

**INNER STRENGTH**

Sixteen Talks by  
Ajaan Lee Dhammadharo  
(Phra Suddhidhammaransi Gambhiramethacariya)

Translated from the Thai  
by Thanissaro Bhikkhu  
(Geoffrey DeGraff)

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Glossary

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

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

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

In any event, Ajaan Lee's comments are best read as food for thought--pointing out an area to be explored, suggesting various ways to understand and deal with it--and not as hard and fast rules.

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

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

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

Thanissaro Bhikkhu  
(Geoffrey DeGraff)

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

namo tassa bhagavato arahato samma-sambuddhassa.  
ayudo balado dhiro'ti.

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

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

People who don't have enough strength of their own have to start out by hoping to depend on others until they reach the point where they can stand on their own. In depending on others, we have to be careful in choosing a good mainstay, in line with the Pali phrase, *asevana ca balanam, panditananca sevana*: We have to choose good people to associate with. If we associate with wise people and sages, they'll teach us to be good. If we associate with fools, we'll suffer for it.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

A Mind of Pure Gold (July, 1958)

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

If liberating insight arises, we'll see the absolute truth--that all our preoccupations are inconstant, stressful and not the self--appearing in our heart. When we can see things clearly in this way, we'll be able to let go of our various preoccupations. The mind

will give rise to a brilliant radiance--termed dhammo pajjoto, the light of the Dhamma--and we'll attain to the transcendency of the mind. When we reach this point, that's when we're said to have grown up. We can go wherever we like, for no one will be able to pull the wool over our eyes.

Fashionings (February 6, 1956)

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

anicca vata sankhara uppada-vaya-dhammino

uppajjitva nirujjhanti ....

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

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

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

Fashionings, as they appear in actuality, are of two sorts: fashionings on the level of the world, and fashionings on the level of the Dhamma. Both sorts have their reality, but they're things that arise and then decay. This is why the Buddha said, 'anicca vata sankhara...'--which means, 'All fashionings are inconstant...'--because both sorts of these fashionings begin by arising, then change, and finally disband. Whoever can focus in to know clearly and truly see this condition, curb the mind and become wise to all fashionings, is sure to gain release from all suffering and stress.

Fashionings on the level of the world are things that people create and conjure into being, such as wealth, status, pleasure and praise. As for fashionings on the level of the Dhamma, whether or not we dress them up, we all have them in equal measure--i.e., properties (dhatu), khandhas and sense media.

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

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

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

The other side to all this is non-fashioning (visankhara). What is non-fashioning? No wobbling, no changing, no disbanding: That's non-fashioning. Fashionings change, but our mind doesn't change. Fashionings are stress, but our mind isn't stressed. Fashionings are not-self, but our mind isn't not-self. Fashionings without a mind in possession: That's non-fashioning.

Most of us, by and large, are aware only of the knowledge offered by the Six Teachers--the senses of sight, hearing, smell, taste,

feeling and ideation--which are sources of change, uncertainty, stress, unawareness and fashionings. So we should close off these senses, because fashionings can't see other fashionings. Only if we get on the other side will we be able to see.

The Tree is in its Seed (August 27, 1956)

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

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

atitam nanvagameyya nappatikankhe anagatam  
paccuppananca yo dhammam tatha tatha vipassati:

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

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

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

When mental fashionings and unawareness disband, awareness arises. For example, knowledge of past lives: We see the mind's ancestry--its past lifetimes. Knowledge of death and rebirth: We know the good and bad actions of our fellow beings, how they die and

are reborn. A mind trained to maturity in concentration develops quality, like a mature mango seed, which is capable of containing all its ancestry, its parents and children, in itself. If anyone plants it, it'll break out into roots, stems, branches, leaves, flowers and more fruits just like before. A mind not yet trained to maturity is like the seed of an unripe mango that has fallen from the tree. If you plant it, it won't grow. It'll just rot there in the dirt. Since it's not yet ripe, it isn't capable of containing its ancestry and descendants.

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

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

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

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

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

want only the goodness that we build up within ourselves.

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

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

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

When wise people practice the Dhamma, they have to be selective and choose only what's good. They won't let their minds feed on anything spoiled, because spoiled things, when we feed on them, can be toxic and harmful. As for good things, when we eat them, they don't cause any harm. They can only benefit us.

Goodness, evil, purity--all come from within us. The Buddha thus taught that each of us has his or her own kamma. What he said on this point is absolutely true. There's no way you can argue with it. 'Kamma' means the good and bad actions that come from intentions. Intentions are thoughts that come from the mind, so the mind lies at

the essence of intention and kamma, because the mind is what thinks and gives the orders. When an intention is shoddy or dishonest, the resulting action is bad kamma, and will result in suffering. When an intention is good, proper and honest, the action will be good kamma and will result in pleasure. So whether we're to suffer or to experience pleasure, to be good or shoddy, pure or impure, depends on our own actions and intentions, not on anything anyone else may do for us. Once we realize this, there's no more confusion.

The Lessons of Unawareness (August 21, 1956)

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"The sermon this afternoon was on the theme, 'vijja-carana-sampanno sugato lokavidu.' I didn't listen to the beginning. All I can remember is this:"

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

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

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

1. Wholesomeness (kusala-dhamma) means the goodness that exists naturally, whether or not there's a Buddha to point it out. This dhamma is what gives comfort and benefit to living beings in proportion to how much they practice it. Don't go thinking that goodness comes from having been formulated by the Buddha, or that it comes from his teachings. Goodness has been in the world ever since long before the time of the Buddha, but no one was really acquainted

with it because no sage had been able to identify it. But when the Buddha came and ferreted out awareness itself, he was able to see the dhamma that has existed in the world from time immemorial. This sort of dhamma didn't arise from anything he said or taught. It's the goodness that exists naturally in the world. If this sort of goodness didn't exist as a normal part of the world, the human race would have died out long ago. The fact that we have any peace and well-being at all comes from our having imbued our hearts with this goodness as we have been able to discover it. Otherwise we wouldn't be able to withstand all the fires of worldliness.

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

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

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

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

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

So the Buddha taught us to develop our awareness in order to know

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

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

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

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

3. The truly high level of awareness is called bhavanamaya-panna. This level of awareness arises in a trained mind. This is what is meant by vijja-carana-sampanno sugato lokavidu. The awareness here includes knowledge of one's past lives; knowledge of death and rebirth--knowing the mental stream of other people, what sort of good and evil they've done, and where they will go after death; and knowledge of the end of mental fermentation: Whoever develops the mind to the point of Right Concentration, giving rise to intuitive insight, will be able to let go of:

(i) Self-identification (sakkaya-ditthi). They'll see that the body isn't really theirs.

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

(iii) Attachment to the formalities of virtue (silabbata-paramasa). The virtues of the five precepts will be firmly established in their hearts.

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

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

But once we've developed awareness, then when greed arises, we won't identify with it. The same holds true with anger and delusion. This is a step we have to master so that we can catch sight of how these three defilements actually come and go. In other words, when greed comes, we sit and keep watch on the greed until it dies of its own accord. We'll then be able to know exactly what ugly features it has when it comes, and exactly how good it is when it goes. We just sit there and watch it until it disbands, and we'll feel an immediate sense of relief. When anger or delusion comes, we sit and keep watch on the anger or delusion--don't go running off anywhere else--and we'll be able to see exactly how bad anger is when it comes, and how good it is when it goes. What delusion is like when it comes--no matter which side it's going to be deluded about--we make a point of keeping our gaze fixed on it. When we can hold ourselves in check

this way, that's awareness.

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

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

PART TWO: INNER SKILL  
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The ABC's of the Breath (September 27, 1957)

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

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

In another sense, the breath is like a piece of paper. When we think 'bud-' in with the breath, it's as if we took a pencil and wrote a letter of the alphabet on a piece of paper. If we keep doing this, eventually we'll be able to read what we've written. But if our mind doesn't stay constantly with the breath, it's as if we wrote sometimes right and sometimes wrong. The letters we'd write would be a mess,

and wouldn't even be letters. No matter how large our piece of paper might be, the whole thing would be a mess. We wouldn't be able to read what letters we had written, or what they were supposed to say.

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

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

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

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

As the Mind Turns (August 9, 1958)

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

unawareness; the brightness, awareness.

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

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

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

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

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

To see ourself or to see the world, the Buddha teaches us to survey ourself from the head to the feet, from the feet to the head, just as if we're going to plant a tree: We have to survey things from the ground on up to the tips of the branches. The ground stands for

the purity of our livelihood. We have to examine the ground to see if it has any termites or other pests that will destroy the roots of our tree. Then we have to add the right amount of fertilizer--not too little, and not too much. We have to care for it correctly in line with its size. For example, how do we observe the five precepts so that they're pure? How do we observe the eight, the ten and the 227 precepts so that they're pure? What things should we abstain from doing? What things should we do? This is called Right Livelihood.

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

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

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

'I abstain from high and large beds:' When we lie down to sleep, the Buddha doesn't have us use soft mattresses or cushions that are too comfortable, because if we have a lot of comfort, we'll sleep a lot and not want to get up to do good. The results of our concentration practice will be meager, and our laziness will grow rampant. This is like caterpillars and worms that burrow throughout the soil: They'll keep whispering to us, teaching us all sorts of things until ultimately they tell us to stop doing good--and so we stop. This is like insects crawling up from the ground and eating into our tree, climbing higher and higher up until they reach the tiptop branches: the mind. Ultimately, when they eat the tips of the branches, the tree won't bear flowers. When it has no flowers, it

won't bear fruit. In the same way, if we lack a sense of moderation in caring for ourself, we won't be practicing Right Livelihood. If we don't have a proper sense of how to nourish and care for the body, our conduct will have to degenerate. But if we have a proper sense of how to nourish and care for the body, our conduct will have to develop in the direction of purity, and the mind will have to develop along with it, step by step.

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

Mental corruption refers to (1) greed for sights, sounds, smells, tastes, etc.; (2) ill will--focusing on this matter or that person as not being good, which develops into a desire for retribution, leading to a confrontation or to violence; (3) wrong views--seeing that doing good doesn't lead to good results; for example, seeing that being generous, observing the precepts or practicing meditation doesn't make one rich or happy, so that one stops doing good. We have to rid the heart of these three forms of mental corruption. When the heart is freed from corruption, it will have to enter mental rectitude, becoming a worthwhile mind, pursuing Right Undertaking: in other words, meditation.

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

anakula ca kammanta edam mangalam uttamam:

'Undertakings that are not left unfinished are a supreme good omen.'

In practicing meditation, the mind is what gives the orders. In other words, we should have a base or a frame of reference,

contemplating the breath so that it becomes refined--because the more refined something is, the higher its value. Our breath sensations are of five sorts:

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

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

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

(5) The fifth sort are the breath sensations flowing in the intestines, helping to warm the fires of digestion, just as if we were steaming fish or other foods to keep them from spoiling. When our food is cooked, it can be of use--like the steam condensing on the lid of a pot--to enrich the blood that nourishes the various parts of the body. Whichever kind of nourishment should become hair, nails, teeth, skin, etc., the blood sends to those parts.

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

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

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

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

3. We'll see that the body and mind are inconstant, stressful and not self, to the point where we become disenchanted with them. This will cause us to let go of the body, and free us from the fetters of attachment. These fetters include such things as attachment to worldly phenomena (loka-dhamma): When we let ourselves get pleased with gain, status, pleasure and praise, it's no different from the King of Death tying our hands up tight. Then when he gives a single lash with his whip--i.e., we suffer loss, disgrace, pain and censure--we come tumbling right down.

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

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

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

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

Mental Power, Step by Step (July 26, 1956)

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

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

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

Concepts lie at the essence of mental fashioning. The mind thinks of matters either past or future, and then starts elaborating on them as good or bad, liking or disliking them. If we see them as good, we get pleased and taken with them: This is delusion. If we

see them as bad, we get displeased, which clouds and defiles the mind, making it irritated, restless and annoyed: This is ill will. The things that give rise to unrest and disturbance in the mind are all classed as Hindrances (nivarana)--fashionings that fashion the mind, destroying whatever is good in our practice of concentration. So we have to do away with them all.

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

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

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

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

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

that happen, that we know or see, letting them follow their own regular course without our feeling caught up with them. The mind will then move up to liberating insight.

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

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

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

Observe & Evaluate (July 24, 1956)

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

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

When we sit and meditate, we have to observe the breath as it goes in and out to see what it feels like as it comes in, how it moves or exerts pressure on the different parts of the body, and in what ways it gives rise to a sense of comfort. Is breathing in long and out long easy and comfortable, or is breathing in short and out long easy and comfortable? Is breathing in fast and out fast comfortable, or is breathing in slow and out slow? Is heavy breathing comfortable, or is light breathing comfortable? We have to use our own powers of observation and evaluation, and gain a sense of how to correct, adjust and ease the breath so that it's stable, balanced and just right. If, for example, slow breathing is uncomfortable, adjust it so that it's faster. If long breathing is uncomfortable, change to short breathing. If the breath is too gentle or weak--making you drowsy or your mind drift--breathe more heavily and strongly.

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

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

The mind will be independent, quiet, light and at ease--self-contained, like a flame in a glass lantern. Even though insects may come and swarm around the lantern, they can't put out the flame; and at the same time, the flame can't lick out to burn the hand of the person carrying it. A mind that has mindfulness constantly watching over it is bound to be incapable of stretching or reaching out to take up with any preoccupations at all. It won't lick out in

front or flicker back behind, and external preoccupations won't be able to come barging into the heart. Our eyes--the eyes of our discernment--will be clear and far-seeing, just as if we were sitting in the interstices of a net, able to see clearly in whichever direction we looked.

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

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

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

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

When the mind is focused with full circumspection, it can let go of allusions to the past. It sees the true nature of its old preoccupations, that there's nothing lasting or certain about them.

As for the future lying ahead of us, it's like having to sail a small boat across the great wide sea: There are bound to be dangers on all sides. So the mind lets go of allusions to the future and comes into the present, seeing and knowing the present.

The mind stands firm and doesn't sway.  
Unawareness falls away.

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

A void.

You don't latch on to world-fashionings of the past, world-fashionings of the future, or dhamma-fashionings of the present. Fashionings disappear. Avijja--counterfeit, untrue awareness--disappears. 'True' disappears. All that remains is awareness: 'buddha... buddha...'

The factor that fashions the body, i.e., the breath; the factors that fashion speech, i.e., thoughts that formulate words; and the factor that fashions the mind, i.e., thinking, all disappear. But awareness doesn't disappear. When the factor that fashions the body moves, you're aware of it. When the factor that fashions speech moves, you're aware of it. When the factor that fashions the mind moves, you're aware of it, but awareness isn't attached to anything it knows. In other words, no fashionings can affect it. There is simply awareness. At a thought, the mind appears, fashionings appear. If you want to use them, there they are. If not, they disappear on their own, by their very nature. Awareness is above everything else. This is release.

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

The Refinements of the Breath (August 3, 1956)

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

1. The common breath is the breath we breathe into the body. It comes in two sorts. (a) That which is mixed with impure or polluted air: When it goes into the lungs, it doesn't all come out. The dregs hang on in the body. And when these dregs mix with the blood in the heart, they can cause the blood to be harmful to the body, giving rise to diseases. But these diseases don't need to be treated with

medicine. If we treat them using the breath, they'll go away. (b) The other sort of common breath is that which is beneficial--the breath mixed with pure air. When it mixes with the blood in the heart, it's beneficial to the body.

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

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

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

The mind at this point is said to be in Right Concentration, which can lead to liberating insight. Liberating insight can cut away all allusions and concepts dealing with past and future. In other words, the mind is content to stay with the profound breath, the spacious and empty breath. As long as the mind hasn't penetrated to this level of the breath, it isn't free from Hindrances. It doesn't give rise to discernment; it has no true awareness. But when the awareness that comes from stillness gains power, it gives rise to strength and light. The mind and breath are both bright. When every aspect of the breath is equally strong, the profound breath becomes apparent: quiet and smooth; free from waves; motionless and resilient. The breath at this point isn't affected by the in-and-out breath. The body is quiet, with no feelings of pain. It feels buoyant, saturated and full, like the mantle of a Coleman lantern: There's no need to pump, there's no sound, the air inside seems still, and yet the light is dazzling. All that's needed is the vapor of the kerosene, and the lantern will give off light.

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

When insight arises, we can be aware on the level of sensations (rupa) and mental acts (nama) that arise from the in-and-out breath. We're aware of the common breath, the refined breath and the profound breath. We can keep tabs on all three levels of the breath. When our awareness reaches this point, we can be said to know the breath, or to

know sensation. Then we observe how these things affect the mind. This is called knowing mental acts. Once we can know both sensation and mental acts, we'll know: 'This is true awareness. This is how true awareness goes about knowing.' As long as we can't make the mind behave in this way, we can't know. And when we can't know, that's avijja, unawareness.

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

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

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

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

Unawareness is what kills people. Unawareness is a trap. But ordinarily a trap can catch only dull-witted animals. Sharp-witted animals usually don't let themselves get caught. If we're stupid, unawareness will catch us and eat us all up. If we live under the sway of ignorance--if we aren't acquainted with the three levels of breath in the body--we'll have to reap harm. To know them, though, is to have Right Mindfulness. We'll know the causes of our actions and

their results. To know this is to be mindful and alert. Our body and actions will be clear to us, like a fire that's bright in and of itself. Where does its brightness come from? From the energy in the kerosene. So it is with the profound breath. It's quiet in the body, like a Coleman lantern glowing dazzlingly bright: It's quiet, as if no air had been pumped into it at all.

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

When vipassana arises, it's as if we put kerosene directly on the mantle of a lantern: The fire will flame up instantly; the light will dazzle in a single flash. The allusions and concepts that label sensations will disappear; the allusions and concepts that label mental acts will disappear. All labeling and naming of things will disappear in a single mental instant. Sensations are still there, as always; mental acts are still there, as always, but the labels that take hold of them are cut, just like a telegraph line: The transmitter is there, the receiver is there, the line is there, but there's no connection--the current isn't running. Whoever wants to send a message can go ahead and try, but everything is quiet. So it is with the heart: When we cut through labels and concepts, then no matter what anyone may say to us, the heart is quiet.

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

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

This is termed paccattam: We see on our own, and become responsible for ourselves. Sanditthiko: We can see clearly for ourselves. Akaliko: No matter when, as soon as we reflect on the three levels of the breath, we immediately gain comfort and ease. To

speaking in legal terms, we've come of age. We're no longer minors, and have full rights to our parents' legacy in accordance with the law. To speak in terms of the monastic discipline, we no longer have to stay under our teachers, because we're fully able to look after ourselves. And to speak in terms of the Dhamma, we no longer have to depend on teachers or texts.

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

The Direct Path (September 14, 1956)

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

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

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

The best breath to focus on is the empty, spacious breath. To make use of the breath means to use whichever feeling is most predominant, as when you feel very relaxed, very empty or very comfortable. If there's a feeling of motion, don't use it. Use just the feelings of emptiness, relaxation or lightness. To use them means to expand their range, so that you feel empty in every part of the body. This is called having a sense of how to make use of the

feelings you already have. But in using these feelings, you have to be completely mindful and self-aware. Otherwise, when you start feeling empty or light, you might go thinking that your body has disappeared.

In letting these sensations expand, you can let them spread either one at a time or all together at once. The important point is that you keep them balanced, and that you focus on the whole body all at once as the single object of your awareness. This is called *ekayana-magga*, the direct path. If you can master this, it's like having a white cloth that you can either keep hidden in your fist or spread out for two meters. Your body, although it may weigh 50 kilograms, may feel as light as a single kilogram. This is called *maha-satipatthana*--the great frame of reference

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

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

When these five strengths appear in the heart, the heart will be fully mature. '*Saddhindriyam viriyindriyam satindriyam samadhindriyam pannindriyam*:' Your conviction, persistence, mindfulness, concentration and discernment will be mature and pre-eminent in their own spheres. It's the nature of mature adults that they co-operate.

When they work together on a job, they finish it. So it is when you have these five adults working together for you: You'll be able to complete any task. Your mind will have the power to demolish every defilement in the heart, just as a nuclear bomb can demolish anything anywhere in the world.

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

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

Knowledge & Vision (July, 1958)

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

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

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

This is threshold concentration; or vicara--spreading the breath.

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

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

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

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

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

To know where beings go and take birth is termed knowledge of death and rebirth. We become disenchanted with states of being. Once we know enough to feel disenchantment, our states of being and birth lessen. Our burdens and concerns lighten. The mind's cycling through

states of being slows down. Just like a wheel when we put thorns in the tire and place logs in the way: It slows down. When the mind turns more slowly, you can count the stages in its cycle. This is called knowing the moments of the mind. To know in this way is liberating insight. It's awareness. To know past, future and present is awareness.

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

Stress for ordinary people is pain and suffering. For sages, it's the wavering of pleasure.

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

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

The breath energy in the body falls into two classes. One class

is called the 'feminine breath,' the gentle flow of energy from below the navel up to the head and out the nose. The other class is called the 'masculine breath,' the solid flow of energy from the ends of the feet up through the spine. Once you can focus on these breaths, don't go against their basic nature. Be conscious of them when you go in to co-ordinate and connect them, and observe the results that come from spreading and adjusting the breath. As soon as things feel smooth and easy, focus in on the breath in the stomach and intestines, and the breath energy that acts as a sentinel between them, keeping them from rubbing against each other, like the cotton wool used to pack a stack of glassware to keep the glasses from striking against one another.

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

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

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

Coming Home (September 22, 1956)

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

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

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

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

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

We should make ourselves aware that when the mind starts tipping, it can tip in either of two directions: (1) It may go toward thoughts of the past, matters that happened two hours ago or all the way back to our very first breath. Distractions of this sort can carry two kinds of meaning for us: Either they deal in terms of worldly matters--our own affairs or those of other people, good or bad--or else they deal in terms of the Dhamma, things good or bad that have happened and that we've taken note of. (2) Or else our mind may tip towards thoughts of the future, which are the same sort of thing--our own affairs or those of others, dealing in terms of the world or the Dhamma, good or bad.

When our mind starts drifting in this way, we're bound to receive one of two sorts of results: contentment or discontentment, moods that indulge either in pleasure or in self affliction. For this reason, we have to catch hold of the mind constantly and bring it into the present so that these Hindrances can't come seeping in. But even then, the mind isn't really at equilibrium. It's still apt to waver to some extent. But this wavering isn't really wrong (if we know how to use it, it isn't wrong; if we don't, it is) because the mind, when

it wavers, is looking for a place to stay. In Pali, this is called sambhavesin. So we're taught to find a meditation theme to act as a focal point for the mind, in the same way that a movie screen acts as a reflector for images so that they appear sharp and clear. This is to keep external preoccupations from barging in.

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

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

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

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

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

have to learn how to observe the obvious breath before we can become aware of the more refined breath sensations in the body.

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

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

Vitakka is like putting sand into a sifter. Vicara is like sifting the sand. When we first put sand into a sifter, it's still coarse and lumpy. But as we keep sifting, the sand will become more and more refined until we have nothing but fine particles. So it is when we fix the mind on the breath. In the first stages, the breath is still coarse, but as we keep using more and more vitakka and vicara, the breath becomes more and more refined until it permeates to every pore. Olarika-rupa: All sorts of comfortable sensations will appear--a sense of lightness, spaciousness, respite, freedom from aches and pains, etc.--and we'll feel nothing but refreshment and pleasure in the sense of the Dhamma, constantly cool and relaxed. Sukhumala-rupa: This sense of pleasure will appear to be like tiny particles, like the mist of atoms that forms the air but can't be seen with the naked eye. But even though we feel comfortable and relaxed at this point, this mist of pleasure pervading the body can form a birthplace for the mind, so we can't say that we've gone beyond stress and pain.

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

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

When the body grows full and complete to this extent, all four of the elementary properties become mature and responsible in their own spheres, and can be termed mahabhuta-rupa. Earth is responsible in its own earth affairs, water in its own water affairs, wind in its own

wind affairs, and fire in its own fire affairs. When all four properties become more responsible and mature in their own affairs, this is termed *olarika-rupa*. The properties of space and cognizance also become mature. It's as if they all become mature adults. The nature of mature adults, when they live together, is that they hardly ever quarrel or dispute. Children, when they live with children, tend to be quarreling all the time. So when all six properties are mature, earth won't conflict with water, water won't conflict with wind, wind won't conflict with fire, fire won't conflict with space, space won't conflict with cognizance. All will live in harmony and unity.

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

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

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

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

and go through the practice all over again.

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

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

Ordinary people usually can't say no to their defilements. They usually have to act in line with their defilements as they arise. For example, when they feel strong anger, they can't bear it. They have to let it show, to the point where they can get really ugly and do things that fly right in the face of morality. Stream-winners, although they do have defilements, can say no to them. Why? Because they have the discipline of mindfulness embedded within them, enabling them to tell right from wrong. When the mind wavers in a good direction, they're aware of it. When it wavers in a bad direction, they're aware of it. They see, hear, smell aromas, taste flavors, feel tactile sensations just like ordinary people, but they don't let these things make inroads on the heart. They have the self-control that enables them to withstand their defilements, like a person who is able to carry a bowlful of water while running, without spilling a single drop. Even though stream-winners may be 'riding a bicycle'--i.e., sitting, standing, walking, lying down, speaking, thinking, eating, opening or closing their eyes--the permanent quality of their hearts never gets overturned. This is a quality that never disappears, although it may waver sometimes. That wavering is what can cause them to be reborn. But even though they may be reborn, they're reborn in good states of being, as human or heavenly beings.

As for ordinary people, they take birth without any real rhyme or reason, and they keep doing it over and over again. Stream-winners, however, understand birth. Though they experience birth, they let it disband. In other words, they have no use for shoddy impulses. They respond weakly to shoddy impulses, and strongly to good ones. Ordinary people respond strongly to bad impulses, and weakly to good ones. For example, a person who decides to go do good at a monastery--if someone then makes fun of him, saying that people who go

to the monastery are old-fashioned or have hit rock-bottom--will hardly feel like going at all. But no matter how other people may try to talk him into doing good, he hardly responds. This is because the level of the mind has fallen very low.

As for stream-winners, no matter how many times shoddy impulses may occur to them, the goodness of nibbana acts as a magnet on their hearts. This is what draws them to keep on practicing until they reach the end point. When they reach the end point, there can be no more birth, no more ageing, no more illness, no more death. Sensations stop, feelings stop, concepts stop, fashionings stop, cognizance stops. As for the six properties, they also stop. Earth stops, water stops, wind stops, fire stops, space stops, cognizance stops. The properties, khandhas and sense media all stop. There's no mental label alluding to any of the khandhas. Mental labels are the media that let the khandhas come running in. When mental labels stop, there's nobody running. And when everyone has stopped running, there's no pushing and shoving, no colliding, no conversing. The heart looks after itself, in line with its duties.

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

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

Noble disciples are like people who realize that rain water is the vapor that heat sucks up from the salt water of the ocean and then falls down as rain--and so that rain water is ocean water, and ocean water is rain water. Ordinary run-of-the-mill people are like people who don't know what rain water comes from. They assume that rain water is up there in the sky and so they deludedly wait to drink nothing but rain water. If no rain comes, they're sure to die. The reason for their ignorance is their own stupidity. They don't know enough to search for new resources--the qualities of the Noble Ones--and so will have to keep gathering up the same old things to eat over and over again. They keep spinning around in the cycle of rebirth in this way, with no thought of searching for a way out of this mass of suffering and stress. They're like a red ant that keeps probing its way around and around the rim of a bushel basket--whose circumference isn't even two meters--all because it doesn't realize

that the rim of the basket is round. This is why we keep experiencing birth, ageing, illness and death without end.

As for the Noble Ones, they see that everything in the world is the same old stuff coming over and over again. Wealth and poverty, good and bad, pleasure and pain, praise and censure, etc., keep trading places around and around in circles. This is the cycle of defilement, which causes ignorant people to misunderstand. The world itself spins--Sunday, Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday, Saturday, and then back to the same old Sunday all over again. January, February, March, April, May, etc., up to November and December, and then back to January. The year of the rat, the ox, the tiger, all the way up to the year of the pig, and then back to the same old year of the rat all over again. Everything is like this, night following day, day following night. Night-time isn't for sure: Our daytime is other people's night-time, their daytime is our night-time. Things keep changing like this. This is called the wheel of the world, which causes people with only partial knowledge to misunderstand and to quarrel.

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

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

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

PART THREE: INNER RELEASE  
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The Truth & its Shadows (Undated, 1959)  
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The Dhamma of attainment is something cool, clean and clear. It doesn't take birth, age, grow ill or die. Whoever works earnestly at

the Dhamma of study and practice will give rise to the Dhamma of attainment without a doubt. The Dhamma of attainment is paccattam: You have to know it for yourself.

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

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

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

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

Illness is something that everyone has, i.e., the diseases that appear in the various parts of the body. Once we've treated the disease in our eyes, it'll go appear in our ears, nose, in front, in back, in our arm, our hand, our foot, etc., and then it'll sneak

inside. Like a person trying to catch hold of an eel: The more you try to catch it, the more it slips off every which way. And so we keep on treating our diseases till we die. Some kinds of disease will go away whether we treat them or not. If it's a disease that goes away with treatment, then take medicine. If it's one that goes away whether we treat it or not, why bother? This is what it means to have discernment.

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

If we look at it in another way, we'll see that ageing, illness and death are simply the shadows of stress, and not its true substance. People who lack discernment will try to do away with the shadows, which leads only to more suffering and stress. This is because they aren't acquainted with what the shadows and substance of stress come from. The essence of stress lies with the mind. Ageing, illness and death are its shadows or effects that show by way of the body. When we want to kill our enemy, and so take a knife to stab his shadow, how is he going to die? In the same way, ignorant people try to destroy the shadows of stress, and don't get anywhere. As for the essence of stress in the heart, they don't think of remedying it at all. This ignorance of theirs is one form of avijja, or unawareness.

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

Stress comes from the three forms of craving, and so we should kill off craving for sensuality, craving for becoming, and craving for no becoming. These things are fabricated in our own heart, and we have to know them with our own mindfulness and discernment. Once we've contemplated them until we see, we'll know: 'This sort of mental state is craving for sensuality; this sort is craving for becoming; and this sort, craving for no becoming.' People with discernment will see that these things exist in the heart in subtle, intermediate and blatant stages, just as a person has three stages in a lifetime: youth, middle age and old age. 'Youth' is craving for sensuality. Once this thirst arises in the heart, it wavers and moves--this is craving for becoming--and then takes shape as craving for no further becoming--a sambhavesin with its neck stretched out looking for its object, causing itself stress and pain. In other

words, we take a liking to various sights, sounds, smells, flavors, etc., and so fix on them, which brings us stress. So we shouldn't preoccupy ourselves with sights, sounds, etc., that provoke greed, anger or delusion (craving for sensuality), causing the mind to waver and whisk out with concepts (this is craving for becoming; when the mind sticks with its wavering, won't stop repeating its motions, that's craving for no further becoming).

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

Ignorant people will go ride in the shadow of a car--and they'll end up with their heads bashed in. People who don't realize what the shadows of virtue are, will end up riding only the shadows. Words and deeds are the shadows of virtue. Actual virtue is in the heart. The heart at normalcy is the substance of virtue. The substance of concentration is the mind firmly centered in a single preoccupation without any interference from concepts or mental labels. The bodily side to concentration--when our mouth, eyes, ears, nose and tongue are quiet--is just the shadow, as when the body sits still, its mouth closed and not speaking with anyone, its nose not interested in any smells, its eyes closed and not interested in any objects, etc. If the mind is firmly centered to the level of fixed penetration, then whether we sit, stand, walk or lie down, the mind doesn't waver. Once the mind is trained to the level of fixed penetration, discernment will arise without our having to search for it, just like an imperial sword: When it's drawn for use, it's sharp and flashing. When it's no longer needed, it goes back in the scabbard. This is why we are taught,

mano-pubbangama dhamma mano-settha mano-maya:

The mind is the most extraordinary thing there is. The mind is the source of the Dhamma.

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

Beyond Right & Wrong (January 17, 1959)

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

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

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

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

The discernment here isn't ordinary knowledge or insight. It's a special cognitive skill, the skill of the Noble Path. We'll give rise to three eyes in the heart, so as to see the reds and greens, the highs and lows of the mundane world: a sport for those with wisdom. Our internal eyes will look at the Dhamma in front and behind, above and below and all around us, so as to know all the ins and outs of goodness and evil. This is discernment. We'll be at our ease, feeling pleasure with no pain interfering at all. This is called vijja-carana-sampanno--being fully equipped with cognitive skill.

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

Discernment will arise, the skill of liberating insight and intuitive understanding, all at once.

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

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

If we can get our practice on the Noble Path, though, we'll enter nibbana. Virtue will disband, concentration will disband, discernment will disband. In other words, we won't dwell on our knowledge or discernment. If we're intelligent enough to know, we simply know, without taking intelligence as being an essential part of ourselves. On the lower level, we're not stuck on virtue, concentration or discernment. On a higher level, we're not stuck on the stages of stream-entry, once-returning or non-returning. Nibbana isn't stuck on the world, the world isn't stuck on nibbana. Only at this point can we use the term 'arahant'.

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

None of the valuables of the mundane world give any real pleasure. They're nothing but stress. They're good as far as the

world is concerned, but nibbana doesn't have any need for them. Right views and wrong views are an affair of the world. Nibbana doesn't have any right views or wrong views. For this reason, whatever is a wrong view, we should abandon. Whatever is a right view, we should develop--until the day it can fall from our grasp. That's when we can be at our ease.

Point Zero (April 22, 1957)

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

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

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

When there's no more counting like this, the heart attains purity and the highest happiness, as in the Pali stanza.

nibbanam paramam sunnam nibbanam paramam sukham.

which means, 'Nibbana is the ultimate void, emptiness, zero. Nibbana is the ultimate ease.'

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

## GLOSSARY

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### I. Terms

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

akaliko\*\*: Timeless; unconditioned by time or season.

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

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

avijja: Unawareness; ignorance; counterfeit awareness.

bhavanamaya-panna: Discernment achieved by developing the mind through meditation.

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

buddho\*: Awake.

chabbanna-ransi: Six-colored radiance or aura. Mentioned usually as an attribute of the Buddha.

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

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

dhamma-vicaya-sambojjhanga: Discrimination of phenomena, qualities, principles, etc. One of the factors of Awakening, the others being mindfulness, persistence, rapture, serenity, concentration and

equanimity.

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

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

gotarabhu-nana: 'Change of lineage knowledge': The glimpse of nibbana that changes one from an ordinary run-of-the-mill person to a Noble One.

jhana: Absorption in a physical sensation (rupa jhana) or in a mental notion (arupa jhana). Vitakka (directed thought), vicara (evaluation) and piti (rapture) are three of the five factors forming the first level of rupa jhana, the other two being sukha (pleasure) and ekaggatarammana (singleness of preoccupation).

kamma: Acts of intention that result in states of being and birth.

khandha: Component parts of sensory perception: rupa (sensations, sense data); vedana (feelings of pleasure, pain or indifference); sanna (labels, concepts, allusions); sankhara (mental fashionings, anything created by the mind); and vinnana (cognizance).

lokavidu\*: Expert with regard to the cosmos.

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

mahabhuta-rupa: The four great physical properties--earth, water, fire and wind (see 'dhatu').

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

nivarana: Hindrances to concentration--sensual desires, ill will, torpor & lethargy, restlessness & anxiety, and uncertainty.

opanayiko\*\* : Referring inwardly; to be brought inwards.

paccattam\*\* : Personal; individual.

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

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

sanditthiko\*\* : Self-evident; visible here and now.

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

sankhara : Fashioning--the forces and factors that fashion things, the process of fashioning, and the fashioned things which result; all processes or things conditioned, compounded or concocted by nature, whether on the physical or the mental level.

sugato\* : Well-faring; going (or gone) to a good destination.

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

vicara : Evaluation (see 'jhana').

vijja : Awareness, science, cognitive skill.

vijja-carana-sampanno\* : Consummate in knowledge and conduct; accomplished in the conduct leading to awareness or cognitive skill.

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

vitakka : Directed thought (see 'jhana').

## II. Quotations

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anicca vata sankhara, uppada-vaya-dhammino, uppajjitva nirujjhanti:  
Fashionings are inconstant, subject to arising and passing away.

Arising, they disband. (From stanzas uttered on the occasion of the Buddha's passing into total nibbana.)

asevana ca balanam, panditananca sevana: Non-association with fools, and association with the wise. (From a discourse listing factors that augur well for one's well-being.)

atta hi attano natho: One's self is one's own mainstay.

atitam nanvagameyya, nappatikankhe anagatam, paccuppanna yo dhammam, tatha tatha vipassati: He would not pursue the past, nor yearn for the future...and whatever phenomenon is present, he clearly sees it as it occurs. (From stanzas describing a person who spends his day auspiciously in terms of the practice.)

ayudo balado dhiro'ti: The wise person who gives life and strength.... (From stanzas extolling the benefits (to the donor) of a donation of food.)

ekayano ayam maggo sattanam visuddhiya: This is a direct path for the purification of beings. (See 'ekayana-magga'.)

kammassako'mhi: I am heir to my kamma.

mano-pubbangama dhamma, mano-settha mano-maya: Phenomena have the mind in their forefront, are excelled by the mind, are made from the mind.

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

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

The translator

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sabbe satta sada hontu  
avera sukha-jivino  
katam punna-phalam mayham  
sabbe bhagi bhavantu te

May all beings always live happily,  
free from animosity.  
May all share in the blessings  
springing from the good I have done.