to disappear. The ground that had previously swelled and swallowed the partially decomposed skeleton remains, transforming them all into earth, was no longer evident.

Then the knowledge and realization arose that every part of the entire body is made of earth, and that they had all returned to the earth. A few moments later the *citta* again reacted in a mysterious way and all the earth simply vanished. Everything disappeared. All that remained was pure awareness. It was then completely empty, and there arose an indescribable feeling of wonder and amazement, because this kind of result from the investigation had never happened before. But then it actually happened and was vividly perceived and experienced. The *citta* then remained in the state of singularity, without a single moment of duality, because it was truly in an absolute state of oneness. As soon as the *citta* began to stir, duality would reappear with the thought process. But at that time there was absolutely no thought process. There was only the awareness of pure awareness—

a transcendently marvelous state of awareness. During that time, everything was perfectly serene and at peace—and totally empty—completely devoid of the physical world: no trees, no mountains. Nothing! It could probably be said that they had all turned into space; but then again, the one who experienced this did not construe them to be so. Only the knowingness was there; that's all that can be said.

The *citta* remained for many hours in this state of calm. When it came out, everything remained serene and peaceful, even when particular objects were focused on. That kind of experience probably happens just once for each practitioner. Personally, it happened to me only once and never occurred again.

But even so, I could still investigate into the basis of truth according to the skill of the *citta*, until I succeeded every time. The transformation process into earth, water, air and fire was vividly distinct every time I investigated it. This kind of experience is capable of strengthening the *citta*, making it well acquainted with the truth—the genuine earth, water, air and fire—as well as being capable of gradually uprooting the view of 'I' and 'mine'. For in truth, we should consider the body as the elements, or as the earth element, for it is precisely that. It is not 'I' or 'mine' following our opinions and imaginings.

By repeatedly investigating and then continually understanding—constantly and perpetually keeping this going—the profundity of your understanding will steadily deepen until you clearly comprehend and detach yourself from the view of body as 'I' and 'mine'. Then there will be merely the body. If we call it 'body', that is merely a label. We could also call it a phenomenon, if we like. Once the *citta* has sufficiently understood, nothing can pose a problem. Whatever the heart may call it, it can't pose a problem, because the problem is solely within the heart. It's therefore necessary to correct our problems by disengaging ourselves from our delusion and fantasy and thus entering into the truth of Dhamma—the pure awareness. Externally, there are merely elements, though we might suppose them to be

a body. They are really the elements, plain and simple elements. Returning to the *citta*, it is purely *citta*. Both of them are the Truth—the all-embracing Truth.

Alright! Should *vedanā* (feeling) appear, let it do so, for it is also a variety of element or a form of *sabhāva dhamma* (natural processes) similar to the body. This is how they are related. *Saññā* is notion. As soon as concocting begins, we would realize that this originates from the *citta*, fabricating and forming opinions. When we understand this, the *citta* will disengage and *saññā* immediately cease. But if we are not aware of this it will continue on in succession, like a chain reaction. When we become aware of this, it will stop at the moment when *sati* catches up with it. It will then cease to concoct concepts and associations of ideas. This is what is meant by *sati* being up with; if it can't catch up with it, then the train of thoughts will perpetually go on and on.

The investigation of the body should be of the greatest concern. The Lord therefore taught the four *Satipaṭṭhāna* (Four Foundations of Mindfulness) which are completely found within the body and *citta*. The *Sacca dhammas* are also found here. The Lord taught them with regard to this place—that is to say with regard to the *citta*. What is the purpose of all these investigations? They are for the purpose of making the *citta* realize and comprehend according to truth, so that it can then relinquish its deluded attachment to the view of 'self'.

Alright! When we have completely eliminated our false belief in the four elements of earth, water, air and fire—as well as those of *vedanā*, *saññā*, *sankhāra* and *viññāṇa* (feeling, memory, thoughts and sense awareness) which make up the five *khandhas* (aggregates), we must then investigate the delusion of the *citta*. See! It's still a problem.

This level of delusion is insidious due to the subtle nature of its *kilesas* causing a subtle misconception of the *citta*. We must move in closer and investigate. What do we use as the basis for this investigation? We are investigating the *citta*, and

the *citta* is *nāma dhamma* (incorporeal). Not only the *citta* is *nāma dhamma*; so are *vedanā*, and the *kilesas* and *paññā* (wisdom). All *nāma dhammas* can coexist and interrelate. Since the *kilesas* and the *citta* are both *nāma dhammas*, they associate together.

Alright! *Paññā* must therefore do the searching for it is also *nāma dhamma*. We must investigate the *citta* in the same way as we did *vedanā*, *saññā*, *sankhāra* and *viññāṇa*, by differentiating and analyzing so as to see its true nature.

We must put the *citta* in the dock, and we must hit hard at the accused. It has gathered its corruptions into itself and is conceited, thinking that it is all-wise and all-knowing. Indeed, it knows everything about this physical world of forms, sounds, smells, tastes and tactile objects, and about the body, *vedanā*, *saññā*, *sankhāra* and *viññāṇa*; but the problem is that it doesn't know itself! This is where it gets stuck. This is where it is ignorant.

We must now turn *paññā* into the *citta*, dissecting and cutting it so as to penetrate it. We must thrust through to that knowingness, which is the conceited awareness that is the real delusion of the *citta*. After careful and thorough scrutiny and analysis of the conditions that are diffused within the *citta*, it is seen as just another *sabhāva dhamma* (natural process).

Alright! If the *citta* is ruined by the investigation, let it be so. Don't cherish and cling to it. If the *citta* stands up to the truth, it will remain and won't disintegrate. If it stands up to its true nature, it will be free from the corruptions and so arrive at the state of purity. Let's see whether the *citta* will be annihilated or not. Dig into it. Don't cherish anything, not even the *citta*. Don't be afraid that the *citta* will be destroyed or dispersed or vanish. Once *paññā* has completely wiped out the infiltrators, every kind of *kilesa* will disappear for they are all the falsity existing within the *citta*. When the investigation really gets moving properly, those things that are vulnerable to dispersion will not be able to withstand; they will disintegrate.

But the nature that cannot be annihilated under any circumstances, will always remain. How could this *citta* disappear?

Please notice that it is the *citta* that is dominated by the *kilesas*. Once *pāññā* has totally shattered and cleared the *kilesas* away, the *citta* will be transformed into the state of purity. This is the genuine purity. How can it vanish? Were it to disappear, how could it be pure? Everything else dissolves and disintegrates, but this one is the genuine *amata* (the Undying). It is deathless by way of purity. This is not the *amata* that spins with the *vaṭṭa cakka* (the revolving wheel of birth and death). The other is called the undying, but it also whirls with the *vaṭṭa cakka*. This *amata* is undying and does not revolve. It is *vivaṭṭa*—undying and non-revolving. This is the real and true essence existing in the midst of our *khandhas*.

This is indeed the main culprit, the one that incites and agitates the *citta*, fooling it to be deluded by the world and the *dhātu* (elements), by the *khandhas* and the various *vedanā*, and by pain, illness, confusion and madness. In truth, these things voice no opinions. Whatever the body is, that's what it is. When *vedanā* arises, it does so in its natural way. It does not know that it is *vedanā*, that it is *dukkha* or *sukha* or neutral or whatever. It is this *citta* that forms the opinions and ideas about them and then falls for its own opinions and ideas, gaining no benefit but only afflicting itself with much harm.

We must therefore investigate them with *pāññā* to see according to their true nature. What will then disintegrate? What have we got to lose? If the body should break, let it break. It is *anicca*, *dukkha* and *anattā*, as the Lord always said. These *dhammas* reign over the entire physical world, so why shouldn't they rule over the *khandhas*? If it falls under the laws of *anicca*, *dukkha* and *anattā*, how can we interfere? Let go of it! If it can't withstand, let it break! Everything in this physical world is breaking and dissolving. Some sooner, others later, but surely our *khandhas* can't last for eons and eons for they fall under the same laws and limita-

tions. So let's investigate to see according to truth before they break up. This is circumspect *paññā*. Let's get to comprehend clearly when *dukkha vedanā* appears.

Alright! Today we climb into the ring. That's it. Today we are going into the ring in order to realize the truth in accordance with the principle of Dhamma, not to fail and go under. You see! When *dukkha vedanā* arises, that's *dukkha vedanā*'s business; and the investigation of *dukkha vedanā* in the *khandhas* is the business of *satipaññā*. We want to find out the truth, from this investigation; so how can we be obliterated? We neither do it for our downfall nor our own destruction, but we do it for victory and for the penetrative discernment and all-embracing realization of every aspect of truth within our hearts. Then we will be free from these things—this is the highest blessing.

The Lord said that “*Nibbāna sacchikiriya ca etammangalamuttamaṃ*” (The realization of *Nibbāna* is the highest blessing). This is the way for the realization of *Nibbāna*. This is the way to do it. *Nibbāna* is concealed because the *citta* is being covered and totally obscured by the *kilesa*, *tañhā* and *avijjā* (defilements, cravings and ignorance). We must therefore remedy this by the method of investigation and analysis to see in accordance with the truth. This is the way of revealing and uncovering all the things that have been hidden. It is called the way of realizing *Nibbāna* to see it clearly within the heart. Once it is clearly perceived, it will be *etammangalamuttamaṃ* the highest blessing. What can be any higher than *Nibbāna sacchikiriya*? This is really the highest. From there on it is *Phutthassa lokadhammehi cittaṃ yassa na kampati asokaṃ virajaṃ khemaṃ etammangalamuttamaṃ*—whatever comes into contact with it, the *citta* is no longer shaken or disturbed. Nothing can reach it or affect it; then what can be said but *khemaṃ*. The Lord said that this is the secure and blissful *citta*. It is the highest blessing.

The two blessings mentioned here are in the heart and nowhere else. It is the heart that is the blessing; yet it is also a curse under the same guise. Right at this

moment we are turning the curse that has infiltrated our hearts into the blessing: *Nibbāna sacchikiriyā*.

Alright! Let's remedy it! Let's unravel it! *Tapo ca brahmacariyañca Ariya Saccāna dassanam*. Here, 'tapo' means the incineration of the *kilesas*. The fiery *kilesas* sear the *citta* so we must incinerate them with this *tapo* (conflagrant) *dhamma* which is *satipaṇṇā*. It's an affliction to the *kilesas* that scorches and burns them.

Ariya Saccāna dassanam means the realization of the *Ariya Sacca* (Four Noble Truths). *Dukkha* is now fully understood within the *citta*, and *Samudaya* (the cause of *dukkha*) is completely relinquished. *Magga* (the Path) is fully developed to its ultimate level of *mahā-sati* and *mahā-pañṇā* (supreme mindfulness and supreme wisdom). What else is left to say? *Nirodha* (the total cessation of *dukkha*) has appeared. This is the way of seeing the *Sacca dhamma*. The one who truly sees and completely realizes the *Sacca dhamma* is the one who has realized *Nibbāna* and is no longer shaken by all the *loka dhamma* (worldly *dhamma*). This one is the *citta*.

We must try to seize this fundamental essence. The *citta* is of paramount importance. We have already investigated and dealt with the body and everything within the five *khandhas*. All we have to do now is to catch the one that's the principal culprit. If anything should break, let it break. That is the way of this world and has been like that from time immemorial. We have undergone repeated births and deaths for eons and eons, and we are still going down that same road we have gone down before.

That road is the way of nature. No one can interfere with it, but all must follow it. We already have an inkling of the truth of nature's way. What are we going to do now? The wisdom in this explanation ends here. Please take it up for consideration and meditate upon it. Don't remain heedless and complacent. *Nibbāna sacchikiriyā ca etammangalamuttamam*—endeavoring for the realization of *Nibbāna*

is the highest blessing—must one day definitely be the possession of those Buddhist followers who relentlessly strive and exert themselves.

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— T W O —

Māgha Pūjā

15th February, 1976

Today is *Māgha Pūjā* day. It is the day when the Lord Buddha declared his intention to let go of life, taking leave of the world of *samsāra* and the prison of the cycle of birth and death (*vaṭṭa cakka*). He chose to abandon his body and discard the very heavy burden he carried for eighty years. He had borne this extremely oppressive load during all that time, and it was never anything but a burden. Such is the nature of the human body (*dhātu khandha*).

By contrast, other things are sometimes heavy and sometimes light, allowing us to occasionally catch a breath. For example, food and water are heavy when we have to carry them, but as we steadily use them, they become lighter and lighter. But we have been bearing the load of our body since birth, and it never gets lighter. It's always heavy. As we advance in years and our strength declines, it seems increasingly heavy. That is why the Buddha declared: “*Bhārā have pañcakkhandhā*”—these five groups are an extremely heavy load.

Apart from shouldering the heavy load of this body, we also have painful feeling, memory, thought and consciousness to put up with—all burdensome and piercing to the heart. Not only are they oppressive, but they are also sharp-pointed, so they pierce through the body and the heart.

The Lord Buddha put up with this body until he was eighty years old. To put it simply, he must have said: “Oh! This body is beyond bearing. It is time to leave it!” Thus he declared that in three months’ time he would abandon life and lay down the burden. He made the decision on the full moon day of the third lunar month.

On that very same day, twelve hundred and fifty noble disciples (*Ariya Sāvakas*) assembled together, spontaneously, without invitation, each coming his own initiative. The Lord Buddha then expounded the teaching to the *Arahant* disciples, delighting them with the bliss of the Buddha Dhamma. This gathering thus became the Pure Assembly (*Visuddhi Uposatha*). Here is a brief outline of what was said on that day.

*Sabbaṭṭhapaṇṇāsa akaraṇaṃ kusalassūpasampadā
Sacitta pariyodāpanaṃ etaṃ Buddhānasāsaṇaṃ
Anūpavādo anūpaghāto pāṭimokkhe ca samvaro
Mattaññutā ca bhattasmiṃ pantañca sayanāsaṇaṃ
Adhicitte ca āyogo, etaṃ Buddhānasāsaṇaṃ*

The Buddha gave this teaching to the twelve hundred and fifty *Arahants* as a form of diversion on that afternoon. For those *Arahants*, it was more of an enjoyment than an exhortation, because all of them were already Pure Ones, no longer needing instruction to cleanse the *kilesas* and *āsavas* from their hearts. That is why they were called the Pure Assembly. In the history of Buddhism, this was the sole occasion that the Lord Buddha expounded his teaching to a gathering of 1250 *Arahant* disciples. During the Lord Buddha’s lifetime up until his final passing away (*Parinibbāna*), it never occurred again.

We commemorate the Buddhas and *Arahants* because of their rare brilliance. They were figures of wonder among all people throughout the world, for worldly people's hearts are corrupted by the stain of *kilesas*, so none of them could be considered pure like the *Arahants*.

Sabbapāpassa akaranam—to refrain from unwholesome actions which give rise to all kinds of *dukkha*. The evil nature of the heart is critically important. We can act unwholesomely all the time. The bad actions of body and speech have their limitations, but the evil of the *citta*, which depresses and dulls itself, is prompted by our own thinking and imagining. The agents that push and compel the *citta* into sadness and depression are those things in the *citta* which are already murky and defiled. The Lord Buddha called them *kilesas*. They are those factors which maneuver *saññā* and *sankhāra* into functioning. They cause the *citta* to become gloomy and disconsolate. Evil acts of wrongdoing are not merely actions like robbery, looting and plundering. That is evil on a gross level. But our tendency is to continually generate the intermediate and more subtle evils in our hearts all the time, and this automatically brings feelings of depression. The heart that is downcast will be downcast wherever we go because we constantly create that condition in our hearts. Walking, standing, sitting or reclining—our hearts always imagine and contrive, thus we become miserable in every posture. The Lord Buddha urged us not to produce gloom and misery for ourselves. This is one aspect of his teaching.

What method will prevent the heart from being gloomy and depressed? *Kusalassūpasampadā*—we must develop enough wisdom to be capable of correcting this depression. By cleaning out the gloom-makers and the evils, we will then have *Sacitta pariyoḍapanam*—a bright and cheerful heart. When our cleverness—which is our *satipaññā*—has cleaned out all the filth and gloom from the heart, it becomes *Sacitta pariyoḍapanam*—bright and clear. Evils, great and small, then gradually fade away as the *citta* becomes purified.

The teaching of all the Buddhas is like this. They all say: “Do it this way. There is no alternative”. Any easier way would be known by the wisest of all, the Lord Buddha. He would have woven us all a hammock to lounge around in as we progressively eliminate the *kilesas*. This would accord with his reputation as a teacher full of love and compassion, ministering to a world full of frail and grumbling beings. In fact, the Lord Buddha had already used his superior skill and ability to establish the shortest and most direct path.

Each of the Buddhas had to cultivate the Perfections (*pāramī*) before realizing *Buddhahood*. They used the Dhamma in their hearts to drive out the *kilesas* and then taught this as the true and correct way. They tested and selected with the maximum power of their minds before discovering and teaching Dhamma suitable for all living beings. ‘Suitable’ here does not mean suitable to people’s liking; it refers to a practice suited to overcoming the *kilesas*.

Dhamma that is right and suitable has just this one purpose. No other *dhammas* can surpass the Middle Way of practice passed on by the Lord Buddha. The *kilesas* are not frightened by any other means or methods. Nothing else can eject them from the heart, or even scratch their skins.

Anūpavādo—Don’t slander other people.

Anūpaghāto—Don’t harm or kill human beings or animals.

Pāṭimokkhe ca saṁvaro—Keep your behavior within the bounds of Dhamma, which is the means of uprooting the *kilesas*.

Mattaññutā ca bhattasmim—Know the right measure in using food and living frugally. Don’t indulge and exceed what is reasonable for a practitioner. Know the right amount in whatever you’re involved with.

Pantañca sayanāsanam—Look for seclusion, and use this solitude to deal with the *kilesas*.

Adhicitte ca āyogo—Develop the *citta* to excel in Dhamma, employing *satipaññā*, step by step.

Etam Buddhānasāsanam—This is the essence of the teaching of all the Buddhas.

This was the Dhamma with which the Lord Buddha delighted all the *Sāvakas*. To those *Sāvakas* who were not yet *Arahants*, he also taught *Sabbapāpassa akaranam*. This is a practice necessary for us to follow, the only way we can gradually destroy the *kilesas* in our hearts. But do we genuinely feel this to be true, or is it merely that hammock that takes our fancy?

The essence of the pure Dhamma, imparted by each Buddha, is directly drawn from each of their hearts. But have we received it into ours? The Lord Buddha shared it with his utmost love (*mettā*). Do we receive it with full devotion and trust? With total mind and heart? If we merely feign acceptance of the Dhamma and later discard it, then it will have no value for us at all, and that would go against the Buddha's original intention.

The Lord Buddha decided to relinquish his body on the full moon day of the sixth lunar month. He had announced this on the third month's full moon—which is today. From that moment on, the elements (*dhātu*) and *khandhas*—with all their oppressive and irritating affects—vanished from the Lord. This is *Anupādisesa Nibbāna* (complete passing away without remainder). No more worries, no more responsibilities to any *sammuti* (mundane convention). Nothing remained. This is the Dhamma that transcends the world. The ultimate Dhamma.

The world comprises various forms of *sammuti*, evident everywhere. The three realms of existence are the worlds of *sammuti*, the worlds of assumption and change, the worlds of *anicca*, *dukkha* and *anattā*—the governing principles of all existence. No one can resist them. But once we have transcended them, all concerns come to an end. *Nicchāto parinibbuto*—craving totally ends. No mundane conventions remain. It is from this Dhamma that all the truths taught by the Buddha emanate.

If we take this Dhamma deeply to heart in our practice, then it will ‘ring and roar’ in our hearts. At first, it will resound in a cool, calm and peaceful condition of heart: namely, the various levels of *samādhi*. Then it will resonate with *paññā* in our reflection and analysis, so that we can gradually free ourselves, step by step. Finally, it will resound in the pure (*visuddhi*) state wherein we are completely released. There, *Nicchāto parinibbuto*—all craving is entirely extinguished. The source of these cravings is all of the various kinds of *kilesas*, which are never sated, never satisfied. Such is the nature of the *kilesas*. All the waters of the ocean cannot match this craving. *Natthi tañhā samā nadī*—the waters of river and ocean cannot equal the *kilesas*—the cause of craving. They continually engulf the hearts of sentient beings and never run out.

How can we dry up these waters? We must bail them out, using the energy of our practice, until they eventually diminish. We must drain these waters every day, scrutinizing, understanding and relinquishing them every day. Then the waters will not appear to be so great. They are really only as large as our *khandhas*: *rūpa, vedanā, saññā, sankhāra, viññāṇa*—that’s all. But for the heart that is attached to them, they are a heavy matter. The heart doesn’t grasp after a piece of land; instead it seizes hold right here. This is the big issue, a hot and heavy concern. The *kilesas* are the very things that fuel the fires of the heart. No other fires can burn as hot as the fires of *kilesa-tañhā-āsava*. They inhabit the heart where they endlessly turn up the heat.

We all know about floods. And when our lungs are flooded, the doctor can drain them. But when *kilesa-tañhā-āsava* engulf the heart, what are we going to use to pump them out? There are only faith, effort mindfulness and wisdom to use. So we must probe, examine and investigate in order to see things clearly, as they really are. What does the heart cling to? What are its false assumptions? Does it ever heed the voice of Dhamma?

The *kilesas* usually tend to play smart with the Buddha. They are his adversaries. They must always assert their cleverness with the Dhamma and contend with it. Grasping is the *kilesa's* way, while correcting and uprooting the *kilesas* is Dhamma's way. Dhamma extracts the *kilesas* with wisdom, transcending them to arrive at the supreme happiness of the *Nibbāna* Dhamma, or the Pure Dhamma. So there is always this rivalry between the *kilesas* and Dhamma.

Keep on trying! Don't lose out to those things. This time you have now entered the boxing ring and must resolve to be the champion. Fight without backing down. Better to die than to let them carry you out of the ring. Even though you may be floored, if you are alive and still able to return the fight, then battle on. If you cannot manage to fight anymore, then you can still curse them right there in the ring. What harm can that do? We are fighters, so if we can no longer fight the *kilesas*, then at least we can curse every mother and father of them. This is your single remaining weapon. When you are down and cannot punch back, you still have a mouth. You can still denounce, scold and curse even though you are knocked down.

This is only an analogy of course. To be a warrior doesn't mean we go around cursing and abusing anyone, but rather that we combat the *kilesas*. We must fight in a manner befitting a disciple of the *Tathāgata*, who was himself of the warrior class.

Have you noticed how our teachers practiced? The *ācariyas* whom we respect so deeply were all warriors in this way. If that's how they triumphed, why should they teach us to go in a different direction?

Alright! Keep switching and varying your probe with *paññā* and stay on top of events within your mind. This *paññā* possesses such a sharp discernment that it is capable of drawing us out of the deep mud hole where we've been stuck, buried in the *dhātus* and *khandhas*, for countless eons. Ultimately, we end up with the *citta*,

where again we must pull everything out. The ‘I’ must be extracted from form (*rūpa*), from the body (*kāya*) and from the elements: earth, water, fire and wind. We must pull the *citta* out of *dukkha vedanā*, the painful feeling which we have assumed to be the self. The way to withdraw from *rūpa* is simply to let go of that very form that we grasped as self. We pull away from *vedanā*, *saññā*, *sankhāra viññāṇa* which we think of as ‘I’ and ‘mine’. Use wisdom right there to try and root out the self-identity, keep up with whatever is going on.

The *citta* is subtle and extraordinary. The body, in contrast, is nothing special—no matter how much we cling to it in our delusion. Is it not our utter stupidity that makes us so readily shoulder this gross thing without ever wanting to put it down? If we were really smart and considered what’s behind it all, instead of shouldering it, we’d let go of it. Why carry it? Probe and investigate this matter carefully. You do have mindfulness and wisdom, after all!

We must not dread dying. Why be afraid? Fear is just another *kilesa*. Why build up *kilesas* by being frightened? We must build courage because this is the quality that counters the *kilesas*. Bring it out to fight the *kilesas* in order to find out what actually dies. In fact, nothing dies. The *kilesas* are always lying to us about death. The moment we are unguarded, they immediately sneak in and whisper: “When will I die? Today? Tomorrow? Here? Over there? I’m going to die very soon!” We upset ourselves with such thinking, while the *dhātu* (elements) just remain there, indifferent. In this way we complicate matters and confuse ourselves by thinking that we are responsible. What kind of responsibility is that? It’s more like self-confusion than self-responsibility. If we are truly self-responsible and self-reliant, then our hearts must have full *satipaññā* for investigating and rooting out the *kilesas*. It must probe and extract all the anxieties and confusions about life, death, sickness and the rest—never easing off or allowing the *kilesas* in to fool us. This is the practitioner who truly takes responsibility for himself. We must investigate everything—both close in and all around—until we know them and can extract

them completely from the heart. Then we will have serene contentment. That happiness is found right here in the heart. Success and right responsibility are also right here.

We may hear news that some person is *Sotāpanna*, *Sakādagāmi*, *Anāgāmi* or *Arahant*. But what about us? Our news is only about weakness, discouragement, depression, stupidity, dejection and chaos. This is our whole story. Doesn't it run contrary to the reports we hear about those others? Our personal news is exactly the opposite of those who possess the 'Aryan Treasure', which is the Dhamma wealth in their hearts. If our news is really like that, then it can only concern the thousand-and-one kinds of *dukkha*. 'Sinking in the mud' is more like it. Unwanted news makes up the account of our lives; and because we create this story, we must also bear the result.

Who is Dhamma intended for? Who is it taught for? Who makes up the Buddhist community, if not us? Surely the Dhamma was taught and intended for us. What are we taught to overcome? Do we have the means to accomplish it? Yes, they are right here with us. It's as if the Buddha is right here before our very eyes, pointing them out to us. They're not in the distant past; they are fresh and up-to-date. The Dhamma of the Lord Buddha exists here with us now, so what's the use of all our speculation?

"The Buddha realized *Nibbāna* at a distant time and place. He taught the Dhamma long ago so by now it has become stale and insipid. Its true flavor cannot have lasted until today".

There! Listen to that! The *kilesas* lie to us, can't we hear them?

Please beware this kind of *Māra* whose fabrications destroy the person who believes in such ideas, mashing him to pulp. The truth of Dhamma belongs to no specific time or era; it is always with anyone who is searching for the truth.

How can Dhamma vanish with time? Why destroy the truth with these ideas, and needlessly bringing ourselves to ruin?

Who in this world can know better than the Lord Buddha? The Buddha, Dhamma and Sangha always stand challenging the *kilesas* in the arena of truth. This condition is *akāliko* (timeless) and therefore *sīla*, *samādhi* and *paññā* are never outmoded or behind the times. They are independent of time and place, and yet they are within everyone. They can be produced at anytime; and whenever cultivated, they grow and develop. This is the way leading to *magga*, *phala* and *Nibbāna*, which is beyond time and place (*akāliko*)—just as the *kilesas* too always exist in the hearts of beings in this world.

People now, as in the Buddha's time, all have *kilesas*. The overcoming of the *kilesas* must also be done with the same *sīla*, *samādhi*, *paññā*, faith and effort. How can the *kilesas* be something of the distant past? They cannot. By rectifying them at the right spot, we could all go beyond *dukkha*. We must uncover whatever is cloaking the heart. Mindfulness and wisdom must be focused on whatever is dark and obscure, taking that as the target for investigation. Where exactly are the sadness and gloom? They are conditions of the heart that we know. It's just like when darkness and light contact our eyes. We perceive darkness as dark, but the "one who knows" the darkness is not in the dark. Light and darkness are known; sadness and cheerfulness are known.

The one-who-knows, knows in this way. We must make *paññā* penetrate further, taking the *citta* or some mental object as our target. Don't be alarmed. Be neither glad nor regretful when sadness and gloom appear within the heart. Look on them as mental conditions that must be investigated, as things which arise, cease and come out from the heart. They depend on the heart for their birth, and then latch on to it. We must examine with persevering effort until we come to understand their true nature. Why get excited or concerned with them? Whatever passes through the heart—that we must know. Then we really are studying and

practicing Buddhism. We have to study until we know, scrutinizing with *paññā* until we understand those things that appear within ourselves. This true knowingness has no ups and downs. It is never like that. Mere conditions should be recognized as such by the practitioner.

When those conditions end, all that remains is the state of complete purity (*pārisuddhi*). From then on there's no longer any concern for those conditions, because they remained a problem only as long as we encountered them in the *citta*. When they are there they have to declare their existence for us to know. So if we want the truth, we must take up the task of investigating *vedanā* (feeling) that appears simultaneously with any sadness, cheerfulness, depression, happiness or suffering which come up. Such is the way of one who knows with all-round *paññā*, and we must use this wisdom to know all those things dwelling as conditions in the *citta*. This is the only place where we can finish off our studies.

They talk of graduating with a Bachelor's, Master's or Doctor's degree or passing the various levels of Pāli study, following popular conventions of the time. The customs and rituals of people with *kilesas* are numerous beyond description, unlike the ways of Dhamma which are always constant and unalterable.

You can have as many grades and degrees as you like, but the *kilesas* don't seem to bother with these things. They just enjoy themselves singing away on top of people's hearts all the time. When were they ever more humble than people? They have greater power than people, stupid people, that is. Intelligent people are able to crush and destroy them, so this is the way we should gain our knowledge and qualification.

The Bachelor's degree in *sīla*, *samādhi* and *paññā* is all around us. That's the one we should get. Then it's on to the Master's and the highest grade, so that we have *eka citta*, *eka Dhamma*—one *citta*, one Dhamma. But this isn't the 'oneness'

(*eka*) of somebody with only one eye, who is nearly blind already. Don't be an *eka* of that kind.

The true *eka* of the Lord Buddha is *eka citta, eka Dhamma*. Study up to this Ph.D. We must have all-round knowledge for this highest (*eka*) degree, replacing ignorance with knowledge about ourselves. We must bring in *paññā* to examine, probe and clear-up until reaching the supreme (*eka*) Dhamma level, or the genuine Dhamma, which are the same. The *citta* and the Dhamma are then one and the same.

Buddham, Dhammam, Sangham saraṇam gacchāmi—taking refuge in the Buddha, Dhamma and Sangha falls within this One Dhamma. *Dhammo padīpo* (the light of Dhamma) always shines brightly. This is the true Dhamma—timeless and unconditioned. Alright! Let's build the Buddha, Dhamma and Sangha right here within our hearts. *Buddham, Dhammam, Sangham saraṇam gacchāmi*—we go for refuge to the Buddha, Dhamma and Sangha. More precisely, we arrive at the Buddha, Dhamma and Sangha in the purity inside the heart, which is the coming together of all three refuges. Get to see them clearly within the heart. This is the way to create a refuge within ourselves. This is the complete *attāhi attano nātho*. We are our own refuge, not needing to depend on anything else.

As is the Buddha, so are the Dhamma, Sangha—Buddha, Dhamma and Sangha are the same. When one has reached this stage, there is no need to go anywhere to pay our respects to the Lord Buddha. We can offer this purity of heart, this wholly pure Dhamma, as our *pūjā* to him. Nothing else can fit together as well as the heart and Dhamma do. The Buddha of the Lord Buddha and our Buddha, are one and the same Buddha. This is indisputable.

Did the Lord Buddha pass away (*Parinibbāna*) a long time ago or not? We no longer ask, because it's only a process involving the *dhātu khandha* (physical elements). The Lord simply let go of his *khandhas* at a certain time, in a certain year

and place. The Noble Disciples (*Sāvaka Sangho*) were just the same. Were they all completely annihilated after they passed away? Was it really like that? This is the view of empty, useless men and women—not the truth of the Dhamma of Supreme Happiness, which validates that state of purity.

What is Sangha? It is the one who is now in possession of the state of purity. This is the real Sangha, which is found within all of us. *Attāhi attano nātho*—we are our own refuge. Make this refuge sufficiently secure. This is an essential point. It is imperative for the *citta* to free itself from all dangers and attain freedom. Whatever is worth attaining is worth striving for. So go for it right here.

Don't upset yourself over anything at all. Nothing in this world really matters. It's simply that our hearts go and get involved with things. We actually look for matters to disturb ourselves, so we must cut them off with *sati* and *paññā*. Wherever we are, we are always alone. We are born alone. When we are sick, it isn't the assembled relatives that are in pain. When we die, we die alone; nobody else can die in our place or deputize for our pain. We alone must suffer illness and die. Therefore, we must help ourselves—*attāhi attano nātho*—using our own mindfulness and wisdom. This is the most correct and appropriate way.

The Lord Buddha decided to let go of his life on this same full moon day. Today we should also resolve to relinquish the *kilesas*. These are the essential things that we must get rid of.

As far as dying is concerned, the Lord Buddha said it wasn't important which day we die on. Whenever the breath runs out, that is the day we die. The only criteria is our last breath. If there's still breath, then we haven't yet died. So we keep on breathing, which is itself no real problem. It's merely a lot of wind. The important point is the laying of a firm spiritual basis and putting ourselves on the alert for the sake of our heart. *Attāhi attano nātho*—we are our own refuge. When this is fully realized we experience contentment in living and dying, whenever or

wherever it may happen. No more problems remain, for they were only a matter of *sammuti* (mundane conventions).

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— T H R E E —

The Middle Way of Practice

18th September, 1962

*T*he way to listen to a *desanā* is to focus your attention in the present. Don't send the mind outward but keep it fixed within. This is for the purpose of truly experiencing the taste of Dhamma right in your heart. It has been expounded that one may gain five benefits while listening to a *desanā*. The benefits that will bear fruits in the future are additional side benefits. For this reason, there were many Buddhist followers who became enlightened while listening to the Lord Buddha's Dhamma discourse. It was because they had all established their minds correctly. They were not concerned with the past or the future, but were only aware of the present—being solely receptive and ready to experience the taste of Dhamma that the Lord was expounding at that time.

When the Lord Buddha first went forth into homelessness, he did so with an extremely great interest in Dhamma. Even prior to that, he had been fascinated and concerned from the moment he successively caught sight of the four *deva-dutas* (signs, i.e. an old man, a sick man, a dead man, and a holy man) to the day of his renunciation. He then strove with diligent effort in his austere practices

and paid attention to his task and undertaking from the first day of his going forth to the day of his Enlightenment. He never abandoned his pursuit or relented in his exertion. Laziness, discouragement and weakness could not prevail over his heart as they do over the hearts of other sentient beings.

It was likewise with all the *Sāvakas* who went forth following the example of the Lord with interest and the aspiration to be free from *dukkha*. When they listened to the words of the Lord's Dhamma, they did so with attentiveness, and took them up and practiced them with devotion. They lived, came or went with mindfulness. Every facet of exertion was truly attended with reflection and application of the truth principle. The results and the rewards of their interest and devotion seem to differ from those of our time. This is due to the immense difference in the appreciation of Dhamma and the intensity of practice. If such is the case, how can the results be the same?

The Lord Buddha never relented nor relaxed in the pursuit of his quest from the first day of his endeavor to the day of his Enlightenment when he had finally attained to his goal and became the *Sāsadā* (Great Teacher) of the world. He then brought the Dhamma out to the Buddhist faithful by teaching and exhorting them following the path of Dhamma by which he already had experienced the results. Those who had received the Dhamma transmitted by the Lord were all joyful and delighted in the essence of Dhamma. Having taken it up and applied it to their practice, they had all in due course of time gained to the various Dhamma attainments and acquired the 'Dhamma Eye', like the Lord had before them.

From the beginning the Lord Buddha was the example and ideal of the Buddhist faithful. This can be seen from the way he practiced. He always spent his time living in the forest. When he renounced the home life, he went forth into the forest. Never did he take an interest in others, not even the kingdom which he had left behind and all the people whom he had ruled over and given peace and security. He was no longer concerned about his princely status but courageously

and unflinchingly stood up to the ordeal of his exertion in Dhamma. In this respect, no one can surpass the Lord. Every mode of practice that he carried out always transcended the world. His renunciation and going forth into homelessness differed from the way of the world, so when the results bore fruit, they also differed. They were then of two different worlds, as his heart had been transformed into the purified heart of a Buddha. The results of his attainment must therefore stand in contrast to the rest of the world.

This was also true in the case of the *Sāvakas*, who had gone forth following the Lord Buddha. When they heard the fundamental instruction given by the Lord, they were highly elated, jubilant and satisfied. The Lord had exhorted them thus: “*Rukkhamūla senāsanam nissāya pabbajjā tatthavo yāvajīvam ussāhokaranīyo*”. This in our own words would mean: “Look yonder! There’s a mountain! A deep forest! Over there are the mountainsides and canyons! There are the creeks and streams, cliffs, hilltops and mountain slopes! There are water fronts and rivers by the hill-sides! These are places of ease and quietude, free from all forms of entanglement. You should all seek this kind of location and strive in these environments”.

The *Tathāgata* attained *Buddhahood* within these settings and surroundings. He did not become enlightened through mingling and socializing. Nor did he become enlightened through indulgence in mirth and gaiety following the flow of *tañhā*, self-seeking ambitions and obsessions, which influence and drag one away through the power of the *kilesas*. The *Tathāgata*, on the contrary, attained to his Enlightenment in secluded and solitary places. Those were the locations where he strove in his strenuous exertion. He escaped from every class of people, from his palace and city so he could remain in such surroundings. The *dukkha* that the *Tathāgata* went through was the *dukkha* derived from his exertion in those secluded and remote places. The *Tathāgata* did not become enlightened amidst the grandeur and magnificence of palaces, at crossroads or market places or in the midst of the crowds and multitudes. The *Tathāgata* attained to his Enlightenment

in solitude and seclusion, totally retired from the world. He accomplished his objective and arrived at the state of purity of a Buddha in those out-of-the-way places.

For this reason, may all of you turn to those places that the *Tathāgata* has described to you. They are in the mountains, hillsides and caves, under shady trees, in deep forests, in open spaces where the air is light and clear. These places are deserted and quiet, free from confusion and trouble. These places are not wanted by people. So, you should seek for such locations and live there, for they are where the *Tathāgata* attained *Buddhahood*. If you aspire for the state free from *dukkha* following the example of the *Tathāgata*, you must go to the places that the *Tathāgata* has pointed out. Then you will definitely one day follow the *Tathāgata* in being rid of lives and existences—the repeated births and deaths that are like a pit of glowing coals.

What is explained above was the Buddha's second fundamental instruction. The first instruction stated: *Pañsakula civaram*..., etc.—“All of you who have gone forth should seek for discarded materials left in the cemeteries or along the road sides, and stitch them together to make your lower robe, upper robe and outer robe, so they may be used to protect your body and maintain your holy life from day to day. This will accord with your asceticism and spartan existence in following the way of Dhamma by subsisting frugally on the four basic requisites of a monk's life (food, shelter, clothing and medicine). You will be content with little and satisfied with whatever requisites are available, and not indulge in using them in an excessive or extravagant manner. You may, however, simply accept a gift of robes presented by lay devotees as it is the way of simplicity and moderation—being easily fed and taken care of—and poses no problems and concerns to the faithful supporters.

The third instruction was: *Pindiyāloṇapabhojanam*...etc.—Having gone forth in the *Sāsana* (Way of Buddhism), you must not be lazy. You should go on *piṇḍapāta*

(almsround), feeding yourself by your own effort using your own two feet, with a pure and honest heart. All the faithful supporters and lay devotees happily and willingly offer the gift of food following the *samaṇa* (holy man or recluse) tradition, without involving the usual transaction of money in the way that people generally do. The practice and observance of going on *piṇḍapāta* as the means of feeding yourself is the pure and impeccable livelihood for one who has gone forth. You should try to maintain this practice for the rest of your life. You should consider any abundance and excess which might occasionally occur as an exceptional circumstance when you have to oblige the laity. But, reflecting your honor and dignity, you must never become heedless and complacent by taking the shower of gifts, because they will then turn into—*sakkāro purisaṃ hanti* : gifts and offerings that kill the unworthy (as the bait kills the fish).

The fourth instruction: *Gilānabhesajja*—this refers to medicine for the remedy of illness, which afflict both *bhikkhus* and lay people alike when the conditions arise. You must know and exercise moderation in requesting assistance from relatives or those supporters who volunteer their service. You must keep your requests well within the bounds of propriety. ‘Knowing moderation’ is the necessary Dhamma which one who has gone forth should always bear in mind. You will then become a *Sanghasobhanā*—a graceful recluse who adorns the *Sāsana* with elegance and beauty, and is one who is well received by fellow Buddhists and the public at large. The important point which a *bhikkhu* must take into consideration is to be cautious and wary of excessiveness and immoderation in dealing with every form of solicitation (with the exception of going on *piṇḍapāta* which is the daily observance practiced by *bhikkhus* and novices). You should never make a habit of visiting and soliciting co-operation from the lay people, and always exercise moderation when dealing with any necessary situation.

After having heard the instruction on these fundamental *dhammas* from the Lord Buddha, the *Sāvakas* gladly took them up and practiced them with zealous

devotion by going into the seclusion and solitude of the forests and mountains unimpeded by concern for their lives and well-being. Though they might have come from varying family backgrounds—some were kings and princes—they would not insist upon maintaining their past status or position. That would merely give rise to conceit, snobbery and contempt for those requisites of living—food and lodging—that the lay supporters provided according to their means and resources. The *Sāvakas* welcomed every kind of food—with the exception of those prohibited by the *Vinaya* (Monastic Code of Discipline)—for the sake of maintaining their life process and supporting a consistent effort in their practice. They were mindful of their exertion, as well as their practical duties and observances. They were attracted to quiet and secluded surroundings away from the noise, confusion the world’s disturbing influences. Their efforts in meditation steadily continued both day and night and in all postures—standing, walking, sitting and lying down. To them nothing was more worthwhile and rewarding than the practice that would rid them of *dukkha*.

The *Sāvakas* considered freedom from *dukkha* to be an invaluable Dhamma more beneficial than the repeated births and deaths resulting from the deception of *avijjā* (ignorance)—the source that causes all sentient beings to ceaselessly suffer *dukkha*. As the *Sāvakas* were totally determined and dedicated to liberation, neither pride of royal blood and family wealth, nor pride of being a scholar or a learned person, could creep into their hearts. For them there was only the devotion to the practice of meditation—the means to lift the *citta* out of *dukkha*. For this reason all of them, from the first to the last *Arahant Sāvaka*, were able to gain Enlightenment following the Lord Buddha.

Therefore, may all of you practitioners turn your attention to the stories of the Lord Buddha and the *Arahant Sāvakas* and contemplate how they practiced in order to arrive at satisfactory results; how they became famous and were revered and venerated by all living beings—*devatā* (deities) from every realm and people

from all walks of life. No one can surpass the Lord Buddha, the Dhamma and the Sangha in wisdom, discernment and accomplishment, for in all of these they were supreme. All of us should reflect upon this. Being easily discouraged and weakened, or being obsessed with food and sleep, are not the way to true nobility and freedom from *dukkha*. They are incapable of making the supreme Dhamma appear within the field of our awareness, which is the heart.

In every movement and posture—standing, walking, sitting and lying down—you should always give heed to reason and constantly be observant of your actions. You should make sure that those actions don't delay your progress or blemish your body, speech and heart. You should delight in seclusion and solitary existence and totally commit your effort, both in body and in heart, solely to the work of meditation. You should have dogged determination as your guide, with every thought and movement pointing toward the goal: freedom from *dukkha*. Then the outcome will undoubtedly be the same as that of the Lord Buddha and the *Sāvaka* since it follows the same path.

The Lord Buddha did not expound the Dhamma teachings—for example, *sammā ditṭhi* (Right View) and *sammā sankappo* (Right Thought)—for just anybody, but specifically for all of us who practice the way of *sīla*, *samādhi* and *paññā* (morality, calm and stability of heart, and wisdom). Once we have trod the path pointed out to us by the Lord and lived and practiced following the fundamental instruction discussed in the foregoing paragraphs—for example, *rukḥhamūla senāsanam*: living at the foot of trees—the result can only be freedom from *dukkha* and the attainment to the natural eminence of a Buddha *Sāvaka* (the Buddha's Noble Disciple), which is the state of purity within one's heart.

You must always be mindful, whether you are standing, walking, sitting or lying down, excepting only when you are asleep and it is beyond your means. Be always inclined to the application of *satipaññā* (mindfulness and wisdom) and strenuous effort. The reality of deliverance will then appear within your heart.

During the Lord Buddha's time, people listened to Dhamma with sincere interest, fixing the Dhamma they heard within their minds. They did not allow the Dhamma to disperse and slip away. Neither did they listen for courtesy's sake, doing it merely as a ritual. Everything that people today do, which includes all the *bhikkhus* here, becomes mere ritual. If you are not really dedicated and firmly determined for freedom from *dukkha*, everything you do will unconsciously turn into ritual. For instance, it would be a mere ritual if we walk *caṅkama* (walking meditation) just to keep up with the schedule we have set. Whether the *citta* and *sati* are in tune with our exertion is a matter of debate, so consequently the forthcoming results will be different from what we expected. And for what reason? Even though we may be walking *caṅkama*, the *citta* is focusing on everything except the Dhamma principle. What is the principle of Dhamma? The Dhamma principle is constant mindfulness while striving in your practice.

When we are focusing our attention to investigate any particular theme or condition of Dhamma, if instead of being concentrated in those objects the *citta* and *sati* are allowed to drift and wander to other places and *ārammaṇa*, drawn by their alluring and seductive powers—an indication that the flow of the heart has already gone astray—then the ensuing results must be contrary to Dhamma. This is what happens when we don't strive to observe our minds, but merely do the practice for its own sake. We might then think wrongly and criticize the *Sāsana*, decrying the Dhamma Teaching of the Lord Buddha as not being the *Niyyānika Dhamma* that is truly capable of leading the practitioners of Dhamma away from *dukkha*. We might blame it for not being equal to the claim that it is the *Svākkhāta Dhamma*, the well-taught Dhamma. In truth, the flow of our heart is constantly pulling toward the world both day and night. So please bear in mind that the world, both internal and external, is different from the Dhamma aspired to by the Lord Buddha. The endeavor of the Lord Buddha and all the *Sāvakas* aimed for the Dhamma principle as the deliverance from *dukkha*. Consequently, all of

their efforts were directed toward eradicating defilements until they were totally removed. Then they attained the state of *Buddho* (Illumination), which the whole world paid homage to. They had attained the consummation of Dhamma because their practices completely accorded with Dhamma. Such is the outcome when the means and ends fall together in complete harmony.

But with us, though we may really be walking *caṅkama* or sitting in *samādhi* meditation, our *samādhi* is merely a stump-like *samādhi*. This is when we actually fall asleep right in *samādhi* practice. We tend to do this often, and some people may do it regularly, though I cannot confirm it. But it is probably the case, since the results always turn out so differently from the Lord Buddha. If the causes accord with Dhamma, the results cannot be otherwise. Both the means and end result must correspond. So if we don't get the right results, it must be because we don't practice following the principle of Dhamma. Instead of walking *caṅkama* or sitting in *samādhi* with *sati* in tune with the Dhamma theme or the *sabhāva dhamma* (process) under investigation, the *citta* turns to something else by sending the flow of the heart out chasing after forms, sounds, smells, tastes, and tactile objects. Furthermore, the *dhammāramāṇa* (mental objects) conceived right in the heart are also about forms, sounds, smells, tastes and tactile objects, either those of the past or of the future. The *citta* never stays in the present for even a single moment. If this is the case, the results must always be mundane, since the flow of the *citta* is constantly involved with worldly affairs.

The *citta*, on the other hand, will also be mundane being *Samudaya*, the origin of *dukkha* that afflicts our hearts with trouble and hardship. As a consequence we find fault with the result: "Why is there anxiety and worry? Why am I miserable today?" We never take into consideration or realize that we perpetually instigate those unpleasant experiences by running at cross-purposes with Dhamma. That's why the outcome has to be like it is.

For this reason all of us who practice must constantly fix within our minds the resolution to be free from *dukkha*. We must never allow our actions done through body, speech, and heart to deviate from the teaching of the Lord Buddha who taught us to seek seclusion and solitude in the deep that are so conducive to our efforts. Never did he exhort anyone to live and practice in the market or at the cross-roads or in crowded places packed with people as if such places would instantly enable us to arrive at a safe haven free from *dukkha*. We must contemplate on what *rukhamūla senāsanam* (living under trees) really means. Every facet of the Dhamma Teaching expounded by all the Buddhas is backed up by sound and justifiable reasons. It is the basis of truth that will always impart benefits to those who observe and practice it. Therefore, the story of the Lord Buddha and the *Sāvakas* is a story of wonder and marvel in respect to how they cultivated the Way and attained the ultimate achievement, becoming great teachers for the whole world.

Whether he is a Great Teacher of the world or an ordinary one, he can only teach us on some occasions. It is of paramount importance for us to take the Dhamma—the principle of truth and reason which is the real essence of the Great Teacher—as the teacher who will constantly teach us. Then every action will always be made known to our teacher, which is our own heart. We must always bear this in mind and not be careless or absent-minded. Otherwise, we will never be able to keep to our course and survive but instead will waste our time uselessly. Don't ever entertain the thought that day and night, either of the past, present or future, are something exceptional or unusual, for they are all the self same day and night. The *kilesas* and *āsavas* that are involved with the heart and all its related conditions are not dependent on time. This is the most significant fact. Please investigate it.

Wherever you go you should always have the Great Teacher guiding you. Whether you are sitting or lying down, standing or walking, you should always be

mindful of your deportment. Without the basis of *sati* and *paññā*, calm of heart and circumspection cannot arise. This is because *satipaññā* and your diligent effort form a protective fence to safeguard them. All that is required is for you to keep within the bounds of *sīla*, *samādhi* and *paññā*, as you tread the path with your strenuous exertion. You will then experience the realm free from *dukkha* right within your own heart without having to ask anyone else about it. Regardless of time, if the *Svākkhāta Dhamma* is still extant in the world, and the one who listens takes it up for study and practices following its instruction with dedication, the result can only be the attainment of freedom from *dukkha*. This you will clearly perceive in your heart. Please keep this in mind, and correct the problem in your heart, or else your practice will steadily degenerate and you will never be able to accomplish anything.

When you are always mindful and constantly probe with *paññā* into the *sabhāva dhammas*—the body, for example—you will constantly come across unusual and extraordinary knowledge. On the other hand, if your efforts are spasmodic, then the forthcoming result will be correspondingly limited. So you should try to cultivate and develop *sati* and *paññā* to be constantly mindful and circumspect. This will definitely contribute to *samādhi*—firmness and stability of heart—and genuine wisdom in the way of *paññā* which arises due to the investigation of the body, *vedanā*, *citta* and *dhamma*, or the investigation of the four *Ariya Sacca* (Noble Truths) of *Dukkha*, *Samudaya*, *Nirodha* and *Magga*. Please also understand that the *Satipaṭṭhāna* and the *Ariya Sacca* are the *dhammas* of the present, which are constantly exhibiting themselves right within your body and heart.

In the *Majjhimā Paṭipadā* (the Middle Way of Practice, i.e. the Noble Eightfold Path), the Lord expounded *sammā dīṭṭhi*—Right View. This means right views of things in general, of specific things, or of the subtle aspect of Dhamma.

The right views of the average Buddhist deals specifically with the belief in vice and virtue: that those who practice virtue reap the fruits of virtue, and those who

practice evil reap the fruits of evil, and so on. They have the conviction that these things truly exist. This is one level of *sammā diṭṭhi*.

The specific understanding of the practitioner who investigates the four *Satipaṭṭhāna*, or the four *Ariya Sacca*, with *paññā* is another level of *sammā diṭṭhi*. Here you contemplate the body, *vedanā*, *citta* and *dhamma* to see them as the *ti-lakkhaṇa* (three characteristics of existence), that they are all intrinsically *anicca*, *dukkha* and *anattā* (impermanent, suffering and not-self). You build up your faith and firm conviction in the *Sacca dhamma* by investigating the *ti-lakkhaṇa* and by taking the *ti-lakkhaṇa* inherent within the *sabhāva dhammas* as the path for *paññā* to follow. Moreover, you investigate the *Ariya Sacca* to perceive and realize that *dukkha*—which arises from the body and heart of oneself and all other beings—is something that one cannot remain heedless and complacent about. You also see the harm of *Samudaya*, the source that generates the *dukkha* that all creatures must suffer endlessly. Consequently, you are ready to dismantle and eradicate *Samudaya* with *paññā* so that you may arrive at *Nirodha*, the realm of the total cessation of *dukkha*.

Sammā diṭṭhi, as Right View of the subtle aspects of Dhamma, deals with the correct understanding of *dukkha* as one form of truth, of *Samudaya* as another, of *Nirodha* as another, and of *Magga*—*sīla*, *samādhi* and *paññā*—as another form of truth. This is the correct view that neither voices opinion nor passes judgment on the *Ariya Sacca* and all the *sabhāva dhammas* everywhere. This is another level of *sammā diṭṭhi*.

Since there are practitioners with various Dhamma attainments, there are many levels of *sammā diṭṭhi*. If there was only one level of *sammā diṭṭhi*, *paññā* could not be of many grades. Since there are several degrees of *kilesas*—producers of sadness and gloom—*paññā* must correspondingly be of many grades. For this reason, *sammā diṭṭhi* is also of many levels.

The second path factor is *sammā sankappo*—Right Thought. It is of three categories: the thought of non-oppression, the thought of friendliness free from ill-will and the thought that frees one of entanglement and bonds.

The thought of non-oppression refers to regard for the welfare of our fellow beings, both people and animals alike. We must also pay attention to our own well-being by not taxing and over-burdening ourselves. We do not meditate on how to intentionally inflict troubles and hardships on others. Nor do we contemplate ways we can bring degeneracy and moral turpitude upon ourselves by, for instance, indulging in alcohol and narcotic drugs like opium and heroin.

The thought of friendship means to refrain from feeling animosity or aversion for people and animals. We do not contemplate tyrannizing and trampling on others. Nor do we maliciously wish others to suffer illness or fall dead; nor do we contemplate suicide by the various methods that are regularly reported in the newspapers. Those thoughts arise due to wrong reflection. Where previously a person's life was his most valuable possession, due to wrong understanding, it now becomes his enemy. This kind of story happens all the time. You should understand that this is the outcome of wrong thoughts and faulty reasoning. Someone who truly safeguards and looks after himself will immediately curb and restrain any wrong thoughts—as soon as the *citta* begins to conceive them within the heart—by relinquishing and abandoning them. How could he allow those wrong reflections to get out of hand to the point of committing suicide? Is this an example of loving oneself?

One kind of thought renunciation is to think in a way that releases us from entanglements in the mundane manner that people usually consider. For instance, thinking of delivering ourselves from the bonds of poverty, want and hunger in order to achieve wealth and abundance. Another form of renunciation is the practice of *dāna*, *sīla* and *bhāvanā* (generosity, morality and mind development). Here we think about contributing to the construction of roads, wells and

cetiyas (pagodas); maintaining and refurbishing old, dilapidated sacred shrines and relics; or building *kutis* and *vihāras* (*bhikkhu*'s dwelling), *sālā* (assembly pavilion) and other kinds of structures for the sake of merit and virtue so that we can lift ourselves from the mass of *dukkha*.

Another kind of renunciation is to contemplate and see the peril in birth old age, sickness and death that are inherent within every form of sentient existence without exception, and to discern that the life of one who has gone forth is conducive to the development of the way of *sīla*, *samādhi* and *paññā*—the way that fulfills our aspirations—and to make up our mind to take the 'going forth' to become a nun, a *bhikkhu* or a novice.

A practitioner contemplates and investigates his subject of meditation to release the *citta* from all mental hindrances. He utilizes all the various methods, developed by perpetual analysis and reflection, to eradicate the *kilesas*. He steadily removes the *kilesas* through the various stages right up to the automatic level of *sammā sankappo*. By constantly probing and examining, he finally eliminates all the *kilesas*. This is the last category of *sammā sankappo* and the end of the elaboration of this second path factor.

The Lord taught us the third path factor: *sammā vācā*—Right Speech. This includes speaking about things in general, but more specifically about a dialogue on Dhamma.

Speaking words of wisdom that are not detrimental to those who listen, speaking with reason that is impressive and eloquent, speaking politely, modestly and unassumingly and speaking in gratitude and appreciation of all people who have been kind and benevolent, are all one level of *sammā vācā*.

The most appropriate form of speech is talk about Dhamma. This means speaking only about the *sallekha* (purifying) *dhammas*, the means of removing the *kilesas*. This includes talk of wanting little in terms of a *bhikkhu*'s basic requisites;

talk of being contented with whatever requisites are made available in accordance with Dhamma; talk of not socializing and mingling with others; talk of seclusion and quietude of body and heart; talk of strenuous exertion and diligent effort; talk of maintaining the purity of *sīla* (moral precepts); talk of the development of *samādhi*; talk of the cultivation of *paññā* to sharpen the power of discernment; talk of *vimutti*—the state of deliverance—and of *vimutti nāṇadassana*—the clear, penetrative realization of deliverance. These are the subtle aspects of *sammā vācā*. They are not vain talk or gossip, but serious talk full of interest, appreciation and devotion to the effort needed to apply these purifying *dharmas*.

The Lord taught us the fourth path factor: *sammā kammanto*—Right Action or Pursuit. There are right actions that deal with general mundane work and those that deal with the work of Dhamma. Occupations that are not against the law—for example, farming and trading—fall within the bounds of right pursuit. The building of temples and monasteries or the practices of *dāna* and *sīla*, and the development of *mettā bhāvanā* (loving kindness), are another kind of right pursuit. The practices of walking *caṅkama* and sitting in *samādhi* are also another variety of right undertaking. Every movement of body, speech and mind is *kamma*—action. Therefore, actions done by body, speech and heart are called *kamma*. Correct and proper bodily actions, speech and thoughts are called *sammā kammanta*.

Right Pursuit carries a wide and extensive meaning, so it's up to each individual to interpret and apply it for himself. The world and Dhamma have always been paired together like the left and right arms of the same person. It is not possible to separate the world and Dhamma. The world has its work and Dhamma has its. Since the conditions and the make-up of people vary from case to case, their undertakings cannot be identical. For this reason, a lay person must pursue the work that befits his position, while someone who follows the way of Dhamma must pursue the work of one who has gone forth. Each must take up the work that accords with his status. In either case, don't allow your pursuits in life to conflict

with what is right. Each one will then have his own *sammā kammanta*—right undertaking. Both the world and Dhamma will steadily flourish with each passing day because everyone is contributing and helping.

The Lord taught us the fifth path factor: *sammā ājīvo* - Right Livelihood. This includes the feeding ourselves, which is the common form of livelihood among people and animals. Nourishing the *citta* with wholesome *ārammaṇas* (mental objects) is another kind of livelihood. Nurturing the *citta* with the higher levels of Dhamma is another.

A legitimate way of living in accordance with Dhamma (not unlawful ones like theft and corruption) is one form of *sammā ājīvo*. We live off of what we can obtain to support our lives from day to day. If we are able to acquire things in abundance in a way that accords with Dhamma, that is also an aspect of *sammā ājīvo*.

The nourishment of the heart with *ārammaṇas* (mental objects) that arise due to its contact with external objects—like forms of men and women, their sounds, their smells, their tastes, and male and female body contacts—is another variety of *sammā ājīvo*. This includes anything that suits our liking and keeps us happy and cheerful, free from sadness and melancholy. We are constantly absorbed in pleasure and delight, which serves as the elixir of life. But should we pursue them in the wrong way, they could turn into poisons destroying the heart. This type of *sammā ājīvo* is suitable to those in the world who knows the right measure of things, as well as propriety, bounds and limits in behavior.

Preventing the poisons of the world from affecting the eyes, ears, nose, tongue, body and heart is the way of nurturing the heart with Dhamma. Every contact made with forms, sounds, smells, tastes, tactile objects and mental objects should always be contemplated in the light of Dhamma. We should not allow any affection or aversion to arise, for it will be a discomfort for the heart. The investigation that accords with Dhamma will provide and sustain the heart with the essence

of Dhamma. The heart will experience bliss, contentment and serenity. It will be permeated with wisdom and discernment, so we won't seek any *ārammaṇa* that is poisonous and destructive to the heart, but only those that constantly provide and nourish the heart with Dhamma. We must always investigate in the light of Dhamma every contact between the internal *āyatana*s (sense organs), like the eyes and ears, and the external *āyatana*s (sense objects), like sights and sounds, for true understanding and liberation. We must never contemplate in the worldly-minded way, as it is the way of taking in fire to burn ourselves. This will only cause anxiety and restlessness inside the heart. We must constantly feed the heart with the *ārammaṇas* of Dhamma. The essence of Dhamma is the nourishment of the heart. It will steadily sustain and protect the heart, keeping it secure.

The Lord taught us the sixth path factor: *sammā vāyāmo*—Right Effort. There are four kinds of effort: the effort to prevent the accumulation of unwholesome qualities within our character; the effort to get rid of anything unwholesome that has arisen; the effort to develop wholesome qualities within us; and the effort to maintain the wholesome qualities that have already arisen. We must make them *Opānāyiko* (drawing inward) by applying them to our own level of attainment in Dhamma, where they will be drawn into the basic principles of *samādhi* and *paññā*.

We must devote ourselves to taking care of the *citta* that is obsessed and infatuated with the flow of *tañhā* (craving) due to the power of ignorance dragging it away. We must try to curb the restlessness and disquiet of the *citta* with the disciplinary power of *sati* and *paññā*. The way of *sīla*, *samādhi* and *paññā* is the Dhamma that can rectify every kind of *kilesa*, so we must strive to develop them within our hearts. If we aspire for *Nibbāna* and the total extinction of the fire of anxiety, we must carefully cultivate *sīla*, *samādhi* and *paññā*. Once the levels of *sīla*, *samādhi* and *paññā* have appeared within us, we must not let them slip away through negligence. One must nourish and develop them to full maturity where they will be transformed into the *Maggañāṇa* (supramundane knowledge of the

Path) that can obliterate all traces of the *kilesas*. The realm of *Vimutti* (Freedom) and *Nibbāna*—that was previously perceived as something beyond our means and abilities—will be the Dhamma realized within our hearts the instant all the *kilesas* have been eliminated.

The Lord taught us the seventh path factor: *sammā sati*—Right Mindfulness. This is the setting up of mindfulness in our meditation practice. Whatever Dhamma we use as the heart's *ārammaṇa*—for example, the recollection of “*Buddho*” or *ānāpānasati* (mindfulness of breathing)—we should have *sati* concentrating on that object. Or if we should focus our attention on the four objects of *satipaṭṭhāna* : body, *vedanā*, *citta* and *dhamma*—whether for the development of *samādhi* or in the investigation for the development of *paññā*—we must constantly have *sati* attending to every moment of our meditation. This is one category of *sammā sati* (Right Mindfulness).

The Lord taught us the eighth path factor: *sammā samādhi*—(Right Calm and Concentration). This refers to the *samādhi* that is imbued with *paññā*, and not the stump-like *samādhi*. It is also not the type of *samādhi* that is constantly addictive, where we have no inclination to investigate in the way of *paññā* because we think that this type of *samādhi* is in itself an adequately exalted Dhamma. Instead, we criticize *paññā* as being unworthy. This kind of *samādhi* is called *miccha* (incorrect) *samādhi*, and it is not the *samādhi* that can truly deliver us from *dukkha*.

To practice the *samādhi* that will free us from *dukkha*, we must focus our attention on any particular Dhamma principle or theme that we prefer, having *sati* directing and guarding until the *citta* manages to converge into *samādhi*. It doesn't matter what class of *samādhi* this may be. It is right or *samādhi* as long as we feel that the *citta* has become calm and ceased thinking, remaining in singularity and isolation from all surrounding conditions for a time before withdrawing from that state.

This is different from the *samādhi* in which the *citta* converges and you immediately lose track of day and night and become totally ignorant of whether you're still alive or not. It's as though you're dead. Only after the *citta* has withdrawn do you realize that it entered into calm or wandered away into the blue. This is the stump-like *samādhi* because it resembles a tree stump without any consciousness. Try to avoid this type of *samādhi*. If you have already grown used to it, you must immediately change and remedy it. This sort of *samādhi* is found in the circle of those who practice. The way to cure it is to avoid allowing the *citta* to converge as it usually does. If you allow it to, it will always stick to that habit. Instead, you must force the *citta* to take a tour of the body with *sati* firmly in control, going up and down, over and over again until *paññā*, *magga* and *phala* (wisdom, path and fruit) are realized.

The kind of *samādhi* that is *sammā samādhi* is the one that has *sati* attending to the state of calm once the *citta* has converged into *samādhi*. After the *citta* has come out of *samādhi*, you should investigate, in the way of *paññā*, the various *sabhāva dhammas* that are found within the body and *citta*. You should investigate when it is opportune and appropriate to do so. *Samādhi* and *paññā* are the *dhammas* that are always interrelated. You shouldn't let your *samādhi* drift away because of not paying careful attention to it. In short, these three *dhammas*—*sati*, *samādhi* and *paññā*—are interrelated and inseparable. *Samādhi* and *paññā* take turns doing the work while *sati* watches over them.

The above eight path factors have been discussed partly from principles of Dhamma and partly from practical experience. Please note that the *dhammas* from *sammā dīṭṭhi* (Right View) through to *sammā samādhi*, are *dhammas* comprised of many levels. It's up to each individual to take them and apply them in his practice in accordance with his Dhamma attainment and ability.

Regardless of whether you are a lay person or a *bhikkhu*, if you are interested, you can practice for the full development of these eight path factors. The fruits of

vimutti (freedom) and *vimutti nāṇadassana* (knowledge and insight of freedom) will then be your most valuable possessions. This is because *sīla*, *samādhi* and *paññā* are all found within that *Magga* (Path). They are like the keys that will open and clearly reveal these two *vimuttis* to the heart.

Moreover, all of you who practice should not understand that *vimutti* and *vimutti nāṇadassana* are separate from each other, or that they perform two different functions. Truly, that's not the case. When a man chops wood with an axe, as soon as the wood is cut up, he both sees it with his eyes and at the same instant realizes it in his heart. In the same way, *vimutti* and *vimutti nāṇadassana* will make you both perceive and experience simultaneously the detachment of the *kilesas* from the heart, which is accomplished by way of *sīla*, *samādhi* and *paññā*. Thereafter, there can be no more fussing with problems, because all the bothersome issues arise from the conflict between the heart and the *kilesas*. This is the greatest of all issues in the three realms of existence. Once the heart, which is the primary problem, is let go, the *kilesas* which reside in and live off the heart will naturally fall away. Furthermore, *sīla*, *samādhi*, *paññā*, *vimutti* and *vimutti nāṇadassana* all remain as they truly are. They are all real, so consequently all the contentious issues come to an end.

Today I have presented a talk on Dhamma to you who practice by highlighting the example of the Lord Buddha and the *Sāvakas* so that it may serve as a guide pointing out the correct way to you. Now you can set your compass—your mode of practice—and relentlessly strive to follow the path of the Lord Buddha. Once you have fully developed the *dhammas* of *sīla*, *samādhi* and *paññā*, then *vimutti* and *vimutti nāṇadassana*—the essence of *Nibbāna*—will undoubtedly be your possession.

For this reason, may all of you set up the understanding that all the aforementioned *dhammas* are found right within your body and your heart. Please draw them inward to be your own possessions. Then, both the cultivation of the means

of practice and its fruits of *vimutti* and *Nibbāna* that I have illustrated will all belong to you, either today or sometime in the future.

Evam.

Such is the way.

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— F O U R —

Developing the Samaṇa in the Heart

12th February, 1976

The Ven. Ācariya Mun often discussed this topic whenever it cropped up in his *desanās* or talks. He would always highlight and elaborate on it as in the *Muttodaya* collection. But in there it is only treated in general terms and not in detail. I myself elaborate more in depth. *Muttodaya* does not do this. Sometimes Ācariya Mun himself did not go into detailed analysis but what he said was enough for us to comprehend. When we had the tree trunk, we would also have its branches.

The Ven. Acariya Mun said, “The Lord Buddha’s Dhamma is pure; it accords with natural principles. But when it is being established in a *putthujana* (an ordinary worldling) it is adulterated and counterfeit Dhamma. But in an *Ariya Puggala* (Noble One) it is real and genuine Dhamma.” That was how he described and summarized it.

There are, however, several levels of *Ariyans* namely, *Sotāpanna*, *Sakadāgāmī*, *Anāgāmī* going up to the *Arahant*—making four in all. Upon investigation, the

Dhamma of the *sotāpatti* level is real and pure for the *Ariyan* who has attained to *Sotāpanna*. But the levels of *Sakadāgāmī*, *Anāgāmī* and *Arahatta* must still be false within his heart even though he can commit them to memory and fully knows the path of practice. They must still be suppositions, though he might be knowledgeable about them. The *Sakadāgāmī* is still counterfeit on the levels of *Anāgāmī* and *Arahatta* and the *Anāgāmī* is false in the level of the *Arahatta Dhamma*. It is not until the attainment of the *Arahatta bhūmi* (plane) that every level of Dhamma becomes complete and perfect within the heart, without any trace of falsehood.

Some may argue that since the Dhamma of the Lord Buddha is real and pure, it must remain so wherever it might be. It can be compared with pure gold which, though it might fall into the mud, is still pure gold. It can't turn into mud or slush. If we don't clarify further, it is certain that pure gold remains pure gold: It doesn't become the mud. But who can deny that the gold is contaminated by the mud when they lie together and get mixed? Is there no difference between the gold fallen in the mud and slime and that which hasn't? Of course there is! How can someone assert that the pure, uncontaminated gold and the gold besmeared with slime are both equally pure? Surely, they are different. A second comparison, we could consider, is when food is prepared and ready for consumption. If it should slip from our hands into something dirty, then even though it had been suitable to eat, it becomes unacceptable because it's filthy and offensive. Or, if there is a dirty food container, regardless of how palatable and succulent the dish may be, once placed in the dirty vessel, it too becomes dirty. How can it be pure when it's besmeared with filth?

The Dhamma of the Lord Buddha is of a similar nature. The vessel here refers to the heart, which alone is appropriate for receiving Dhamma. If this heart is defiled with corruption, then the contacted Dhamma, in associating with it, must also be corrupted. The intensity of corruption will depend on the concentration

of the defilements. This is what the Lord called inauthentic and unreal, meaning not genuinely pure.

Furthermore, although the palm-leaf scriptures are Dhamma, when we look them up and study them, we only commit them to memory and retain them in the heart. But because the heart is filled with the *kilesas*, the Dhamma that comes into it is just Dhamma learnt by rote and not the genuine Dhamma. If it is real Dhamma, why don't the *kilesas* all disappear from our hearts since each of us has studied and engraved it in our memory? Why are our hearts brim full with *kilesas* when we have already studied and, learnt every facet of Dhamma right up to *Nibbāna*? They still haven't gone beyond the state of being fully possessed by the *kilesas* and this is why the Dhamma is false.

We should take out the Lord Buddha's Dhamma both the theory and practice (*pariyatti* and *paṭipatti*) then investigate and analyze by way of conduct and practice following what was correctly taught. Only then will the Dhamma begin to be genuine from the stage of memory. This is because we have truly fixed it in mind as the outline and plan for our practice and we haven't merely retained or committed it to memory without actually following the plan. This is similar to the plans for a house. Regardless of how many hundreds or thousands of designs might have been drawn up, they are still merely a sketch and not a house. It can't be properly called a house until its construction is completed, following the specifications of the blue print.

Committing it to memory for practical use is one thing, but to simply store it away without any interest in its practical application, is something else. Whatever happens, that which has been studied must then be put into practice. One will then definitely come to practice and then having practiced, one will undoubtedly experience the results of practice (*paṭivedha*). This is the gradual, penetrating discernment and realization. The *citta* will definitely come to steadily experience this, depending on one's ability in practice. We Buddhists should take *pariyatti*

(theory) and *paṭipatti* (practice) as the basic essentials for they are intrinsically fundamental as the *Sāsana* is the principal Dhamma. If we take both the practice and theoretical study as imperative, then the *Sāsana* and the followers will excel in the Dhamma, in virtue and in the knowledge and understanding that bring supreme coolness and peace to both the individual and the community at large.

But the case here is that the *Sāsana* is merely learned by rote. It just remains inscribed on palm leaves. The followers go one way, that which has been memorized goes another way and the way of practice goes in yet another direction. They don't harmonize but are all in a constant state of conflict right there in the same individual. Furthermore, it also disturbs and annoys other people making them wonder how the followers of the Lord Buddha can be in such a mess. Such criticism is well-founded and irrefutable. Whatever is wrong must be accepted as such.

Once the theory is put into practice the results will be in harmony. One will truly understand according to one's attainment level. Whatever has been experienced in the heart through one's practice can undoubtedly be correctly described. It will accord with the practical experience itself. One will be very bold and confident when talking of them without any qualms that one could be contradicted, for one has truly seen and experienced them in oneself. How could one have misgiving? There will be no scruples or twinge of conscience because it is not guessing blindly nor hypothesizing. One did not plagiarize others' experience. One spoke from one's own experience and insight. How could it be wrong? How then could one be intimidated or shaken? Every one of us is seeking for the truth. We know the truth as far as our ability allows and can talk about it in as much as we know it. How then can there be any diffidence or misgivings? There are none, of course.

It was never said that the Lord Buddha took a "*Nibbāna* course" at any institution. Nor did he pursue in any school a study of the Eightfold Path, the *Majjhimā Paṭipadā* (Middle Way of Practice). On the contrary, he did it all on his own by way of analysis and investigation right up to Enlightenment. He realized and exper-

rienced Dhamma to his heart's contentment and then declared this Dhamma to the world. Who can be more capable and accomplished than the Lord Buddha not having to learn from anyone but being a *Sabbaññū*, a Self-enlightened One, and the founder of the *Buddha Sāsana* (Way of Buddhism)? If we wish to be as worthy as the *Sāsana* is truly professed to be, we who are followers must make ourselves worthy followers of the *Sāsana* and its principles. We would then gain benefit. We would not just vainly bear the load of scriptures, unable to inflict any blows on the *kilesas* in our heart or gain any practical value. This would be inconsistent with the fame and reputation of the Lord Buddha and with the purpose of his Teaching: namely the removal and elimination of the *kilesa-āsava* following the way of the Dhamma principles.

Instead, what we do is shoulder the burden of the *kilesas* by merely bearing the Dhamma by rote—quite contrary to the purpose of the *Sāsana*. This is how Dhamma turns mundane. The way for Dhamma to really be Dhamma is by the practice as already mentioned. When the texts have been studied and we practice, only then will we learn the truth. This is because the way of the Lord Buddha's Teaching was perfectly expounded, being the *Svākkhāta Dhamma* (Well-Taught Dhamma). The only deviation and sophistry is the practitioner's own misunderstanding and in this case he is beyond help since he is running contrary to the truth, which is Dhamma.

The *Sāsana Dhamma* of the Lord Buddha is like any merchandise which boldly challenges any test of validity or quality. This 'Dhamma merchandise' will put all the other products out of business—regardless of the market it's sold on—because people are always on the lookout for good and genuine products, and once they have seen something that catches their eye, how can they fail to recognize it? Even small children recognize that much. But Dhamma is not a material substance which can be put on sale to compete with all the other commodities. It can only be appreciated by those who have experienced it and can only be realized

and perceived by each individual for himself. Such an experience is not for the accumulation of the *kilesas* nor for ostentation nor conceit. These are the affairs of the *kilesas*. Every stage of insight and realization is for the sake of uprooting the *kilesas*. They are inimical both to oneself and to others. How then could one show off one's attainments or wave them about in the manner to promote the growth of the *kilesas* and make other people sickened and disgusted? This is certainly not the way to practice for their removal.

For this reason, the practitioner who has realized any Dhamma is usually serene and at peace. He follows within the bounds of reason whether he talks or remains silent. He is neither hungry nor acquisitive but lives like a *samaṇa* (recluse) one who lives within the bounds of reason in both his words and his stillness. This is what the Lord referred to when he said: “*Samaṇānañca dassanaṃ etammangalamuttam*”—“To behold a *samaṇa* who is free from corruption and perversion is the highest blessing”. *Samaṇa* here is of four stages. The first is *Sotāpanna*, the second *Sakadāgāmī*, the third *Anāgāmī*, and the fourth the *Arahant*. These are the various calibers of *samaṇa*.

From the conventional viewpoint this refers to those who have become a *samaṇa* by virtue of their attainment to the various levels of Dhamma: *Sotāpanna*, *Sakadāgāmī*, *Anāgāmī* or *Arahant*. All of them are a blessing to those who look to them with respect. This is the external *samaṇa*. Turning to the internal *samaṇa*, we see its various stages within the heart by means of investigation of the *Sacca dhamma*. These are the agents that unveil the *magga* and *phala* (Path and Fruit) so that they may be clearly perceived within the heart—another form of highest blessing. We must turn inward for our own benefit, or else we will be constantly searching for the external *samaṇa*, perpetually speculating as to who is a *Sotāpanna*, *Sakadāgāmī*, an *Anāgāmī* and who is an *Arahant*. None of them wear labels or insignia like military officers, so how can we pick them out? Even if they truly are *Sotāpanna*, *Sakadāgāmī*, *Anāgāmī* or *Arahant*, how could we know from

their behavior and deportment? They would never flaunt it in the gross and indecent way the world does. They would never do it. Those who have impeccable virtue and seek after Truth and Dhamma and who are imbued with the Truth and Dhamma, cannot behave in this way. It's impossible.

Seeking for this kind of *samaṇa* so as to pay our respects is far from easy. It's so difficult to know when we might come across them. Instead we should take any aspect of the Teaching that spells out the way for achieving those four levels of *samaṇa*, and then apply the teaching so that we can reach those very levels within ourselves. This is by far the most appropriate way. It really gets us to the heart of the problem, without uselessly wasting time in having to hunt for clues and chasing after shadows.

When we have found a teacher who is imbued with Truth and Dhamma, peaceful in body, speech and heart—or better still if he is the first, second, third or fourth grade of *samaṇa*—then, we must not let slip the first, second, third and fourth levels of *samaṇa* which could appear within our own hearts. We would then reap the fruits of our practice when prerequisites and conditions are fulfilled because the Lord Buddha did not reserve the fruits solely for himself.

Sota means “stream” (or current): it means the entry into the stream of *Nibbāna*. But we tend to speculate about various theories and models of what the nature of the stream of *Nibbāna* is really like. How wide or narrow, how deep or shallow, how coarse or subtle, is this stream? This merely turns into *saññā ārammaṇa* (imagination or flights of fancy) which have no practical value. In fact, ‘the stream’ refers to the realm of certainty which is a guarantee that one will definitely arrive at the state free from *dukkha*. But, in any event, stream or no stream, the meditator should try to have inner peace. It is the *citta* itself, when being constantly and persistently nourished so as to grow in a fruitful and wholesome way that will become *Nibbāna*. A home is a home, a house is a house, earth is earth, water is water, air is air, and fire is fire. Neither earth nor sky nor space

can become *Nibbāna*, nor lead one to *Nibbāna*. Nor can they be developed into a *Sotāpanna*, a *Sakadāgāmi*, an *Anāgāmi* or an *Arahant*. How then is it possible to make them into *Nibbāna*? The *citta* alone is capable of gradually eliminating all the veils of delusion from the heart by way of practice and conduct. Peace and happiness will naturally arise of their own accord. The reason why there isn't any peace, is because of those delusive influences that continually agitate and bother us. Day and night they disturb us with worry, anxiety, confusion and instability and in every position—whether standing, walking, sitting or lying down. It is just the *kilesas* that constantly disturb and confuse us and add chaos to our predicament. How then can we remain calm and peaceful?

The path of the *kilesas* has been detrimental to living beings for eons and eons. They warrant the criticism and censure that is continually voiced by the Lord Buddha's Dhamma. Sentient beings invariably tend to take the *kilesas* as something worthwhile and beneficial. They never give a thought to throwing off the oppression and dominance of the *kilesas* which are the cause for so much complaining in the world. If they are really so valuable and profitable, why all the moaning? The actual cause for the complaining is simply the *kilesas* which bring about the *dukkha* and hardship. And this is why the Lord exhorted us to develop the *Samaṇa dhamma*. *Samaṇa* means serenity. Once we become calm and serene we will slowly become the first, second, third and fourth *samaṇa* within our heart. What is the way of practice for the attainment to these four *samaṇa*? The Lord expounded this in general terms in the *Dhammacakka Pavattana Sutta*, though not in great detail. A beginner in the way of practice might find it quite difficult to understand. The Lord said of the first *Sacca Dhamma* (Truthful Dhamma) *Dukkha Ariya Sacca* (The Noble Truth of Suffering), that it was *jātipi dukkhā jarāpi dukkhā maranampi dukkhā soka parideva dukkha domanassupāyāsa...* (birth, ageing and death are *dukkha*) This is the story of *dukkha*. How does this *dukkha* come to exist? It arises from birth. Birth is the origin of the arising of *dukkha*. The real agent of

birth has its root in *Avijjā paccayā sankhārā* (ignorance conditions the arising of *sankhāra*). Indeed, what other than *Avijjā paccayā sankhārā* can give rise to birth? The Lord started right here at the principal determinant.

The Ven. Ācariya Mun’s way of analyzing it was very interesting. He said, “*Thūti bhūtam avijjā paccayā sankhārā*” (ignorance of the primordial heart conditions the arising of *sankhāra*). How is it possible for *avijjā* to arise and subsist if it has no foundation and support, no father and mother for its origin? It must depend on *Thūti bhūtam avijjā paccayā sankhārā* as the basis of birth, of life and existence.

This can then be differentiated into three categories:

Nandi rāga sahatatā tattara tattarāabhinandini seyyathīdam kāmataṇhā bhavataṇhā vibhavataṇhā (accompanied by enjoyment and lust, and enjoying this and that: in other words, craving for sensual pleasure, craving for being, and craving for non-being). The Lord said they are *Samudaya* (origin of *dukkha*) or *Samudaya Ariya Sacca* (The noble truth of the origin of *dukkha*). This is a noble truth. What then can be used to overcome it? The noble truth of the origin of *dukkha* is entirely made up of influences that only muddle the *citta*, agitating and clouding it. If the *citta* were material in nature, it would become all messed up and reduced to mud and slime.

The three *taṇhās* (cravings) are *kāmataṇhā*, *bhavataṇhā* and *vibhavataṇhā*—craving, lust and the inability to remain at ease, or live peacefully and naturally. *Taṇhā* is necessarily lustful and ravenous, grasping and acquisitive. One is always restless, agitated, struggling constantly, chasing after and driven on by *kāmataṇhā*, *bhavataṇhā* or *vibhavataṇhā*. It is just this lust and craving that continually hound the heart under their oppressive and extorting influence.

These are simple terms that the meditator who aspires for Dhamma and the overcoming of the constantly harmful *kilesas* can understand. The reason why the

citta can't remain in its natural state, is because of these influences that consume, disturb, instigate and continually stir up chaos. It becomes impossible for the *citta* to have any peace. What can be done to remedy this? The Lord taught the *Magga Ariya Saccam* (The noble truth of the Path) which begins with *sammā ditṭhi* (Right View) and *sammā sankappo* (Right Thought) as the remedy for those conditions that create all the commotion and confusion. This comes through the power of craving, lust and restlessness. When consumed by *taṇhā*, regardless of whether one is human or animal, one will openly or covertly take up the chase and in one way or another achieve one's objective. This is due to the compulsive craving, lustful ambition and insatiability which force the heart to struggle constantly in pursuit of its various objects. All those who fall under this domineering power must be exposed to *dukkha* and torment.

What is the cause of *dukkha*? This *dukkha* is caused by *Samudaya* which oppresses and lords it over the hearts of all beings, subjecting them to pain and misery. This goes on by day and night, in all the postures—walking, standing, sitting and lying—and in every form of existence. Every train of thought falls under the driving and oppressive force of *Samudaya* (origin of *dukkha*), so what are we going to use to overcome and correct it? The most efficient tools for complete taming and eradication from the heart of these three *samudayas* are none other than *sammā ditṭhi* (Right view), *sammā sankappo* (Right Thought), *samāna vācā* (Right Speech), *sammā kammanto* (Right Action), *sammā ājīvo* (Right Livelihood), *sammā vāyāmo* (Right Effort), *sammā sati* (Right Mindfulness) and *sammā samādhi* (Right Calm, stability and firmness of heart). There are no other tools superior to these—the *Majjhimā Paṭipadā* (Middle Way of Practice).

What kind of view is considered *sammā ditṭhi* (Right View)? Our hearts are now completely in the wrong. *Kāmatāṇhā* is wrong view, so are *bhavataṇhā* and *vibhavataṇhā*. As these are all wrong view, they perpetually affect both body and heart.

Why is there affection and love? What is the reason behind it? We must bring our *satipaṇṇā* (mindfulness and wisdom) to bear in the investigation of the body which is the primary object of affection. We cherish this body first before going on to love other bodies. What do you think about this? *Kāmatanḥā* (sensual craving) is right here! We must investigate into the basis of reason. What is the reason for love and affection? Is it love for the skin, flesh, muscles, bone, hair of the head or body? Whoever they belong to, they are just the same, so why this affection? Analyze and differentiate between them so that we can clearly perceive them. This separation and analysis is called *Magga. Sammā diṭṭhi* (Right View) is the *pañṇā* (wisdom). These explain the truth about attachment: both the object of clinging and the reason for it. What is the value of this object of attachment? Instead of bringing comfort, benefit and happiness, this attachment brings a blazing fire—consuming the heart with *dukkha*, torment and hardship. This is the result of attachment and it arises out of the false notion that these objects belong to us and are ourselves. These are all nonsense. *Paṇṇā* must therefore be sent into the chase to straighten out the wrong idea and to remedy it. This was why the Lord taught the investigation of the body—*kāyagatāsati*. Probe into it. Investigate both inside and out, above and below, internally and externally. Do it thoroughly and judiciously, over and over again until one comes to comprehend it clearly. This is the way of *pañṇā*, the tool for suppressing craving and thirst that arise due to the power of the *kilesas*. Nothing other than *sammā diṭṭhi* (Right View) and *sammā sankappo* (Right Thought) can overcome and put an end to craving and cure us of our desire. These are factors of the Eightfold Path. *Magga Ariya Saccam* (noble truth of the Path) is the instrument that can tame every type of *kilesa*. This is the way we should go.

We must hit hard with our *satipaṇṇā* for this is the tool that can beat the tricks of the *kilesas*. Without hesitating, we must investigate anywhere that is dark and obscure. That's where the viper will be lurking. Wherever *pañṇā* is not yet quick

enough to follow, that will be the place of the arising of views of ‘self’, ‘animal’, ‘people’, ‘I’, ‘they’, ‘mine’, ‘theirs’. *Paññā* must penetrate and pervade so as to see according to the ‘natural scriptures’—which are none other than the body and *citta*. The truth will then be unveiled, dispelling all notions of ‘people’, ‘animal’, ‘I’ and ‘they’. How can there be such ideas once *paññā* has fathomed the truth that these fabrications and suppositions are all simply a fiction designed by the *kilesas*, the masters of deception. *Paññā* would then steadily follow through in its cleanup work until everything had been dealt with.

The *citta*, that for ages has been oppressed by the might of *upadāna* (attachment), will now be freed and uplifted through *satipaññā*. The titles of ‘I’ and ‘mine’ and the claims of dominion, especially over the five *khandhas* will be uprooted. We have laid claim from birth that they are ‘I’ and ‘mine’, that the flesh, sinew, bone, arms and legs are all ‘I’ and ‘mine’, that every section is ‘I’ and ‘mine’—even though all these things are unaware of our claims. We draw up the boundaries of our own domain, and then as things intrude or impinge, they give rise to pain, agony and *dukkha* within the heart. We experience the *dukkha* not only in the body, but also in the heart—due to our affection, our cherishing and the way in which we draw up our domain.

The investigation leading to the penetration of the nature of things as they truly are, was called by the Lord, the investigation of the *Sacca dhamma* with *paññā* and *sammā ditṭhi*. In short, this refers to the correct view of the four *Sacca dhammas*, one of which is *Dukkha Sacca* (the truth of *dukkha*). *Sammā sankappo* (Right Thought) is the way of thinking for the uprooting of the *kilesas*. The Lord divided this into three. First, we should not hold any thoughts of malice or enmity against others (*abbayaṭṭāda sankappo*). The general tendency of the *kilesas* is basically towards animosity. Then, *avihiṃsa sankappo*, which means refraining from burdening or oppressing oneself or others. Third, *nekkhamma sankappo* refers to

the resolution to free oneself from all entanglements: for example, from the shack-
le of *kāma chanda* (delight in sense pleasures).

Before anything can be spread out to disturb other people, according to the natural principles they must first bother us. This is due to the *citta*'s incorrect view of things under the power of the *kilesas*. *Sammā sankappo* must therefore be focused to rectify things at this place first. When *sammā sankappo* and *sammā diṭṭhi* are brought together, they are similar to single strands of chord weaved together into one rope to increase the strength. They are the *citta*'s activity—thinking up the various thoughts and associations of ideas. Together they become *paññā*. This then is the wisdom of the single *citta* like the two-ply rope. With all eight factors combined they become a single, eight-ply rope, which is actually the *Majjhimā Paṭipadā*, the Middle Way. This has been the most appropriate tool for correcting the *kilesas*, ever since the time of the Lord Buddha.

What else should be investigated if not the things that are even now entangling our hearts? We must untangle them here with *Magga*, for example *sammā sankappo* (Right Thought).

Only *Magga* can eliminate the *kilesas* from the heart by using *satipaṇṇā* to investigate and battle against our delusion in the arena of the body and *khandhas*. We must contend on the platform of *rūpa*, *vedanā*, *saññā*, *sankhāra* and *viññāṇa*. These are the objects of investigation, and we must examine them as our investigation targets until we see into their real nature. Personally, I find it is against my style to teach about other things but clarifying these points is close to my heart because these things are real. The *kilesas* and *Magga* are both found here. The *Sacca dhammas*—*Dukkha*, *Samudaya*, *Nirodha* and *Magga*—exist right here.

As *Magga* steadily quells the *kilesas*, *Nirodha* (the cessation of *dukkha*) becomes steadily apparent by itself depending on the strength of *Magga* which is the factor doing the work. *Satipaṇṇā* is the agent that steadily subdues and eradicates the

kilesas and steadily bring about the cessation of *dukkha*. It's not possible for anyone to aim at putting an end to *dukkha* without treading in the Way of *Magga*. The Lord said that *Nirodha* must be realized, but what method can we use to achieve this realization other than the application of *Magga*? If we simply concentrate all our efforts on realizing *Nirodha* without depending on the *Magga* as the way to clear and blaze the path, then we will achieve nothing because this Dhamma is an outgrowth of *Magga*.

The Lord simply pointed out the characteristics and functional relationships, but the essential thing is, when *satipaṇṇā* focuses its attention on any particular point, it will steadily spread to all the other *Sacca dhammas*. They work together simultaneously, like various parts of a large clockwork mechanism that all inter-relate. If we were to try to differentiate each independent function, it would be as confusing as trying to follow ox tracks inside the corral. It's just not possible.

We should therefore investigate a single object like *rūpa dhamma* (corporeal) or *nāma dhamma* (incorporeal) which can be found right in this very body. For example, *rūpa* contains many different object-parts. Although *vedanā* (feeling) may arise during the investigation, there won't be any upset or bother because *rūpa* (form) is *rūpa*, and *vedanā* is just *nāma dhamma* (a mental phenomenon). How could there be any 'self', any 'animal', or 'people', 'I' or 'they'? All *vedanā*, whether *sukha* or *dukkha* (satisfactory or not) have similar characteristics. How could they be self, animal or people? They are just *nāma dhammas* appearing in the *citta* and acknowledged by it as a condition having the characteristic of *dukkha*, or *sukha*. They then disappear following the conditions that cause them to cease. See! *Paṇṇā* is able to discern everything because they really do exist and are not something mysterious or secretive. They manifest themselves openly and depend completely for their existence on the conditions that support their appearance.

We continually see *rūpa khandha* (the body), day-in and day-out. We have to put it to bed, lay it down, discharge its wastes, stand it up and take it for walks.

Vedanā is also constantly manifesting itself, even right at this very moment. *Sukha* and *dukkha* are constantly taking turns to come up. The important thing is not to let the heart take on the *dukkha* as well. If *dukkha* comes, then it should be clear that this *khandha* is *anicca*, *dukkha* and *anattā*. If you don't let the *citta* get bound up with it, then the *citta* won't suffer *dukkha*.

I have talked about this *vedanā* each day, so you should listen well and get to understand it. The *kilesas* tenaciously cling to these five *khandhas* and have done so for countless ages, for eons and eons. This is why it is not sufficient to only investigate them every now and again. To only give a *desanā* about them every once in a while is also not adequate; it must be done repeatedly until it is fully understood and with complete confidence. The contemplation must similarly be carried out repeatedly until one fully understands. Then the letting-go will follow of its own accord. There! Get to see it clearly. Where is *vedanā*? Where is *dukkha vedanā*? Wherever it is, it must always be *dukkha vedanā*. One can't make it into anything else. It must always be true to its natural state.

Saññā is recollection. How much have we recalled from the day of our birth until now? Can we find anything essential in these recollections? If they were truly self, animal, or people, and if we had to store them all away, we would probably not be able to find a chest big enough to contain them. We recall them ceaselessly. But as soon as they are recalled, they pass away without remainder. Listen! What real essence can be found in them?

The *sankhāra* (thinking process) perpetually concocts from dawn 'til dusk, dusk 'til dawn. Sometimes it conceives so much that the heart gets upset and troubled. If it goes on and on, it can exhaust the heart to the point of a nervous breakdown. *Sankhāra* is concocting or conceiving and it can be effectively curbed by no other means than *satipaññā*. It can even cause death, for example with the person who pines away through some sorrow or disappointment. The *kilesas* take the *sankhāras* as their concocting device as a means for applying pressure by

perpetuating the conceiving and imagining. One conceives about this thing and that. Once *sankhāra* and *saññā* become the instrument of the *kilesas*, they pierce through to the heart causing enormous agony and *dukkha*, even to the extent of insanity. People suffer *dukkha* because they think too much. Are *sankhāra* really so worthwhile?

Viññāṇa (sense awareness) merely acknowledges the contacted objects and then it spontaneously dies away. Where in all this is there any real essence to be found? These are the things we are deluded about, everything else is merely the by-product of the *kilesas*. This is the truly fundamental point. This is the way to tread the *Magga Paṭipadā* (Path of Practice), and it is here that we must investigate to achieve clear insight. In other words, this is called the *Magga Sacca* (Path of Truth) and is the means of correcting and overcoming our delusion. Then, as the result of our letting-do, the heart can be at peace and free from all worries.

Death is a fundamental law beyond the world's sphere of influence. The laws of *anicca*, *dukkha* and *anattā* follow the course of nature and are themselves the way of nature. If the time hasn't really come, even though we may have anticipated it in our investigation, it (the body) won't break up. But when the time has arrived, however tenaciously we may cling and hold back, no interdiction can prevail and it just goes its own way, the so-called 'Way of nature'. No one can exert any influence, interfere with or mitigate against it. It must follow its own road letting nature take its course. This is an undeniable principle in the world. How can it not be called the fateful and destined road? Who can prevent its course? We must investigate so that we can see according to its true nature—as they say, 'to fell a tree from the windward side'. We must not run counter to the Lord Buddha's Dhamma, which was expounded according to the natural principle, but rather we should comprehend it by following the truth. The heart will then be at peace.

When the heart co-exists with the *kilesas*, it dwells in confusion and consequently reaps *dukkha*. We have already seen the harm in this and we must make

sure the heart stays with Dhamma, mindfulness and wisdom. The heart will then be secure, protected, cool and tranquil. We must try to overcome *kilesas* wherever we find them. When we have done this externally we must exterminate them within the *dhātu khandha* (the body) and then inside the *citta* itself. We must use all-encompassing *paññā* to completely penetrate all of the *kilesas*—those authors of the concepts of ‘animal’ and ‘people’. From the moment the *kilesas* have been entirely dispersed, all notions of self, animal and people will cease to be a problem. Such ideas about people and animals will disappear by themselves and we will no longer have pointless fantasies about them. The truth is left as it actually is, bringing peace of mind and freedom from all worries.

Peace is then really attained right here, but it isn’t the *Sacca Dhamma*. *Dukkha* is a *Sacca dhamma*. Both, the *dukkha* of the body and heart are called *Dukkha Sacca* (the truth of *dukkha*). *Samudaya* is a function of all the *kilesas-āsavas* (defilements and taints) and is called *Samudaya Sacca* (the truth of the origin of *dukkha*). *Magga* ranges from *sammā ditṭhi* (Right View) through to *sammā samādhi*. It too is *Sacca dhamma*, that is, a tool for the correction and eradication of the *kilesas* which are the origin of *dukkha*. *Nirodha* follows, performing the work of steadily extinguishing *dukkha* until the total penetrative realization of the nature of *Samudaya*. *Samudaya* is the principal culprit that only exists inside the heart. When it is completely eliminated and the *kilesas* have also been totally expelled, *Nirodha*, the total cessation of *dukkha*, will be realized.

Vimutti (freedom) is the one who knows that *dukkha* has ceased and that the *kilesas* are finished due to *Magga*’s destructive power. This is not the *Sacca dhamma*. *Vimutti* is the purified one and not any of those four *Sacca dhammas*. The *Sacca dhammas* are only a means to an end and when the end is reached they naturally lose their prevalence. There is no need for coercion or force. It is a natural consequence just as the stairs lose their significance once we have climbed them. Such is the way of *Magga*. So too with *satipaññā*. Once it has completely

accomplished its task and the *citta* has attained to Deliverance, its instrumental work in dispelling the *kilesas-āsavas* automatically ceases.

This is our sign of excellence. It is the *Samaṇa* the supreme *samaṇa*, the fourth class of *samaṇa*. The first *samaṇa* we encountered was the *Sotāpanna*, the second the *Sakadāgāmī*, the third the *Anāgāmī*. We have consecutively met each one in our practice. The fourth *samaṇa* is the *Arahant*, the *Arahatta Dhamma*. This is the ultimate achievement realized through the *Magga Paṭipadā* (Path of Practice), the most penetrating and brilliant of ways. These four *samaṇas* are found in this heart. ‘*Etammangalamuttam*’—the highest blessing is also found right here in our heart. There’s no need to seek it elsewhere, because when the heart attains to the ultimate purity—that is, becomes free from all oppressive influences—the heart itself is the ultimate and final blessing.

Whatever has been discussed here about the *Sacca dhamma* or the four *samaṇas*, is all found within the one who knows, and nowhere else. This is the one who, can achieve the four *samaṇas*, and the one who endeavors in the work of emancipation, freeing himself from all bonds and oppression and arriving at the freedom of the fourth *samaṇa*. In short, they are right here within the one who knows.

This is now the one who is absolutely certain, who discerns and perceives everything. The *kilesas* can’t destroy the *citta*. Though they may be capable of ruining many things and they might afflict the *citta* with hardship and suffering, they can’t possibly annihilate it. This nature is unassailable, absolute and permanent. It cannot be annihilated. At most, it may appear multifarious due to the things it comes into association and involvement with. Once cleansed, this nature is complete, perfect and immaculately pure. Conventionally, it is called the ‘supreme fourth *samaṇa*’. In ultimate terms, it is ‘the *Arahatta Dhamma* inside the *citta*’. This *citta* is now wholly Dhamma. The *citta* is Dhamma; the Dhamma is *citta*.

Either way, this truth is beyond disproof. There will be no more contradiction once there are no more *kilesas* to create opposition. When they have all been totally eliminated, how can there be any dispute? This is how all issues are resolved. They cease right here. The cessation of *dukkha* occurs right here. Birth and becoming are ended and cease right at this point. Nowhere else. The One that takes birth and existence is precisely this one. The seed of birth and existence germinates from the *kilesas* found within the *citta* and this is why it must wander through the various realms of existence. It has suffered endless *dukkha*, affliction, upset and hardship due to the conditions and influences that perpetuate these experiences. Once these wrappings and generating sources are entirely removed, every problem will also end right here.

Please contemplate and investigate this until you achieve the result. This heart can be transformed to excellence. Every man and woman, layman and those gone forth can attain to this realization and enlightenment because it depends neither on sex, age or anything else. May I conclude this *desanā* at this point.

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— F I V E —

Amata

The Immortal Dhamma

7th February, 1976

*W*hile listening to a *desanā* please keep the *citta* within yourself. Do not send it out to the various kinds of *ārammaṇa* (thoughts and imaginings). Don't cherish those *ārammaṇa* you have imagined and thought about in the past—this is of no benefit. At this time, you should be trying to fill the heart with Dhamma. The heart has long been parched for lack of Dhamma. It is similar to a forest lacking in moisture where the vegetation easily ignites, scorching and consuming all the trees. There are seldom any forest fires in the rainy season, but the dry season always brings a danger fire. This also happens inside a forest monastery when it is very dry. Baan Taad Forest Monastery has caught on fire several times. This is due to dryness.

When the heart becomes parched through a lack of Dhamma to cool and sustain it, then the fire of the *kilesas* can rapidly take hold. Everything that comes into contact with it will be scorched, without exception. Fire brings damage, so when the *kilesas* are blazing within the heart, how could the heart not be harmed? Regardless of its value, it can't escape becoming stained and, in the end, totally

worthless. Such is the way of the heart that has been constantly scorched and consumed by fire.

A fire will damage our possessions depending on its intensity and extent. Unless, of course, they happen to be stored in a secure place, like a safe that a bank uses to protect its valuables. But do we have a safe place within our hearts? Or are we always exposing ourselves to risks, day and night in all our activities? Are we always leaving ourselves vulnerable; completely plundered and devastated? Don't we have any concern for our priceless hearts? We should use this way of thinking to teach ourselves.

The heart cannot find any happiness because the fire of the *kilesas* constantly burns it. This fire is the blaze of *rāga*, *dosa* and *moha*—greed, hatred and delusion—which is described in the Fire Sermon (*Ādittaparyāya Sutta*). There should be no doubt or uncertainty about this, for this has always been true. If we just take up the various aspects of the Dhamma explained in the *suttas*, and carefully reflect on them using reason following the Dhamma principles presented there, we will then be able to find a way of steering clear of this fire. We would then be able, from time to time, to find some peace and happiness without constantly being caught up in the conflagration.

Each of you has made the effort to come here to practice. You are searching for a secure place to store your wealth—that is, the merit and virtue you have collected. You are searching for a safe place to protect them from destruction by those three great masses of fire.

It's difficult to extinguish a forest fire. If it has really taken hold, then even water cannot contain it. To extinguish the internal fire of the *kilesas*, we must consistently develop and accumulate virtue; for example, *mettā bhāvanā* (cultivation of loving-kindness). This calms and concentrates the heart, making it capable of

effectively subduing those harmful and injurious things, namely the fires discussed above.

Speaking of fire, it must always be hot. Even flying sparks that fall on the body are hot and painful. If we allow ourselves to be burned constantly, day and night, what will we have left? The heart will be entirely burned out. What remains will be mere awareness, without any worth or value since it has been totally given over to the all-consuming *kilesas*. It will be an awareness of *dukkha*, not of happiness. It is not the awareness of wisdom. This awareness is overwhelmed by *dukkha*, so much so that the heart appears quite useless.

The consistent development of *citta-bhāvanā* (mind development) by way of strenuous and diligent effort is the way to extinguish the fire within the heart, gradually bringing peace and happiness. The Lord Buddha taught only those things that are within our capacity to achieve; things beyond our ability he did not teach. All the *dharmas* taught by the Lord Buddha are within the reach of Buddhist practitioners. The Lord did not teach blindly. We practitioners must therefore consider Dhamma to be of paramount importance, and take it deeply to heart. Just as we shun and abhor all forms of *dukkha*—which no one wants—we must move in the direction of the cure for *dukkha*—which is Dhamma.

When all this has been comprehended with reason so that we are committed to our practice by a firm conviction, it is not important whether the practice of Dhamma is easy or difficult. We can only do our best according to our capabilities. For who isn't lazy when under the power of the *kilesas*? This laziness, which loathes doing anything good or beneficial, is within each one of us. Laziness always takes the lead, but it certainly is not the Dhamma that will deliver us from *dukkha*. It's the main factor that makes us complacent and careless, gradually dragging us down following the power of the sly and deceitful *kilesas*.

The Lord Buddha also experienced this, but he was able to transcend those things which had previously oppressed his heart. When we become weak and lazy, we should reflect on the Lord's experience and compare it with our own. By taking up his way as our ideal, we can gain inspiration for our own practice. Then we will be able to find a way to cope without always having to yield to the *kilesas*. Even though it's difficult, we can do it. When we acknowledge the truth of *dukkha*, the overcoming of *dukkha* then becomes crucially important. Otherwise, the problems that we detest and dread will always confront us. Without taking corrective action, it's just not possible for us to find a way out of this predicament.

It does not matter whether a method is difficult or easy. As long as it is effective for uprooting undesirable things from the heart, we must use it. We are all equal in regards to birth and death, and the *dukkha* we have experienced in the various realms of existence right up to the present. Since we are all born and suffer from *dukkha*, we are equal in this regard. We have all been through repeated births and deaths, matching each other in the amount of suffering we've experienced. We have all suffered *dukkha*. There can be no competition among us concerning the number of lives we have gone through, since everyone has had so many. It is a similar story with *dukkha*, which is so abundant in our lives.

Instead of us scoring high marks in the way of the *citta* and Dhamma, we end up being foremost together in the way of *dukkha*. With the *kilesas* as the guide that leads us, we will always be led to more and more suffering. If we insist on trusting the *kilesas*, we will always experience suffering. If we don't resist them, we will never be delivered from this mass of *dukkha*. Resistance to the influence of the *kilesas* is the way of Dhamma. Dhamma uses reason and analysis to understand the danger inherent in the *kilesas*, and to find the methods required to counter them effectively.

We must utilize any means that's effective in overcoming the *kilesas* to reduce the mass of *dukkha*. Whether those methods are difficult or easy is not important.

This is like the way a craftsman uses his tools, some of which will be easy to use and others more difficult. He has to make use of them as the work requires. He must bear with the strenuous tasks, as well as the lighter ones, as he gradually continues until finally accomplishing the required task.

The tools we select for overcoming the *kilesas*, and for developing a firm basis of wholeness and integrity in the heart, all come from Dhamma. Dhamma tools are varied and must be chosen to fit different circumstances. When the heart is only lightly disturbed by the *kilesas*, the strength of our resistance need not be so vigorous. For instance, the amount of time we spend doing sitting and walking meditation is not so important, because the task at hand has not yet reached a critical stage.

But when our hearts are so disturbed by the *kilesas* that we can't unburden ourselves, then we cannot afford to remain idle and indifferent. We must exert ourselves to the utmost, even putting our own lives at stake, without any thought of surrender nor retreat. We must mobilize all of our *sati-paṇṇā* and apply it to the situation, no matter how strenuous and arduous the task may be. We must persevere in our efforts, regardless of how severe the resulting *dukkha* may be. The *dukkha* brought about by our exertion is of little consequence when compared to the *dukkha* that the *kilesa* have heaped upon us. Once we are sunk in *dukkha* caused by the *kilesas*, there is no telling when we can emerge.

We are all aware of the discomfort and pain experienced when sitting or walking in meditation for long hours. We are also aware of how difficult it is to devise the different means of coping with the various kinds of *kilesa*. But we are as yet unaware of the happiness and wonder that result from the hardship of our strenuous efforts. The transcendent experience attained through wisdom is precisely what we are aspiring and yearning for. Once the results follow the cause, which is our diligent effort, then any obstacle can be overcome. But should there be only difficulty and hardship without the reward of peace and happiness, then no one in

this world would be able to continue. This does not apply only to ordinary people. Even the Lord Buddha and his *Arahant* disciples could not have become enlightened for us to take as a refuge.

Buddham, Dhammam, Sangham saraṇam gacchāmi

“I take refuge in the Buddha and Dhamma and Sangha”

Eventually the right time and opportunity will arise so that we can manage to succeed. Persistent effort is very important, as is the constant use of clear reasoning. As soon as our efforts weaken, the *kilesas* will grow more threatening and incisive. When our effort slackens, the *kilesas* will surge and swell; but if our exertion is intense and our *sati-paññā* sharp and keen, then the *kilesas* will gradually fade away. This is because the *kilesas* are afraid only of Dhamma, and nothing else. Only Dhamma can contain and subdue the *kilesas*—the Dhamma of *saddhā*, *virīya*, *sati*, *samādhi* and *paññā*.

Saddhā is the belief in the fruits of the Lord Buddha’s Enlightenment, and trust in the Dhamma he expounded to the world as the *niyyānika dhamma* (the outward going vehicle—going out from *saṃsāra*, from *dukkha*). This is *saddhā* or conviction. If we only would practice following the Lord’s Teaching, then surely we too would realize those same satisfying results.

Virīya is diligent effort. Whatever task we do, whether internally or externally, when it is done with diligent effort it will always be right and proper. When our work is supported by diligent effort, the results will always be well-accomplished and pleasing to the eye.

Sati is mindfulness—the important factor which oversees each task and prevents any negligence or error.

Samādhi is firm resolution and commitment to the work at hand which guides it to its final completion, without distractions and unsteadiness. This is the causal

aspect of *samādhi*. The resultant aspect of *samādhi* appears as stability and firmness of the *citta*, leading to the experience of happiness and ease. This result arises from the causal aspect of *samādhi*; that is, concentration focused on our work without wavering or vacillating. The resultant aspect of *samādhi* is calmness of the heart, leading up to the state of *ekaggatā*, which the Lord Buddha described as the mind being non-dual, because it has only one object.

Paññā is penetrative wisdom. Wisdom is the important factor used in observing and discriminating all circumstances that arise. The outcome of each task depends on the application of *paññā*, which investigates and analyses everything.

These are the factors of Dhamma that will steadily lead us away from *dukkha*, allowing us to complete any work we set out to do. The Lord Buddha said that the Four Ways to Success (*iddhipāda*) are of equally great importance.

Chanda is satisfaction. What are we satisfied with? If we are satisfied with the *kilesas*, then the *kilesas* will come up. We are inclined to search for whatever delights us. Whatever we set our heart on will come up. However, the Four Ways to Success does not refer to such base, corrupting influences, but to the virtue that can lead to the fulfillment of our aspirations. They are the four means to achieve those aims that lie within our reach. *Chanda* is satisfaction. *Viriya* is diligent effort. *Citta* is attentiveness and application to the work. *Vināyāsā* is comprehensive wisdom. These four combine to form a single effective force for accomplishing our objectives.

Indeed, this is the Dhamma that can build a complete human being. They can help develop a firm basis in the *citta* by consolidating our efforts around true guiding principles, complete with excellent rules and disciplines, and good traditions and customs. This ensures that those who undertake the practice do not go counter to the principles of Dhamma. Once the heart is attuned to Dhamma in this way, it is safeguarded with the Dhamma Protection—*dhammārakkhā*. With

Dhamma as its guardian, the heart will steadily prosper. Harmful influences will steadily decline. Regardless of how long the heart may have been down and miserable, it never reaches a state of complete destruction because it remains capable of thinking and reasoning. Once the heart is cleansed through exertion, it will become bright, cool and peaceful. This is the key, the essential factor that will turn our aspirations into full reality. Merely desiring success is not enough, if we allow ourselves to be deterred by weakness and discouragement, which prevents us from pursuing and accomplishing our objective.

Whatever we do or however we think, we should never forget about the Lord Buddha, our *Sāsadā* (Great Teacher). Whenever we become weak and discouraged in any kind of work, we must reflect upon the example set by the Lord Buddha, who gained Enlightenment through persistent effort, using *saddhā*, *virīya*, *sati*, *samādhi* and *paññā*. How else could he become enlightened, if not by these *dhammas*?

With what are we going to develop and nourish our heart so it can excel and be at peace, so that we can at least be considered the follower of a teacher? The Lord Buddha explained his path of practice in a precise and orderly way, so this is the path we must follow. What gave rise to the phrase: *Dhammaṃ saraṇaṃ gacchāmi* (I take refuge in the Dhamma), if not these five *dhammas* of *saddhā*, *virīya*, *sati*, *samādhi* and *paññā*? It is just these five factors that arose with the Lord Buddha.

The same is true of *Saṅghaṃ saraṇaṃ gacchāmi* (I take Refuge in the Saṅgha). None of the *Sāvaka Saṅgha*, regardless of their class or family background—whether they had been kings or merchants, rich or poor—were weak or easily discouraged. Once they had gone forth in the *Buddha Sāsana* they were characterized by their diligent effort. So, diligent effort is an extremely important quality that will steadily uplift the quality of a person's heart.

The five factors of *saddhā*, *virīya*, *sati*, *samādhi* and *paññā* can raise the heart and release it from the oppression of suffering. Once we have taken these five factors as our support, we are bound to progress steadily until we eventually free ourselves from *dukkha*. The Four Ways to Success are also factors that uplift the heart, preventing it from being oppressed and burdened. They never weigh down the heart.

Some of the *Sāvakas* walked *caṅkama* until the soles of their feet blistered. Think of that! Until their feet blistered! Is this striving or not? Some didn't sleep at all for an entire three months period. Ven. Cakkhupāla strove like that until his eyes ruptured, causing him to go blind. Did he suffer or not? Think how hard he strove! As for us, we don't need to strive to the point of ruining our body. If we could only make the *kilesas* suffer, make them run and hide, this in itself would be quite commendable. Don't let the *kilesas* swarm all over your ears and eyes, your nose and tongue, your body and heart. Once you are infested with the *kilesas*, you will never be able to find the essence of Dhamma within your heart. How then will you find any peace?

We must rely on these Dhamma principles to eradicate those *kilesas* that remain dominant in our hearts. Don't cherish anything more than you cherish this Dhamma. It is the tool that will overcome the *kilesas* and steadily deliver the heart to the complete freedom which we treasure so highly. Which one is better, the heart that is free or the heart under the tyranny of the *kilesas*? Which are better, people enslaved without any liberty or free people? As long as we are not weary of living under the power of the *kilesas*, then we will always be submissive to them. But when we become tired of their domination and see the harm they cause, then we will strive to resist them, by whatever means we can. Ultimately we will have to rely on these five essential Dhamma tools to entirely eliminate them.

Where is the battleground for a practitioner? What do those who relentlessly walk *caṅkama* and sit in *bhāvanā* day and night take as their battleground and

object of investigation? The Lord taught the Four *Sacca Dhamma* (Noble Truths) as the main principles of Dhamma. These Four *Sacca Dhamma* exist within the bodies and minds of people. We are also people, so when we walk in meditation and sit in *samādhi bhāvanā* searching for Dhamma, we must look for it in the Noble Truths. We already know about *dukkha*. It arises in the bodies and minds of people and animals. Animals do not know how to remedy *dukkha*, but we do.

When *dukkha* arises in the body, it is something truly undesirable. Even though the body may be normal and healthy, when *dukkha* arises there will be uneasiness and anxiety. As the *dukkha* becomes more severe, our demeanor will become even more unattractive and unsightly. Is the heart that is being afflicted with intense *dukkha* really worth looking at? Instead of alleviating the problem, our actions will tend to simply make matters worse. The idea that we can rid ourselves of intense suffering by using harsh words and offensive behavior is completely mistaken. In truth, the perpetrator hurts not only others with his outpouring of vile and offensive behavior, but he also increases his own suffering. Rather than getting rid of his problems, he merely increases them and spreads them about.

We probe into the cause of *dukkha* by asking: How does *dukkha* arise? This is one aspect of the *Sacca Dhamma*. We may be aware of *dukkha*, but we can't overcome it if we don't correct it at the original cause, which is *samudaya* (the origin of *dukkha*). What is *samudaya*? It is comprised mainly of *kāmatanḥhā*, *bhavatanḥhā* and *vibhavatanḥhā*. The Lord called them "samudaya". Desire for things we love and aversion for things we despise are the root-cause of our suffering. Thoughts and imaginings based on the *kilesas* all produce *dukkha*, and so can be classified as *samudaya*. They all branch out from the same tree, which is the heart. Where are the true roots of greed, hatred and delusion? They are all planted in the heart, and nowhere else.

First we probe and investigate into the body; then we turn to look into the heart, to find out what it is imagining and thinking about. The heart conjures up

dukkha day and night, causing endless trouble for us, and for others as well. So the Lord taught us to use mindfulness and wisdom to investigate and scrutinize our thoughts. The mind tends to worry about the body. Why should it? There's always a cemetery waiting to receive it once its time is up. What can be achieved by all this concern and possessiveness? Will our anxiety bring any benefit? Won't it merely turn into “*Yampicchaṃ nalabhati tampi dukkhaṃ*” (unfulfilled desire breeds *dukkha* in the heart)? So the Lord Buddha advised us to investigate the truth rather than indulging in our desires. Having been formed, the *rūpakhandha* (the body) is destined to break up and disintegrate. We can see this irrefutably when we investigate with *paññā*. It doesn't make any sense to be so possessive of the body. So we then let go our grasp and allow the body to follow its own nature. As long as it still holds together, we must realize that its very existence is inevitably heading for dissolution.

This world is full of cemeteries awaiting the death of each person. If we investigate following the principles of Dhamma, we will no longer be doubtful about our own death, or about the place reserved for us in the cemetery. Once we acknowledge our mortality, we will not be shaken or upset. After seeing it clearly within the heart, we will relinquish death because it is a fundamental law of nature. We have to let nature take its course. Earth, water, air and fire will follow their own essential natures. They are as they are. Let the “one who knows” know them truly, and not mistake water, fire and air to be self. Otherwise, they become parasites entangling the heart with affliction and anxiety. We mistake them for self and so fall into suffering.

Vedanā (feeling) is much the same. We have experienced *sukha* (happiness) and *dukkha* from the time of our birth to the present. Regardless of whether it's the *sukha* and *dukkha* of the body, or that of the heart, they are all *anicca*, *dukkha* and *anattā*. They all arise so as to pass away. They come into existence in order to cease. As long as they are *sammuti* (conventional realities), they cannot be

permanent, stable and unchanging. What is the nature of painful feeling? Bodily feelings are not difficult to investigate when wisdom penetrates them. The pain of the heart is more difficult to see, but it is especially important to investigate. When there is bodily pain, it is always accompanied by pain in the heart. This is the way that the *kilesas* always fool people.

The purpose of contemplating the body is to correct our delusion that the body is self. The investigation of *sukha* and *dukkha vedanā* is done for the purpose of eliminating from the heart the notion the “this feeling is myself”. Let things be as they really are. Feelings are one thing, the one that knows them is another. Do not mix them up. This is impossible anyway because they are intrinsically different. How can they be combined into one? For instance, can two people be combined into one? One person is enough of a burden, but to carry two or three or four or five people becomes extremely burdensome. We couldn’t possibly go on like that. Having shouldered the burden of the body (*rūpa*), we also take up the loads of *vedanā*, *saññā*, *saṅkhāra* and *viññāṇa*, which are pressed down by the weight of *upādāna* (attachment). It’s the heart that must take the responsibility, so the heart alone must bear the consequences—even though it has gained nothing from the attachment. And yet we still insist on cling to them? We must investigate like this to see the true nature of pain.

As for *saññā* (memory), what we remember is soon forgotten. When a memory is needed we may recall it, only to have it fade away again—*Saññāvāssa vimūhati*. That’s how the Lord Buddha described it, and who can argue with him? *Saññā* is transient; memory comes and goes—*Saññā anicca*. The *bhikkhus* chant for the dead: “*Anicca vata saṅkhāra*” (impermanent are all conditioned things). We chant this and yet we imagine ourselves to be people because we take the five *khandhas* as ourselves? In truth, they are *anicca*, *dukkha* and *anattā*.

We must investigate using *paññā*, differentiating and analyzing so as to see the truth completely in all its aspects. Don’t be afraid of death. Death is not found

within the *citta*. By bringing up fear, you will only succeed in fooling yourself and piling up suffering. This is going contrary to Dhamma, which is the truth of the Lord Buddha. Whoever believes in the Lord Buddha must not go counter to the truth, but must investigate to see according to reality using the power of *paññā*. One who does this is someone who truly takes up *Buddham saraṇaṃ gacchāmi* (I take Refuge in the Buddha), and does not just mouth the words. The Lord Buddha offered the Dhamma to all living beings, so we too should be able to comprehend the Four Noble Truths. They exist within each one of us.

Saṅkhāra means thought conception. Is it trustworthy enough to be believed when it conceives, imagines and fabricates? It makes up various forms from various things. For instance, take the form of a doll which eventually falls apart. Our thoughts are much the same. We may think about good or bad things, but they all become fabrications to fool us—because the *citta* is the chief of fools. It is easily taken in by any deception. That’s the way it is. Since it is easily taken in, it is victimized. But if we have wisdom to safeguard and carefully screen our thoughts—regardless of how many thousand times a second *saṅkhāras* create concepts—then they will always be restrained. What can fool wisdom? It realizes that *saṅkhāra* is *saṅkhāra*, and that “knowingness” is the heart. So how can we be deceived by them? Why be startled by our own shadows? This is precisely what *saṅkhāras* are.

It is the same with *viññāṇa* which flicks off and on whenever things come into contact with the eyes, ears, nose, tongue and body, or are known by the heart. Then the *citta* conceives and imagines using *saṅkhāra* and *saññā*, allowing fabrications to arise and deceive us. We are constantly falling for our own *ārammaṇa* (mental objects) both day and night and it is just this delusion that brings about *dukkha*. This is a consequence of being so deluded. If we do not see the harm here, where else can we see it? We will realize the truth of the *Sacca Dhamma* right at this point. So probe into it with great precision. The important thing is not how many times we go over it, but how clearly we understand it with wisdom. Then

wisdom can pierce through any attachment. Even if it appears to be as big as a mountain—it will totally disintegrate. Once pursued by wisdom, craving will have to retreat into the “big cave”, right into the *citta*. We must strike there with *paññā*. Where is the real substance behind the shadows of *anicca*, *dukkha* and *anattā*? Drive on further! Their real substance is in the *citta*, where they all gather. Apart from that there are only shadows—delusions about *rūpa*, *vedanā*, *saññā*, *saṅkhāra* and *viññāna*.

Once *paññā* has completely seen through these delusions, they will converge into the heart. At that point, we must be willing to follow them in and destroy them here, in their hiding place in the heart. When they are in there, they are like bandits waiting in ambush to shoot our heads off. Wherever bandits take up hiding, no matter how valuable the hideout may be, we must blow it up by throwing in explosives; destroying it all, including the bandits. If all must be obliterated, then so be it. We still have life and can build it anew, for we did not die along with it.

So we must hit hard so that the subtle *kilesas* all gather within the *citta*. We must then investigate to see them all as a heap of *anicca*, *dukkha* and *anattā*—because these *kilesas* are the essence of *sammuti* (conventional reality). After that, we must totally obliterate them from the *citta*. Once they have been crushed and dispersed, we will see if the *citta* has also been annihilated. But it hasn't—because the *citta* has no cemetery. The *citta* by its very nature is *amata*—Undying—even when it still has *kilesas*.

The Buddha called this the complete dissolution of the *kilesas*—the end of danger and the extinguishing of the fires of *rāga*, *dosa* and *moha* (greed, hatred and delusion) by the elixir of the *Amata Dhamma* (Immortal Dhamma). With the *kilesas* totally eliminated, only spotless purity remains. And there in the perfectly pure *citta* is where perfect happiness is found. All work comes to an end there. The Lord said: “*Vusitaṃ brahmacariyaṃ kataṃ karaniya naṇaram itthattāyāti*

pajānāti.”—done is the task. Lived out is the Holy life. There is no further work to be done. This is because perfect wisdom has been attained.

This then is the end of *dukkha*. This is where it finishes. The ultimate Dhamma is found right here in this purified Heart. The *Buddham*, *Dhammam* and *Sangham* *saraṇam gacchāmi*—to which we reverently repeat in our hearts—all converge into this natural state of purity. This state and the recollection of the Lord Buddha become one and the same. In their true natural state, *Buddho*, *Dhammo* and *Sangho* are just this absolute purity.

The issue of the time and place of the Lord Buddha’s *Parinibbāna* (final passing away) is entirely settled because the true natural state of Buddha, Dhamma and Sangha now exists in the heart. This is the heart’s priceless treasure. When the true state of things is seen, all questions are settled.

Where did the Lord Buddha go when he passed away? His physical body merely disintegrated following its natural course—bodies being the same everywhere. But the purified nature, the complete *Buddho*, was not annihilated. It did not die. It transcends space and time. Such is the true Buddha. This is what we refer to in: *Buddham*, *Dhammam* and *Sangham* *saraṇam gacchāmi*.

How can this nature be annihilated? We must see it clearly within our own heart and use that to verify this nature once we have attained to a state of absolute purity. This will be the absolute proof. This is how all the *Arahant Sāvakas* (Enlightened Disciples) understood the truth. Wherever they are, they are together with Dhamma—with Buddha, Dhamma and Sangha, having audience with the Lord Buddha all the time—*akāliko* (timelessness). They will be unshakable because the elixir of the *amata* (immortal) Dhamma has totally quenched the fire of *rāga taṇhā* (sensual desire) within their hearts, leaving no residue.

“*Tesaṃ vūpasamo sukho*”—the quelling and cessation of all *sankhāras* is supreme happiness. Once the *sankhāras* in the heart—*sankhāras* which are *samudaya*

(the cause of *dukkha*)—are entirely brought to an end, then we arrive at Supreme Happiness.

The means and the results, the good and the bad, are within all of us who know and are aware. The nature that knows is uniquely suited to all levels of Dhamma, up to and including the *visuddhi dhamma*, which is the state of purity. There is nothing else apart from this knowingness.

Please try to steadily purify this knowing nature, gradually ridding it of all oppressive influences. Then there will be no need to enquire where *Nibbāna* is. Having arrived at the purified *citta*, all questions will finally be settled.

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Farewell Night *Desanā*

19th February, 1976

No one can surpass the Lord Buddha in desiring that people should be good. The Teaching that he gave the world was intended solely to bring virtue, goodness and happiness to all living beings. He did not want the world to be troubled or harmed, which results from wrongdoing due to ignorance of the proper ways of conduct. Because of that, building the *Pāramī* (Perfections) to the extent of those possessed by a Buddha—a being full of *mettā* for all sentient beings—is extremely difficult; and so very different from all other levels of *Pāramī*. Both the ability and *mettā* go hand in hand.

Those who listen to the Teaching of the Lord Buddha, either from his own mouth or from the scriptures, and believe in the principles of truth he espoused, will naturally try to correct and improve themselves so as to be a good people. That is to say, anyone who practices his teaching correctly will be good; from the very first person to do so to the last. Regardless of how many members a family has, when each one practices the Buddha's training to be good, then the whole family will also be good. The same truth applies when extended to a village com-

munity, a town or a country. In the end, there is no longer any need to ask about the peace and happiness of such a country, for peace and happiness will definitely follow from the goodness of all the virtuous people who live there.

Conversely, the various kinds of hardship and unhappiness experienced in the world arise only due to wickedness. The number of “disturbers” (lit. splinters and thorns) a society has corresponds directly to the number of wicked people living in a community. The more evil there is, the more hellish the world becomes. It becomes a dark place, both in daytime as well as nighttime, and in a constant state of agitation. One needn’t go searching for hell because it is being constructed right in people’s hearts, and then scattered and extended everywhere, turning everything into fire. This is very wrong.

If people lived in accordance with the Buddha Dhamma, these things would not occur. There would be no need for judges, courts of appeal or even the Supreme Court, for there would be no cases to settle. Each person would have the intention to be virtuous, always trying to listen to reason for virtue’s sake. In talking with one another, whether they be young or old, man or woman, ordained or householder, people would easily reach a mutual understanding because they intuitively understand the nature of good and evil within the heart. People would be guided solely by the wish to see things in the way of reason, truth and virtue. It would be easy for people to listen and understand each other, and their conduct would be always fair and unbiased with no need for secrecy.

The world, however, does not follow the heart’s desire. Wherever one goes, one meets with troubles and complaints about *dukkha*. Even though everyone studies and searches for knowledge, the whole world remains in a state of confusion and unrest. Because the kinds of knowledge people gain are not permeated with Dhamma they serve no useful purpose, and instead end up burning those who use them. Lacking Dhamma as a support and a guide, as an accelerator and

a brake, they just carry on in their own way (*yathākamma*) without any limit or bounds.

By thinking and investigating in this way you will come to see the value and the importance of the Dhamma of the Lord Buddha. If you simply try to conduct yourself so as to be a good person, this virtuous practice alone will result in peacefulness wherever you go, whatever the circumstances may be. Even though you are still not capable of teaching others to be good, your heart will be peaceful and happy, which is the correct result from your practice. There are different levels of such peacefulness, but everyone is capable of experiencing the ordinary level if the intention is correct and the right effort is put forth for these experiences to arise.

You should not overlook your spiritual potential, for this world can be a happy place, peaceful and worth living in, full of fun and joy. But further than this, those who want to focus on the internal happiness that arises solely within the heart should put their full effort into working towards that aim. Gradually the subtle type of happiness will arise.

Those who are truly interested in the way of *citta-bhāvanā* will take the practice as a battle, a state of combat, and put themselves on the front line. Meditators who are engaged in combat on this battlefield cannot afford to be weak. They must always be vigilant in everything they do. Gradually they will become people who are constantly mindful. Otherwise, they cannot be considered tough enough to be victorious in battle.

Such toughness relies on vigilant effort and *satipaṇṇā* observing your behavior to see if it's going in the right way, or the wrong way, especially when the *citta* is thinking in a way that accumulates unwholesomeness. Because observation of the thinking process becomes increasingly more subtle and involved, it is necessary to depend on *satipaṇṇā* as a guardian, protecting vigilantly at all times. The "stream of the *citta*" and its various imaginings will not then gravitate to those dangerous

and poisonous ideas and emotions which burn and torment the mind. Once the mind has received proper care and nourishment it will gradually become peaceful, light and happy, without fading into gloominess and dullness as it did before.

All of you disciples, who have been training here for a sufficient time, please take the Dhamma of the Lord Buddha and establish it within your hearts. When the time comes for you to leave, you should not think that you have left your teacher and the monastery behind, for your departure is only an action—a physical activity. The important thing is to reflect on the Lord Buddha’s words:

“Whoever practices Dhamma in accordance with the way of Dhamma,
“He is truly one who gives *pūja* to the *Tathāgata*.”

That practice is the way of conducting yourself with *sati*, *paññā*, *saddhā* (faith) and *virīya* (diligent effort), everywhere and in every posture with strict discipline. Conducting yourself well within the heart with constant watchfulness is what’s meant by the practice of Dhamma in accordance with the way of Dhamma and giving *pūja* to the *Tathāgata*—the Lord Buddha—at all times.

The Lord Buddha continued:

“Whoever sees Dhamma, sees the *Tathāgata*”.

How should we practice so as to see the Dhamma and know its truth for ourselves? Simply by practicing the way of *citta-bhāvanā*. That is the way of practicing Dhamma. What is seeing Dhamma if not the overcoming of those obstructions existing right now within us? These obstructions are what we should consider as our enemies! They are represented in the first two *saccadhammas*, being *dukkha* and *samudāya*. We investigate these factors so as to understand their true nature as it exists in every human being and animal, except the *Arahant*, whom *samudāya* cannot enter. The rest must possess those factors to some degree. This is what is called *saccadhamma*. When we have investigated and understood the true nature

of those things, this is called seeing Dhamma. At that point it is possible to uproot and abandon all hindrances, resulting in peace and coolness within. This uprooting, letting go and abandoning of all defilement, we call “seeing Dhamma”. It is a gradual seeing, undertaken step by step, level by level, until we finally see the complete *Tathāgata*.

Speaking of the levels of attainment: Those who have attained to the *Sotāpatti-magga* and *Sotāpatti-phala* can be said to have seen the Lord Buddha at one level, with the heart penetrating to the stream of Dhamma. It is the beginning of seeing the Lord Buddha. It’s similar to standing in a field and seeing the Lord in the distance. The *Sakadāgāmī* would see the Lord Buddha closer and clearer; the *Anāgāmī* closer and clearer still, until finally with the *Arahatta-phala* one would see the Lord Buddha with complete clarity. The Dhamma needed to achieve these various attainments exists within each and every one of us. Constantly taking up the practice in earnest is the same as following the *Tathāgata* and keeping him in one’s sight.

One sees the *Tathāgata* by means of the practice. The *Tathāgata* is seen by way of the cause, which is the practice, and by way of the result, which is successively experiencing the things one should experience. This is like the Lord Buddha who truly saw and knew each stage of the practice before successfully passing beyond it. In truth, the Buddha, the Dhamma and the Sangha are never apart from the heart of those who practice according to Dhamma and who, by virtue of their practice, give *pūja* to the Buddha, the Dhamma and the Sangha. This is the true meaning of *pūja*. The way of diligent effort is the way of having a continuous dialogue with the Lord Buddha.

Saying farewell and departing are merely actions; they are mere conventions. Departures are an ever-present reality. For example, after sitting here one departs to sit over there; from there one returns to sit here. Life is a constant departing. But you mustn’t think of departure only in terms of going from this town to that

town, or this place to that one. These are linear movements on a physical level. On a more subtle level, there is continual departing in the world of *aniccam*. All conditions are impermanent and constantly changing. We can reflect on these conditions so that they become a Dhamma lesson using the *ti-lakkhaṇa*, which is the way of all those who truly know and see. All those who practice the way must rely on the principles of the *ti-lakkhaṇa* to guide them.

Whether we are here or somewhere else we should always strive to cultivate Dhamma for the purpose of relinquishing and eradicating the *kilesas*, and for the extinguishing of all *dukkha* that exists within the heart. When we are here we cultivate Dhamma; when we move there we cultivate Dhamma. Wherever we are we practice for the purpose of uprooting and relinquishing. The place does not matter; what's important is the practice of eliminating the *kilesas*.

For that reason, the Lord Buddha taught the *Sāvakas*: “Go *bhikkhus*, all of you seek secluded places! Be firm like warriors in those places! This is the way to remain close to the *Tathāgata* all the time. It is not necessary for all of you to gather round the *Tathāgata* here in order to have an audience. This is not the way! Rather, whoever has *sati*, being diligent in all postures, is living and worshipping in the presence of the *Tathāgata* then and there. Sitting around carelessly is not the way to live in the presence of the *Tathāgata*. The *Tathāgata* does not regard the comings and goings of his disciples as essential to communicating with him. The *Tathāgata* considers diligence in practice to eradicate the *kilesas* from the heart to be truly having an audience with the *Tathāgata*.”

This is the gradual seeing of the *Tathāgata*. It is the main point in the Teaching whereby the Lord Buddha taught his followers to practice with diligent effort to gradually and successively uproot the *kilesas*, which are the enemies within the heart, until they all are made to vanish. Then they would all see where the *Tathāgata* really is, without having to look at the *Tathāgata* with dim and blurry eyes, lacking in *sati*. All that's necessary is to completely get rid of all those things

which are the enemies of the heart. Then they can take that ‘nature’ and compare it with the *Tathāgata* to see if there is any difference. Undoubtedly, there is none, for all purified ‘nature’ is the same: Listen! The essence of the Lord Buddha’s Teaching is just like this.

The training of one’s heart and the behavior to be good and virtuous is the way of accumulating happiness. When there is steady growth and development within the heart the result is just happiness. Unhappiness or an incomplete happiness, occurs because of those *kilesas* which obstruct the heart, and nothing else.

Only the *kilesas* can obstruct and pierce the hearts of all sentient beings; preventing them from experiencing happiness and satisfaction. The *dukkha* and hardship, both internal and external, are mostly caused by the *kilesas*, and nothing else. For example, when illness afflicts the body, the *kilesas* will also complain that it is painful here or painful there, causing restlessness and worry to arise within the heart. This concern with bodily illness adds another dimension of *dukkha* to the heart. The Lord Buddha and *Sāvakas* also experienced physical ailments, for the human body falls under the conventional laws of *sammuti*, which means that the body is impermanent, unsatisfactory and not-self. The physical body cannot transcend these natural principles. All conventional realities must fall within the laws of nature; and within those natural principles change is always the norm. However, the heart that totally understands the nature of these things never wavers for a moment.

But it is not like this with us. When bodily pain arises, no matter how seemingly small, the heart tends to accumulate additional *dukkha* beyond measure. The *dukkha* within the heart can even become greater than that of the body. This happens when the heart is infiltrated by the *kilesas*. When we are absent-minded and careless, lacking *satipaṇṇā* to know what the *kilesas* are up to, the *kilesas* can penetrate in every possible way, regardless of time, place, or posture. It can happen any time when the *citta* acts without *satipaṇṇā* as the controlling factor. Then it

is as if the *citta* becomes a servant of the *kilesas*, unknowingly helping them. How then can the lessons of Dhamma arise in the heart? The heart can only take lessons from the *kilesas* as they gradually keep on increasing.

Therefore, it is necessary to throw the full force of your *sati*, *paññā*, *saddhā* and *virīya* to keep up with the events happening within the heart. Studying the *dhātu* and *khandha* can make you a noble person. Other kinds of study will not lead to satisfaction because they will not eliminate that hunger that is a normal part of worldly affairs. Only when you have studied the *dhātu khandha* and the heart to completion, will the hunger finally be finished, making you fully and completely satisfied.

At present you are still deficient in your knowledge of the *khandha* and your application of such knowledge in the practice. This knowledge comes from *satipaññā*, penetrative insight into the true nature of the body and mind so as to understand what they really are according to the principles of truth. It is a process of analysis that separates the true from the false. As long as this knowledge is poorly understood, the result is endless confusion and turmoil within the body and the mind. No other confusion and agitation is more troublesome than that which arises in an untrained mind, where all sorts of problems constantly occur. For that reason, you must study the mind thoroughly until you gain enough knowledge to clear up that tangled web of problems, using *satipaññā* to examine and pass judgment at each step of the way.

Alright! Let's study to completion! What is there in the *dhātu khandha*? As has been said, the *rūpa khandha* is just this physical body. The physical components of a person taken together comprise the *rūpa khandha*. *Vedanā khandha* is the sum of pleasant, unpleasant and neutral feelings that arise within the body and the heart. This is called *vedanā khandha*. *Saññā khandha* is memory, recognition and assumed knowledge about various things. This is called *saññā khandha*. *Sankhāra khandha* is the thought-formation created within the heart; that is, thinking good

or bad thoughts; thinking about the past or the future, without limit. This is called *sankhāra khandha*. *Khandha* means group or heap. *Viññāṇa khandha* is the consciousness that acknowledges forms, sounds, smells, tastes or tactile objects when they contact the eyes, ears, nose, tongue and body respectively, and simultaneously reports that sense contact to the heart before it ceases according to its nature and another contact arises. This is called *viññāṇa khandha*, being the *viññāṇa* of the five *khandhas*.

The *viññāṇa* of the five *khandhas* is different from the *paṭisandhi-viññāṇa*. *Paṭisandhi-viññāṇa* refers to *mano*, or specifically the *citta*. It is the *citta* that enters into *paṭisandhi-viññāṇa*, just before being reborn into another form of existence. At that stage, the *citta* is referred to as *paṭisandhi-viññāṇa*, which is synonymous with the heart. With regard to the *viññāṇa* of the five *khandhas*, it arises and ceases with the sensations that come into contact with it. When those sensations subsequently pass away, the corresponding *viññāṇa* also passes away. That is, the acknowledgement ceases with the passing away of those sensations. The *paṭisandhi-viññāṇa*, however, refers to the heart which possesses the faculty of knowing, independent of all phenomena. Even if nothing comes into contact with it, this knowing does not cease.

When you investigate the five *khandhas*, do it until you understand them thoroughly. What is not yet understood should be studied over and over again. Keep on digging and analyzing until you understand. This is the appropriate field of work for those who want eradicate the *kilesas*, *taṇhā* and *āsava* from the heart. This work will result in the destruction of the “cycle of *vatta*”—which is the revolving of the *citta* as it goes on taking birth in various forms of existence, endlessly wandering from birth to birth and always reserving a place in the cemetery. Even before death it has already made its reservation there. This endless wandering is caused by delusion. Due to a fundamental ignorance about the true nature of the *khandhas*, we become attached to the *khandhas* of body and mind. As though that

attachment were not enough, we carry that clinging forward life after life until we are completely lost in delusion, with no end in sight. This will continue to happen indefinitely unless we apply *paññā* to analyze and investigate until we understand the truth and are capable of severing that craving, the cause of *dukkha*. Studying the *dhātu khandha* takes you to the essence of the *Sacca dhamma*, which is also the essence of the four *Satipaṭṭhāna*.

When we investigate any aspect of the *khandhas*, we find that they are all concerned with the essence of the *Sacca dhamma* and the essence of the four *Satipaṭṭhāna*. The body is simply the body, as it is, regardless of whether it is healthy or sick. In either case, *rūpa* is still just *rūpa*. Illness and disease are merely part of the body's natural state. The *dukkha vedanā* that arises due to such bodily changes does not remain for long, so one should see it for what it is. This is the way to study the *khandhas*. Do not be alarmed or frightened or saddened with them, for these changes are normal and natural occurrences of *sammuti*. Conditioned phenomena must inevitably change in accordance with their very nature—at every period, in every second. Even a second is too long a measure of time to describe this change—rather every instant or continuously. All phenomena are constantly changing. There is no pause, no taking time off for rest and sleep like animals and people do.

As for *dukkha*, that also manifests itself constantly. It never stops for sleep or rest. People take time off to rest, sleep and to recuperate so as to feel relax and be comfortable, but not so the *Sacca dhamma* and the *ti-lakkhaṇa*. They never stop; they never ease off with anybody. They follow their unceasing course both day and night, whether one is standing, walking, sitting or lying down. Every condition thing must revolve. This body too revolves; that is, its conditions change. Having sat still for a little while, pain arises. Is this change or not? If there is no change, then why does pain arise? This pain is called *dukkha vedanā*. It is an arising condition that we should focus our attention on. Pain is one type of *Sacca*

dhamma, so investigate it in order to see it as it really is. In critical times of bodily illness we cannot expect depend on others. Thinking that you can depend on this or that person in times of stress is a misunderstanding, which can only drain your mental energy, leaving you too discouraged and disheartened to think about helping yourself. This wrong understanding is created by the *kilesas* constantly whispering their deceptions and thus cutting the ground from under your feet by means of their trickery.

In times of sickness and emergency, you must assume the attitude of a boxer in the ring. Before a boxer climbs into the ring, he takes detailed instructions from his trainer can. But once he enters the ring, he can't rely on the trainer anymore. Right or wrong; good or bad; dead or alive—he must rely entirely on himself. He must help himself to the fullest of his ability. Boxing techniques can no longer be taught at that time. Entering the boxing ring is synonymous with the final battle when the *khandhas* and the *citta* are breaking up and going their separate ways. The time when death is approaching.

When a vulture lands on the branches of a tree, the branch hardly shakes at all. But when it springs off to fly away it shakes the branch until the whole tree vibrates. If the branch is dead, it will probably break off. At the time when the *dhātu khandha* are leaving us, how hard will it shake us? What are we going to use to stand up to this shaking, if not *satipaññā*? Without that wisdom we will surely be unable to endure, losing our balance and our control. Because of that, we must fight to the very end using the full capacity of our *satipaññā* in every moment. Don't entertain any thoughts that the body will be destroyed in the fight. You investigate the *dhātu khandha* for the purpose of seeing their true nature and gaining release from suffering, not to destroy the body. This path of wisdom is followed as a means of helping you emerge victorious at the moment when death approaches. When that time arrives, *dukkha vedanā* will manifest itself very clearly. Every part

throughout the body will appear to be on fire. Internally, the body will feel like a red-hot and glowing furnace. What are you going to do then?

You must probe into the pain with *satipaññā* until you understand the true nature of *dukkha*. Once you see that mass of fire clearly with *paññā*, then turn to examine your heart—is that red-hot as well? Or is it only the bodily *khandha* that is on fire? A heart that possesses *satipaññā* will not be moved. It will remain cool within the mass of painful feelings that burns like a fire within the body. This is the correct way of practice. Analyzing the *dhātu khandha* in this way allows you to help yourself at critical times, instead of expecting to rely on others.

This is what we mean by entering the boxing ring. Once you have resolved to do battle, then fight with reason using all your strength. Be prepared to die, if need be. It doesn't matter who carries you out of the ring. It is a fight to the end with your maximum capacity of *paññā*. Do not fight blindly or halfheartedly. Don't fight like a dummy, allowing the *kilesas* to strike blow after blow without dodging or counter-punching. That's a useless strategy! You must put your life on the line and fight to win. If you die, then so be it. But don't fight ineptly for lack of that most advanced weapon—*satipaññā*.

Battling with *vedanā* means investigating so as to see the true nature of pain. Do not force the pain to disappear. Such coercion goes against the course of nature. Instead, you must investigate the pain to see it as it really is and let it disappear on its own. Even if it does not disappear during the course of investigation, you will understand the nature of *vedanā* and so not cling to it. *Rūpa* is *rūpa*; don't contradict the truth and assume it's something else. *Rūpa* is body; body is *rūpa*—*rūpa* is just physical body. *Vedanā* is just *vedanā*, be it *sukha*, *dukkha*, or neutral—it is just feeling.

What is it that knows the body and knows *vedanā*—*sukha*, *dukkha*, or neutral—if it is not the heart? The heart is not the same as those *dhammas*. Separate

them apart so as to see them clearly with *paññā*. This is the correct way of investigating *Sacca dhamma* so that the heart does not waver, even if the body does not last. Alright! Let's face the battle; let's see what will disappear first and what will be last to vanish. We have confidence in *satipaññā* and the truth—the truth that the heart is not the one that dies. The heart is simply the one that acknowledges everything. Alright! Whatever is impermanent, let it go. The body is impermanent; alright, let it break up. Feelings are impermanent; alright, let them melt away. Whatever is impermanent, let it all dissolve. Whatever is permanent will last and be firm. And what is that which remains? What else other than the “one who knows”, which is the heart. There! It's the “one who knows” standing out distinctly all the time.

Once you have trained yourself in the way of *satipaññā* until you become adept, the results will definitely be like this. But if you are lacking in *satipaññā*, the heart will become discouraged and weak. All sorts of *dukkha* will then converge into the heart because it is the heart itself that accumulates *dukkha* due to its own stupidity. Weakness can never be the path that leads away from all harm and danger; rather it is diligence and hard work, that is, being a warrior with *satipaññā*. It is these factors that can cause bravery and fearlessness to arise within the heart. Nothing else can bring victory over *dukkha* and its causes. Please consider this matter carefully.

When you must live at home without a teacher or instructor, you should consider what teaching was it that the teacher gave you for living without him? The teacher that the *Tathāgata* left behind for us is the Dhamma. You are with the Dhamma, with the Lord Buddha, and with the Sangha at all times by means of the Teaching that you use to train and conduct yourself. These three all represent our teachers. Because of that, you are never without a teacher or his instructions. You live under the protection of *sati*, *paññā*, *saddha* and *virīya*, which will fight to

the end against those defilements which are the enemies in your heart. How can you say you are without a teacher—you are living with your teacher!

When you know and understand you will do so like one who is following in the teacher's footsteps. There is no loneliness, no wavering. There is only firmness and steadfastness in the truth of Dhamma. His teaching should be constantly adhered to as a guide within your heart. Then no matter where you are you can say that you're with the teacher—with the Lord Buddha, the Dhamma and the Sangha—because the real Buddha, Dhamma and Sangha exist within the heart. Only the *citta* can accommodate the Buddha, Dhamma and Sangha and the whole essence of Truth. Only the *citta* can know the Buddha, Dhamma and Sangha—nothing else. The body doesn't know—how then can it know about the Lord Buddha, the Dhamma and the Sangha? *Vedanā* doesn't know either; *saññā* is just a function of memory that having arisen just disappears without trace; *sankhāra* thinks and imagines and then vanishes. How can there be any essence in these mental aggregates sufficient to accommodate the Lord Buddha? The *citta* is what truly knows and understands the Lord Buddha, until *citta* and Buddha become one and the same.

For this reason, you should investigate the *citta* to the utmost. Do not be weak or discouraged! In any case, at the time of death every one of us will have to enter into the battle. It is something that none of us can avoid. We have no other option but to help ourselves; that's for certain. When the critical time comes, it will not be possible for others to help. Regardless of who they are—whether father or mother, sons or daughters, husband or wife—they can only watch on with affection, sympathy and yearning. They will long to help, but when the time comes it will be beyond their power. The only powers that can help us transcend *dukkha* and torment and free us from all bondage are *satipaṇṇā* and our own effort. Nothing else works. So we have to be strict with ourselves and firm at heart especially when the body is nearing its end. We should focus on developing these

powers from this moment on! Then we will not lose control when the *khandhas* begin to break up, for these aggregates cannot transcend death. No matter how they manifest themselves in this lifetime, they end at death.

So the “one who knows” knows body and mind until death, at which time the *dhātu khandha* all dissolve, ridding the “one who knows” of all problems and all responsibilities, and the need for any further investigation. Let’s get down to the crux of the matter! Right to the essence of truth and reason! Then you will arrive at the really genuine Dhamma within the heart.

This Dhamma presentation is quite appropriate; may it now come to an end.

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Glossary

<i>Ācariya</i>	Teacher. Sometimes also a term of respect for a senior <i>Bhikkhu</i> .
<i>Anāgāmi</i>	Non-returner; the penultimate stage of the <i>Ariyan</i> Path.
<i>Ānāpānāsati</i>	Meditation on the feeling of the in and out breaths.
<i>Anattā</i>	Not-self.
<i>Anicca</i>	Impermanence; constant change.
<i>Arahant</i>	One who is worthy, one who attains the ultimate state of <i>Nibbāna</i> .
<i>Ārammaṇa</i>	Support; a supporting condition for the mind; an object.
<i>Āsava</i>	Outflows; that is, the <i>citta</i> flows out into sense desires, into perpetuating existence, into views and opinions, and into ignorance.
<i>Asubha</i>	Loathsomeness; 10 contemplations of the decomposition of a dead body.
<i>Attā</i>	Self.
<i>Avijjā</i>	Fundamental ignorance; ignorance of one's own true nature.

<i>Āyatana</i>	Sense fields; that is, the fields of seeing, hearing, etc.; mental sensation.
<i>Bhāvanā</i>	Development by means of meditation.
<i>Bhikkhu</i>	A monk, usually in reference to Buddhism; one who lives on donated food.
<i>Caṅkama</i>	Walking meditation; pacing back and forth on a path designed for meditation.
<i>Citta</i>	The underlying essence of mind where Dhamma and the <i>kilesas</i> dwell. In its pure state it is indefinable. It is beyond birth and death. It controls the <i>khandhas</i> , but does not die when they do.
<i>Dāna</i>	Generosity.
<i>Deva</i>	An angel-like being of the <i>Deva-realms</i> , which are immediately above the human realm.
<i>Dhamma</i>	Truth; the ultimate order underlying everything; the teaching of the Buddha.
<i>Dhammā(s)</i>	In the plural, means: objects of mind, concepts, theories.
<i>Dhātu</i>	Elements of earth, water, fire and air.
<i>Dukkha</i>	Discontent, suffering.
<i>Iddhipāda</i>	Roads to Power.
<i>Indriya</i>	Faculty, function.
<i>Jīvita</i>	The life principle; vitality or activity of the <i>citta</i> .

<i>Kamma</i>	Lit: “action”. In Buddhism, action of the body, speech or mind which has a moral content of good, bad or neutral. Such action brings back a corresponding result.
<i>Kammaṭṭhāna</i>	Lit: “basis of work”; the 40 subjects of meditation listed in the <i>Visuddhimagga</i> .
<i>Khandha</i>	A heap or group. Usually refers to the Five <i>Khandhas</i> : the physical body, feeling, memory, thought and imagination and consciousness.
<i>Kilesa</i>	The mental defilements based upon greed, hate and delusion.
<i>Ksatriya</i>	The noble warrior caste that the Buddha was born into.
<i>Loka-dhātu</i>	Those things which go to make up the world; the whole universe.
<i>Lokavidū</i>	One who knows the worlds; a term for the Buddha.
<i>Lokuttara</i>	That which is beyond the world; that is, beyond <i>saṃsāra</i> .
<i>Magga</i>	Path; usually refers to the eight-fold path leading to <i>Nibbāna</i> .
<i>Māra</i>	The evil one; the personification of evil and temptation.
<i>Mettā</i>	Friendliness; pure love.
<i>Nāma</i>	Mental phenomena; the four mental factors of the Five <i>Khandhas</i> .
<i>Ñāṇa</i>	Higher knowledge.
<i>Nibbāna</i>	Lit: “Extinguished”; the ultimate goal of Buddhist training.
<i>Nimitta</i>	A sign; in meditation practice, a mental image which is usually visual.
<i>Pāli</i>	The language of the Buddhist Canon and texts.

<i>Paññā</i>	Wisdom.
<i>Parinibbāna</i>	Final <i>Nibbāna</i> attained at the death of the Buddha or any of the <i>Arahants</i> .
<i>Paṭisandhi</i>	State of the <i>citta</i> at the moment of taking on a new life immediately after death.
<i>Piṇḍapāta</i>	Walking on the alms round to receive food.
<i>Pūjā</i>	Homage; devotion.
<i>Rāga</i>	Lust; sexual excitement; attachment.
<i>Rūpa</i>	Form; shape; the body.
<i>Sabhāva</i>	Natural things; things in nature.
<i>Saddhā</i>	Faith; trust; confidence.
<i>Sākyā</i>	The race of people from whom the Buddha came.
<i>Samādhi</i>	Meditative calm; absorbed concentration, having many levels and types.
<i>Samaṇa</i>	A recluse; a practising <i>Bhikkhu</i> .
<i>Samatha</i>	Meditative calm.
<i>Sammuti</i>	Conventional reality; conventions of the world.
<i>Saṃsāra</i>	The total sphere of all the realms of existence.
<i>Sangha</i>	The order of <i>Bhikkhus</i> ; a group of at least four <i>Bhikkhus</i> .

<i>Sankhāra</i>	Physical and mental phenomena composed of inter-related parts or functions.
<i>Saraṇa</i>	A refuge.
<i>Sāsadā</i>	The World Teacher; the Supreme Teacher; the Buddha as a teacher.
<i>Sāsana</i>	The Buddhist religion; the system of teaching and training taught by the Buddha.
<i>Sati</i>	Mindfulness.
<i>Sāvaka</i>	A hearer (of the teaching); usually those who heard the teaching directly from the Buddha.
<i>Sīla</i>	Morality; moral behaviour; the five moral precepts.
<i>Sugato</i>	Well-gone; an epithet for the Buddha.
<i>Sukha</i>	Happiness.
<i>Taṇhā</i>	Craving; the chief cause of <i>dukkha</i> .
<i>Tathāgata</i>	Thus-gone; a common epithet for the Buddha.
<i>Ti-lakkhaṇa</i>	The three characteristics of existence: impermanence, suffering and non-self.
<i>Vassa</i>	The annual 3 month rains retreat, when <i>Bhikkhus</i> are required to remain in a single residence.
<i>Vatṭa</i>	The continuing cycle of birth, life and death.
<i>Vimutti</i>	Freedom; deliverance.
<i>Vinaya</i>	The code of conduct and discipline of a <i>bhikkhu</i> .

