

Morning Readings

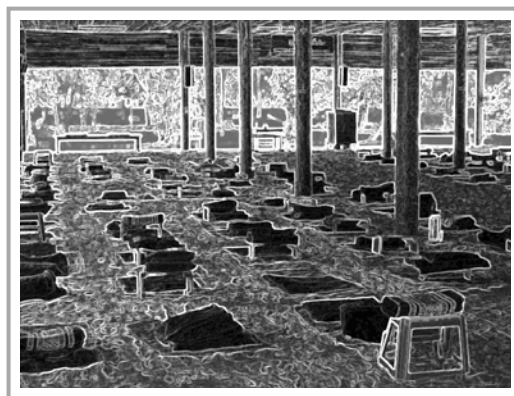
10 - Day meditation retreats

International Dharma Hermitage – Wat Suan Mokkh, Thailand

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The World of 5 a.m.

I would like to discuss briefly why we meet at this time of day. We use the time of dawn because it is a very good time for listening and investigating the *Dhamma**. This is the time of day for example when many flowers open up and blossom. You can call it the blossoming time of day. Similarly for us this is a time when our minds are most receptive, most open and therefore best able to hear and understand *Dhamma*. So we pick this time of day even though it may be difficult for some of you, especially those who like to sleep late. We encourage you to try to find out whether or not this is a special time of the day to be made use of, whether here at the monastery or living at home.

The Buddha awakened at dawn and we suspect that all the great religious teachers have made special use of this time of day. We can call it the world of 5 a.m. This world of 5 a.m. is a special time that we encourage you all to make use of, no matter where you are, no matter who you are with, learn how to benefit from the world at 5 a.m.

Another way of speaking is to say our teacups aren't yet overflowing. This is a metaphor we borrow from the Zen people. At this time of day our teacups aren't yet filled, there is still some space, still some room to pour something into our teacups. Later in the day our teacups get filled up with all kinds of things and there is no room for anything new. But now at 5 a.m. our teacups aren't yet overflowing so there is still room to add something new in order to get some special benefit.

Then you might be wondering what new things are we going to add. We can say that here at 5 a.m. we add the light of *Dhamma* or we can say the light of life or, to speak in a slightly more monastic way, we can say this is a time to add the light of insight and clear seeing.

Buddhadāsa Bhikkhu

A number of similar teachings exist in several retreat lectures by Buddhadāsa Bhikkhu. The present one is used at the foreigner retreats at the International Dharma Hermitage (IDH) for many years. It might be an edited and polished version by a yet unknown person (most likely a previous helper at the IDH-retreats) based on a transcript of one of these talks.

* The expression *Dhamma* in Pāli has the same meaning as the expression *Dharma* in Sanskrit and will be explained on the next page.

Pāli and Sanskrit are two closely related literary languages of ancient Indian origin.

Why Dhamma?

On this first day, we need to ask the question why *Dhamma*? But first we must know what *dharma* is. A quick summary of the meaning of *Dhamma* is the secret of nature which we need to know in order to develop life to its highest possible potential. We talk about developing life to its highest potential so that it becomes free from *dukkha* or all problems associated with life. In order to develop life, we need to know the secret of life. To know its secret will enable us to develop life successfully. *Dhamma* or nature or “Thammachat” in Thai means something which exists in itself and by itself. The secret of life is *Dhamma* nature that exists by itself. It has four meanings;

1. The nature itself
2. The law of nature
3. The duty that must be performed according to the law of nature
4. The fruit or benefit from performing the duty correctly

Life is the nature of body and mind that ultimately belong to nature. If we look at this life, we will see all the four meanings right here. We can see life as nature and the law of nature. If we perform our duty correctly, the result will be peace and coolness. When we see these four meanings, then we know life’s secret. We might not see this fully yet as it takes a gradual development to fully understand it. Let us also consider what the word “development” really means as we do not yet realize how far this life of humanity can develop. Since we don’t realize the highest benefit available to mankind, we don’t take much interest in developing life. The most supreme level is to develop life to be totally above all *dukkha* or problems. *Dukkha* is the Pāli word, translated as suffering, unsatisfactoriness, agitation, affliction, and all kinds of things that disturb life. *Dukkha* interferes with or disturbs balance in life and what we are trying to run away from all the time. Without *dukkha*, our life will be cool, calm and at peace. The *Dhamma* will be useless if we are not aware of *dukkha*, which is a part of our existence.

Some of us might not have seen these big or small problems that have been afflicting our life. Many haven’t looked closely enough at ourselves, so we accept that this is normal or ordinary. So, we need to take a very serious and close look into our life by looking inside ourselves if anything is disturbing our life. This should be the purpose of why we come to Suan Mokkh. If we think we have no problems in life, then the *Dhamma* would be useless. Our four duties in life are to prevent the arising danger in life, secondly to clear away, get rid of or destroy any danger that has already arisen, thirdly, to produce wholesomeness and benefits in life to arise and fourthly, to maintain, protect and preserve the useful and beneficial things that have already arisen. These are the four duties to be performed in life. However, in order to develop life we need to develop the four *Dhamma* tools namely *sati* or mindfulness, *sampajañña* or wisdom in action, *samādhi* and *paññā* or concentration and wisdom. This is why we need to be interested in meditation because it is the only way to develop the mind to attain these four necessary *Dhamma* tools or weapons in life.

There are many techniques available but the most useful mental development method is *ānāpānasati bhāvanā*, mindfulness with breathing, namely the mental development based on breathing. So this is what we will talk about in detail from here on. It is the process of studying the

reality of nature while being mindful of every in and out breath. It is to take an object of nature and study the reality of that thing while breathing with mindfulness. This is the most profound secret of nature.

What are these natural meditation objects or truths that must be brought into the mind to study? They are *kāya* (body), *vedanā* (feeling), *citta* (mind) and *dhamma* (truth itself) which we are to realize as the secrets of the body, feelings, mind and the ultimate truth of the way things are. These four objects have already been taking place in our life all the time since we were born, as they are foundations of life. But because we don't study them or know them, we cannot control them and they become a source of *dukkha* or problems in our life.

Let's take a look of these four foundations in detail. Firstly, there is the nature of the body called *kāya* which is the whole of the body - the body and its subcomponent which is the breath that sustains the whole body. The flesh body cannot be controlled directly but only via our breathing system. So we will study how the breathing body exists, acts and changes and how it influences the flesh body. In the first step, we study the nature of all kinds of breath i.e. short, long, gentle, calm, violent, fast, gentle, fast or slow breath. Keep studying them constantly in order to learn about them. After doing that long enough to know all kinds of breath well, we can see how they condition and influence the flesh body. Experience how the flesh and air body are interrelated and the breath is the conditioner of the flesh or physical body. Then we begin to understand the secret of the body aspect. This secret can be used to unlock other secrets about the body such as we can use the breath to calm the flesh body by breathing gently, deeply and long. There will also arise joy and happiness in the feelings or *vedanā*, which is the second aspect of life.

Through developing *ānāpānasati*, we will learn the secret of how we are all slaves to feelings, and in fact the whole world is trapped under the feeling of either pleasant or unpleasant. How our minds are pulled in different directions depending on what kind of feelings we experience. This is how we are all controlled by feeling. If we are able to master feeling, then we can master the world, to control the feeling is to control the world. The world is out of control as we are not at all interested in learning to control the feelings. You may not believe this yet. But in fact it is a focal point, a meeting place, a center of all our problems because feeling is the cause of craving or ignorant desire that arises. To understand this secret, we will be able to control our life or the world by controlling feelings. This is the secret of feelings.

We will also learn how feelings influence and condition the mind or the *citta*, which is the third aspect of our life. *Citta* means mind, heart and consciousness. To be able to control the feeling, we must be able to control the mind. We will learn how feelings condition the mind. To be able to control the feelings, we can control the mind. We can cause the mind to be in a certain state through mastering feeling, for example the calm feeling will calm the mind. They are all interrelated and inseparable. However, we must be able to master the first two steps, which are body and feelings, before we go on to the mind. We don't go hopping around. We need to know the first two foundations thoroughly before we can learn about the mind. This is extremely crucial as the mind has the primary role in life. This skill can take months or years or however long to develop. The mind is the leader of life, the body is merely a tool led around by the mind. So to control the mind is to control everything. This will take a lot of practice and training.

To study the mind or *citta* is to study the symptom of it which is thoughts, emotions and other things. We cannot study the mind directly. Take the example of electricity - we can't see it directly, but know it is there through its symptoms such as current, voltage, power and all other things. In the same way with the *citta*, we come to know the mind and heart through thoughts. We know the mind how it thinks in various ways. We can gradually train the mind to be concentrated, happy and even liberate the mind by letting go of all the attachments. This is the secret of the mind.

The fourth or last truth of nature is the most supreme secret, namely Dharma or ultimate truth. After having seen the three previous foundations, the mind begins to see all conditioned things are *annicaṃ* (impermanent), *dukkhaṃ* (unsatisfactory) and *anattā* (non-self, not soul, void of self). This is the most supreme, ultimate and final secret. The highest truth comes down to the secret that everything is *tathatā* – thusness – chen nan eng in Thai which means it is just the way it is, only this and cannot be otherwise. It is not good or bad. It is just like this. This most profound truth is almost amusing. When the mind realizes this truth, then the mind becomes free from all the worldly dualities, no winning or losing, sin or merit and all kinds of things, just nature. When we begin to realize the thusness of all things – the attachments start breaking up, dissolving and end. At the end, we just throw everything back to nature. This can be compared like we have been thieves stealing this life from nature as “me and mine” and realizing that, the attachments fade away, dissolve and finally cease. The mind is liberated and free, as it realizes the secrets of selflessness of all things. This is the end of suffering or the meaning of emancipation which is the goal of Buddhism. Other religions might define emancipation differently. That's up to them. But we understand it as we just described. To practice *ānāpānasati* is a systematic method, a natural series of steps or a process that leads to emancipation.

(Today we've talked about it in a general way; we've given a general outline of what happens in the practice so that you have an overview of where the practice goes. The practice leads to emancipation and we've tried to show that to you today. In the following talks, we will supply the details of how to practice mindfulness of breathing in order to emancipate life. So for today, we will end at this point. Thank you for coming.)

The above reading is a modified excerpt from:

Buddhadāsa Bhikkhu

Ānāpānasati

Mindfulness with Breathing: Unveiling the secrets of life

Translated from the Thai by Santikaro Bhikkhu

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Lecture One: Why Dhamma?, pages 1-16

Living in the Present – Without Past, Without Future

Today's subject is about staying with the present moment and not letting the past or future come to disturb us. This goes against the grain with ordinary people because it's understood that we learn from past experience and need the future as the repository of our hopes and dreams. Currently, we live with a certain longing for past times while entertaining expectation about the future, and this, they say, is the way it must be. But the Buddha is on record as saying:

“One ought not to long for what has passed away, nor be anxious over things which are yet to come. The past has left us, the future has not arrived.”

In other words, paying attention to the present is the way to live. But some say that's not possible, that they can survive today because they have expectations regarding, for instance, work, and that they delve into the past in order to learn from previous experience. Although there must be anxieties connected with such an attitude, they are satisfied with that.

Now, the Buddha had a particular aim: that people are able to live without any suffering at all. So how then should they behave when dealing with the past, present, and future? Well, consider a lesson that Buddhists chant regularly called the *Bhaddekaratta Gāthā*, which begins: “One ought not to long for what has passed away, nor be anxious over things that are yet to come” or in other words, one should stay steadily in the present, experiencing the present moment clearly and attempting to do this increasingly as time goes on. Obeying this instruction can, and will be, troublesome, but if being cool and peaceful is what we want then this is the way we need to live.

Bhaddekaratta – means “a prosperous or auspicious single night”. Thus this was a particular teaching taught by the Buddha for people who wished to live the “noble” life just for one day, so if we want to have a very best kind of life for even one day, then this is how we do it. Now, this could be practiced for one or many days. However, here and now we probably won't be able to achieve one or many days, so we do the best we can. We practice for some time – for a little while, for an hour, or perhaps even for a day. If we could live auspiciously and live the “*Bhadda* or auspicious life” for a day, it would indeed be a praiseworthy achievement.

Think about it and consider: the whole time that we have been alive, has there been even one day when our life could be said to have been “auspicious?”

The matter we will need to understand is time itself – the past, present and future times. Why is it taught that dwelling in the present and avoiding past and future entanglements is the best way to live? Well, it's because entertaining the past that memories – matters from the past – will come to disturb us and to break up our peace of mind. It will be the same as future: anyone who entertains unwise expectations or who “builds castle in the air” won't be able to experience a truly peaceful state of mind. Hopes and expectations are troublesome things.

However, at present education systems encourage people to live with expectation – we are taught to live this way, to live in hope, to build up our expectations, and to expect more and more. Life becomes a life lived in hope. But take a look, observe and see how such a life is – is it cool, or is it hot? For as long as we haven't got the thing we want, there is the feeling of expectancy, and how does that feel? Is that an easy, comfortable experience, or is it disturbing to live in expecta-

tion? Some people develop nervous diseases because of this kind of thing. It can torture the mind. Not doing as well as we hoped to or as we expected to, can, over a period of time, lead to a nervous disease. Hence, if we are looking forward to getting something, then we are living in hope. So just let that kind of thinking come to a stop and get on with life without allowing expectation to disturb the mind because when we hope to get anything, we are courting disappointment straight away. Whenever we expect to get something or other, then we are prone to disappointment immediately because what we want has yet to arrive, and disappointment, on any level, disturbs the mind – it bites.

So why hope and get bitten? Don't bother with hope. When we need something, then we think, and then we stop thinking about it and act – act with energy, mindfulness, and wisdom. If we act with mindfulness and proper knowledge, there is no biting, but if we act with hope and expectation there is. Live on hope and expectations and they bite; they bite all the time like some predator, like some ferocious animal. Thus we try to avoid living in hope and instead try to dwell with mindfulness and wisdom, remembering to act without letting expectations in to bite us.

Concerning this, the Buddha once took the example of a hen laying, and then incubating her eggs. The hen lays the eggs and then she just sits on them. She doesn't entertain any expectation that the chicks will emerge from the eggs – no hen would be mad enough to do that; she just sits on the eggs. She occasionally scratches, scrapes, turns the eggs over, and generally does whatever is necessary and right, so that when the time comes, the chicks emerge. Be the same. Don't do anything with expectation.

The first section of *Bhaddekaratta gāthā* runs thus “one ought not to long for what has passed away.” That is, don't dwell in the past; it's finished, gone. Why bring *dukkha* (dis-ease, distress, suffering) of longing into life? Don't bring things from the past to torment the mind. If we have made a mistake don't allow it to be a nuisance; stop thinking about it and try to avoid making the same mistake again. Anything of the sort occurring in the future can be dealt with in the same way.

Now, concerning the present, how should we act? If we were students, for instance, then we would study what we need to study without bringing up things from the past that disturb or expectations of the future – that have no immediate relevance - to disturb the mind. There is no benefit in that. Thus we could be at ease and feel comfortable with ourselves. If we allow the past or future to disturb us, we won't feel at ease; we will be easily distracted and won't accomplish as much as we would like. This is the fundamentally true for everyone; if we haven't seen this yet, then we should, from now on, try to see it. We should try not to let thoughts about the past or the future come to torment the mind. Instead we do our best to stay in the present, with whatever is happening here and now. If we can do this, then it's said the time doesn't bite us; we turn around and eat time instead.

Time has no meaning for us if we avoid thinking too much about past or future events, because there is no foolish desire arising towards such things. There can of course be desire for things we will need at some future time, but if we don't think about them unnecessarily, there won't be the sort of unwise desire that causes problems, and when there's no unwise desire, there is really no time either.

So pay attention to what the Buddha had to say: he said that if we want to live auspiciously and with elevated mind for just one day, then this is the way we do it – by not thinking about the past, and by avoiding foolish hope and expectation concerning things that haven't happened yet. By dwelling in the present moment without the meaning of "past" or "future" coming to disturb us, we dwell with a mind that is peaceful, resolute, and strong – mind which has energy and the power to do things well here and now, and what's better, a mind which is happy and contented.

Supposing someone lives the "*Bhadda*-life" for one day; then even if their whole life span should amount to just that one day, their life would have more value than that of someone who had never lived auspiciously, even though they might live for a thousand years. The Buddha taught this way. Now, can we live like this? Because if we live under the power of time, it means that we are enslaved by it, and that we get bitten, get eaten up by it. Longing for the past and hoping for something in the future bites, so then how can we truly happy?

How many years do we live? How many tens of years do we live, and yet we never have true peace and happiness? So we try to live one night peacefully by not allowing the past and future to interfere. The best present abiding is *samādhi*, that is, mind paying attention so securely on its object that mind will remain there. It is focused on one object, free from the meanings of past and future. Mind that is stilled in *samādhi* is said to dwell in the present only.

Modern education systems don't teach this kind of thing. They teach in another way, so we don't get the opportunity to make use of this knowledge. We can have the ability to live above time, but modern education systems don't teach this; they teach people to rush around, to hurry up, get finished in time, to be quick – so we get nervous diseases all over the place. Worldly education at the present time isn't elevated enough and doesn't give people the necessary understanding of how to live above the power of time. Buddhist knowledge, however, is elevated enough and does.

Please become familiar with and endeavor to practice this dharma of the *Bhaddekaratta gāthā* that we chant together every day. It's something we need and therefore need to practice even if not all the time, will mean that we haven't wasted the opportunity afforded by human birth and meeting with the Buddha's teaching.

Through our own exploration and practice, we will know for ourselves whether this is genuinely auspicious and beneficial. Please give it your full attention.

The above reading is an excerpt from the booklet:

Buddhadāsa Bhikkhu

Living in the present

Translated from the Thai by Dhammavidu Bhikkhu

Commonly misunderstood Buddhist principles

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The complete text of
Living in the present
is as well available at:

[http://www.suanmokkh-
idh.org/talks/idappaccayata.zip](http://www.suanmokkh-idh.org/talks/idappaccayata.zip)

Understanding the Reality of Love

Those of you who friends who are interested in *Dhamma*, today we will study, examine and investigate concerning the word ‘love’ on the religious level. In Buddhism, it is popular to distinguish things on two levels. Whenever we examine or study something, we look at it on these two levels. The first is the level of the household life, of home and families. And then the second level is that which doesn’t have anything to do with the household. So when we want to look at something, we look at it on both of these levels. Ordinarily we just use the word ‘love’, but when it is mixed up with defilements and selfish then we call it *rāga* (lust). However when it is spiritual, when it is under the guidance of mindfulness and wisdom, then we call it *metta*, *karuna* (loving kindness). So we have these three different terms: ‘love’, ‘lust’ and ‘loving kindness’. We should be able to see how distinctly clear these different terms are. Ordinarily people just play around with this word ‘love’. They don’t look at it deeply or carefully. They just play with it, or treat it very superficially. And so it is seldom properly understood. Please don’t play with love, because it is something very profound, very hard to understand, almost mysterious. So we must be very careful to understand it properly. What we call ‘love’ is the heart of religion, of culture, of ethics. But because we haven’t managed it or adjusted it, adapted it properly, there are still many problems remaining in religion, culture and ethics. We’ve looked at the world around us, that people are generally unable to love each other. And even when we look at religion, the different religions can’t even smile together. There’s no smiling between the religions. So even in this world, we still separate and break into parties and factions. And the ordinary world, people are unable to generally love each other. And even in religious matters, which is very sad, they’re unable to love each other, to even love within the religion is something that is far from perfect. If we use love improperly, it becomes hot like a fire. If we use love correctly, it is cool like water. But if we misunderstand love, then it becomes just another kind of insanity. Therefore, let all of us do our best to understand love correctly. This is most appropriate in an era when the world is full of chaos, confusion, because people are unable to love each other. Please begin by clearly distinguishing between these three words we have mentioned. The lowest level is lust. The ordinary common level is love. And then the highest level is what we call ‘loving kindness’ (*metta*). The difference is quite distinct. Actually the difference is vast, and also rather secret. So please examine this and see these differences. According to *Dhamma* principles, it’s quite easy to distinguish these three words. If it is purely an instinctual thing, if it comes from the instincts and is merely instinctual, it is called *pema* in Pāli, which is in Thai: *rak*, or English: ‘love’. When it has to do with the instincts but this instinct has been developed in a defiled way so that it becomes a defilement, then in Pāli it is called *kāma* or *rāga*, which in Thai we use the same word, which both of these essentially mean ‘lust’. This is when the instinct has been developed in a defiled way. If it has to do with the instinct which has been developed in an enlightened way, that means its developed wisely, then in the Pāli language it’s called *metta*, or in Thai *metta maître*, which has to do with friendship, friendliness, or its often translated ‘loving kindness’. This is the third level or aspect of love. You by yourself can see clearly that there is the level which has to do solely with the instincts, and then there is the level that has to do with the instincts but they have changed into defilement. And then there is the level having to do with the instincts which changes into enlightenment. There are these three distinct aspects to love.

Now we'll look at each of these in some detail. We'll examine the love which is purely instinctual, the instinctual love which has changed into defilements, and the instinctual love which has changed into enlightenment, or enlightened love. We'll look at the first one – the purely instinctual aspect, first. This merely instinctual level occurs when there is no real understanding, there's just the instincts. There's no understanding so we say there is *moha* (delusion). There is also *upādāna* (attachment). Love is attached to as the lover, the beloved, and so on. So on this merely instinctual level, there is still delusion or attachment, or we can say in short, *avijjā* (not knowing, or, ignorance). The instinctual level still contains a lot of attachment (*upādāna*). This level can be quite powerful and strong, to the degree that we would die for each other, or one would die for each other. For example, a mother would die for her child, just as we can see amongst animals. This is a way of measuring the strength of this instinctual love. It can have quite a bit of attachment, to the degree that one would die for this thing one loves. So we call it *pema*, the ordinary kind of love which is full of *moha* (delusion), meaning that it isn't understood, it's lacking in mindfulness and wisdom. This love is quite strong, but it's not understood. The love of life, the love of oneself, these are the fullest forms of *pema*, and yet they are still full of *moha* (delusion). This kind of love is still mixed up with selfishness, because it wants to get something. It wants to take or have something. It wants to receive something. So this ordinary love is still mixed up with selfishness. So this ordinary level of love is still quite deluded, or lacking in wisdom. You can't quite say that it's wrong, nor can you say that it is good. It's neither wrong nor good, it's just this ordinary *pema* that comes from, or with, *moha*, with not knowing, lack of understanding, delusion. Nonetheless, this kind of love is necessary. This instinctual love is necessary for reproduction. If we didn't have this kind of love, although it's still rather ignorant, there's nothing wise about it, if there wasn't this kind of love, then all the species would go extinct. So we should understand that although this love is somewhat foolish or stupid, it still is necessary. Next we can look at the kind of love which comes from the instinct which has been developed into defilement. The original natural instinct can be changed through ignorance into defilement. So this defiled instinct has its own particular kind of love. Nature has arranged things so that there is this reproduction instinct. And then nature has arranged so that living things have sexual organs. And then when the glands or hormones reach a certain stage of maturity, then there are certain feelings and sensations which lead the instincts to the kind of love which is defiled. This love that comes from the defiled instincts has a great deal of *moha* - that is non understanding, improper understanding or delusion. And there's a lot of attachment mixed up with it as well. So even with this kind of love, one will die for the thing one loves. People will die for each other, because of the strength of delusion or attachment. Although in these two cases one would die for the object of one's love, they're not the same. For example, when a mother dies for her child or a child dies for her or his mother, that's one level or one aspect or one way. But when a lover dies for his or her lover, that's a much different situation. Although both of them, both kinds of love end in one dying for the object of one's love, there's quite a difference in the love itself. So now the pure instinctual love of *pema* has been transformed into the lust which comes from the defiled instincts. To see the difference between this ordinary instinctual love and lust will enable us to understand what we call 'love' correctly. This love which comes from the defiled instincts is one which thinks only of getting, of taking, of receiving, from the other. This is a love where the delusion is very strong, the attachment is most powerful. And so this love is only thinking of getting, taking, receiving. In

short, this lust is really just a form of insanity. You can call this ‘the love which has lost its way’, because this love has become totally selfish. It’s the love which is a lie. It’s false love. It’s the love that only wants to get, to take, to have, to receive. And so it’s become a lie. It’s just full of selfishness. It desires only to respond to this defilement. It’s the love that is totally motivated by defilement. The world is undergoing all sorts of terrible problems because of this defiled love. There are all kinds of wicked crimes. There are people who kill each other and kill themselves. There are all kinds of insanities that are results of this defiled love. So we could say that this dishonest love, this lie of love, is bringing about many crises in this world.

And so this principle of practicing the *brahmavihāras* towards all living things exists in Buddhism also. It’s important, it’s necessary, that each of you reflect upon, examine upon and deeply consider how we are to use the *brahmavihāras* in this modern world of ours, so that there can be peace. Each of us must ask ourselves and deeply ponder how we can bring peace into this world, how we can adapt and apply the *brahmavihāras* so that there will be peace. If we are unable to extend these most excellent loves to all things, if we’re not yet able to love each other, or we can’t extend this love to animals and to plants, then we must first train to master our minds. If we can master our minds in the highest way, such as through practicing mindfulness with breathing, then it will be possible, it will be easy to have the *brahmavihāras* towards all people, all living things. But first we must master our minds if we are to do this.

Next we’ll look at the question, ‘whose duty is it to bring the *brahmavihāras* to the modern world?’ If we look at things on the political level, we see that the politicians totally lack the *brahmavihāras*. In social matters, in social functions which we organize and set up, we hardly ever think of the *brahmavihāras*. We think about the benefits we will get, the material advancements, the technological progress, the development, and so on, in all of our social organizations and systems and functions, we hardly ever consider these four excellent loves. So in the end the social things are full of competition, there’s lots of crime and corruption, and people even end up killing each other. In economics and industry, they only think of increasing their own benefit. Increasing one’s own profit. Nobody thinks, in economics and industry, they don’t ever consider the *brahmavihāras*. They don’t have the numbers – these don’t fit into their little equations. They only think in terms of personal profit and advantage. Or in the co-operative movement, in these co-operative organizations, the majority of people are thinking of just getting something out of it. They’re primarily interested in their own benefit. So the co-operatives aren’t founded in the *brahmavihāras*, and majority of them fail. Or those that still exist are full of corruption and injustice. And we should look at the last thing – at religion. The religions can’t even smile together. The different religions think only of converting people to their own religion, of taking over the world so that the whole world belongs to just one religion. In these kind of religions, in this sort of religion that thinks only of competition and conquest, there are none of these *brahmavihāras*, there is no real love. So the religions can’t smile together, they can’t co-operate. They just create more problems for the world. So if this is the case for even religion, on what is the world going to rely? Where is the world going to find any refuge? So in the end we’re left with ourselves. Since we can’t depend on the politicians, the economists, the industrialists, or even the organized religions, all we can depend upon is ourselves. It’s up to each of us to develop, to bring the *brahmavihāras* into the world. By developing our mind, especially through practicing mindfulness with breathing, we’ll

have the mastery over our minds that will enable us to have the *brahmavihāras*. When we've trained our minds well enough, the *brahmavihāras* will be no problem. So in the end, you can't look to anybody else to bring about the *brahmavihāras*, to bring peace in the world. It's up to each of us to master our mind so that we have the *brahmavihāras*.

The above reading is an excerpt from:

Buddhadāsa Bhikkhu

The religious level of love

Interpreted into English by Santikaro Bhikkhu

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The Benefits of Practice and Training – Part I

There is the question, why were we born? Or, why were you born? Please scrutinize this question carefully. In fact, the question ‘why were you born’ may not be so important. This is because for most of us, we probably had no intention to be born. It wasn’t our intention to be born. And so it’s not really our responsibility. And in fact, none of us really have much of an idea why we were born, but whether we intended it or not, depending on our mothers and fathers, we were born. The question of why were we born, we could just as well put aside.

But then we’re still left with the most important question of, ‘now that we’re born, what are we going to do?’ Once we have been born, what is the purpose and meaning of our lives? So then, now that we are born, now that we are here, we must consider carefully, and start to understand the questions – now that we are here, what are we going to do? Where are we going to go? How are we going to get there? Even if we didn’t intend to be born, what are we going to do so that this life is not going to be full of *dukkha*? What are we going to do so that this life isn’t just a waste or a failure, so that we end in suicide or mental illness or tragedy? So now that we’re here, where are we going? , how are we going to get there? This is the most important question for all of us who are yet alive. In short, we have our goal and we must travel to get there. Therefore there is the starting point for our travelling. There is the travelling itself, and there is the realization of the goal.

Here when we speak of the journey, we mean practicing *ānāpānasati* – mindfulness with breathing. This is what we mean by the journey. What exactly does this journey entail? What does this journey mean? You’ve already heard many times that the basic principle of practice in Buddhism is *sīla* (the natural morality in harmony with one’s surroundings) *samādhi* (meditation; developing the mind) and *paññā* (understanding things as they really are). The path is the integration of these three components of *sīla*, *samādhi* and *paññā*. But many people fail to recognize of how mindfulness of breathing is all three of these, and so this requires some consideration so that we are not confused by this matter. Another thing with which you are very familiar is what we call the Noble Eightfold Path. But unless you know the Noble Eightfold Path thoroughly and profoundly, then you may wonder what the Noble Eightfold Path has to do with Mindfulness with Breathing. You won’t be able to see the Noble Eightfold Path is in *ānāpānasati*. So regarding morality, mindfulness and wisdom, as well as the Noble Eightfold Path, we must develop proper understanding of this in relation to Mindfulness with Breathing.

Here, *sīla* means ‘calm’ or calmness. *Sīla* is calmness of body and speech, and of course, even mind. *Sīla* is calmness of body and speech. This means the ability to restrain our bodies and speech so that they are calm. The ability to do this is called *sīla*. In *ānāpānasati*, we have this ability to restrain our bodies, our speech, so that they are truly peaceful. To put it directly, if there is no *sīla* we can’t practice *ānāpānasati*. If our bodies and speech are not calm, then there’s no way we can do *ānāpānasati*. If we’ve been living life without morality, then we will not have calm bodies and calm speech. But if we are able to practice *ānāpānasati*, then we are able to restrain our bodies and speech so that they are calm. Therefore *sīla* is inherent in *ānāpānasati*. Even in the beginning stages, if we practice correctly, there is this peacefulness of body and speech. Thus, *sīla* is inherent in Mindfulness with Breathing.

The meaning of *samādhi* is that the mind is focused on one object or thing. This firm focus of the mind is what we mean by *samādhi* and there's one place where this is defined very clearly, that *samādhi* is the *ekagattā citta*, the mind with a single focus. *Samādhi* is *ekagattā citta* which has *nibbāna* as its object. When the mind is focused on just one thing, and that one thing is *nibbāna* - is the perfect peace where there is no *dukkha* - that is the true meaning of *samādhi*.

The Buddha pointed out the three qualities of *samādhi*. This mind with *samādhi* is pure, clean. The mind is collected together and firmly focused. And this mind is active in performing its duty, it's totally ready. There is perfect activity in doing its duty. These are the three qualities of real *samādhi*. This word 'active' is very ancient. It's been used since even before the Buddha's time. It's very important in this context. When we say 'active' we mean that the mind is fully ready to do what it must do. This mind is agile, nimble, flexible, so that it can do what has to be done. This perfect readiness, this preparedness, this agility, this nimbleness, this sensitivity, is what is meant by *kammaniya* – the activeness of the mind. This is the essential quality of *samādhi* – this mind that is active.

To practice, one sees that obviously *samādhi* is there throughout the entire line of practice of *ānāpānasati*.

Next we will see how wisdom, seeing things clearly, (*paññā*) is included in Mindfulness with Breathing. *Paññā*, (wisdom or understanding), starts with looking. We really are beginning when we look. We look at ourselves, by ourselves, within ourselves, until we see ourselves. When we see, see more and more deeply what we really are, this leads to knowing. Knowing in an intuitive way, not in a verbal, talkative way. When we really know, we analyze, we investigate, we scrutinize this knowing, until it's known thoroughly. And then what we must practice becomes clearer and clearer. This is what wisdom is. Looking, seeing, knowing, and then analyzing that until one knows what to practice. And then we practice, and then the results of practice occur. And the true fruits of practice, knowing that, is the final aspect of wisdom. *Paññā*, then, begins with looking. Until we know how to look we have no wisdom. But then from looking we begin to see. Seeing leads to knowing. When there is knowing it can be thoroughly investigated, analyzed, scrutinized, until we know how to practice.

Knowing how to practice means practicing and then there arise the true fruits of practice. Seeing all of this clearly, directly by oneself, is the meaning of wisdom or *paññā*. This word *paññā* in Pāli has two parts. 'Pa' and 'ñā' – 'ñā' means knowing, 'pa' means correct and thorough, or comprehensive. So when we say *paññā* when we translate it as wisdom, it means correct and thorough knowing of what needs to be known, or correct and thorough comprehensive wisdom. This is what we mean by the word *paññā*.

We like to translate *paññā* as wisdom. This is the standard translation, and people seem quite happy with it. But what the meaning of the English word 'wisdom' is, is a good question, and it's your responsibility to find out. If you want to translate the word *paññā* as wisdom, you must check to see if the word 'wisdom' means *paññā*. Correct, thorough, comprehensive, complete knowing. Correct and thorough understanding. That's what *paññā* means in Pāli. What wisdom means in English, you'll have to sort out for yourselves.

You can see for yourselves without believing anyone else, that throughout the entire line of practice called *ānāpānasati*, there is *sīla* – this calmness through restraint, *samādhi* – the collected focused mind, and *paññā* - this correct and thorough understanding. All of these are included in *ānāpānasati* from the start until the end. And so it should no longer be a question of how *ānāpānasati* is the path, is *sīla*, *samādhi*, *paññā*.

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The Benefits of Practice and Training – Part II

Now we can consider for a while *ānāpānasati* in light of the Noble Eightfold Path. First, *sammā diṭṭhi*, Right View, Right Understanding, has induced you to practice *ānāpānasati*. Right View has pulled you into this practice. And as long as we're practicing properly, Right View is always there.

Next is *sammā sankappa*, Right Aspiration. This means that our want or intention is correct, is in harmony with *Dhamma*. This right desire, this right want or intention or aspiration to practice *ānāpānasati*, of course must be there, if we are to practice as we should.

Next is *samma vācā*, Right Speech. Most people realize that in meditation we're not speaking. We shouldn't be speaking. But if one does speak, that speech will be correct, will be appropriate. Or, although we may not speak outwardly, if we are speaking within the mind, then that speech will be correct. It will be peaceful, it will be useful. It won't create any problems.

Next is *samma kammanta*, or Right Action. *Ānāpānasati* itself is about as right as an action can be. To practice *ānāpānasati* is itself right action – action for the sake of quenching *dukkha*. Or if one has *ānāpānasati* and one acts in other ways, then whatever action it will be, it will be correct. If one really has *ānāpānasati* in action, then action will always be for the sake of ending *dukkha*. Our actions will not create more *dukkha*. So in *ānāpānasati* there is always right action.

Next is *samma ājīva*, which is usually translated as Right Livelihood, but please don't understand *samma ājīva* in a narrow way. Many people think this just means the way we earn a living – our job, our profession. The way we feed our stomachs and earn money. This is a far too narrow understanding of *samma ājīva*. It really means 'right maintenance of life'. It's the way we establish and maintain our lives. All the things that we do to maintain life, continue life. This is what is meant by 'Right Livelihood' or *samma ājīva*. It's not just one's job or one's profession. When there is *Ānāpānasati*, then everything we do to maintain life is correct. We won't do anything that exploits or oppresses others, our own bodies, or whatever. So in *ānāpānasati*, we're already doing something very wonderful for maintain life. And any other actions we do to maintain life that come from *ānāpānasati* will be correct, will be non-violent, will be non-oppressive.

Next is *sammā vāyāma*, or Right Effort to try, to preserve, correctly. But this Right Effort ought to include the word 'struggle'. It means the right struggle of life to always move forward, to develop itself higher and higher, this struggle to evolve to develop higher, more perfectly, towards the goal of life. This is what we should mean by *sammā vāyāma*. It includes daring, to try – to dare to do what needs to be done. This daring to struggle, to always try, to move forward in this struggle of life. To do so rightly is part of *ānāpānasati*. *Ānāpānasati* is a very powerful way to struggle to always move forward in life. So when there is *ānāpānasati* there is this right struggle of right effort.

Next is *sammā sati*, Right Mindfulness, which we really don't have to explain at all. It's obvious that *ānāpānasati* is *sammā sati* itself. When *sammā sati* is to govern the mind so that it is always attentive, the mind is always present correctly to what needs to be attended to, always attending to life itself, always being fully present, aware. This *sammā sati* is *ānāpānasati* itself. From all levels, in every possible angle of *sammā sati*, we find it from *ānāpānasati*, Mindfulness with Breathing.

The eighth aspect of the path is *sammā samādhi*, Right Concentration. Concentration here is the mind that is focused and rightly established, it's firm, it's secure. This mind that has been established and secured is what we mean by *sammā samādhi*. When there is this right focus and this right securing of mind, then the mind continually sees things more and more as they really are. The mind progresses in seeing things as they are. We could say that the mind progressively sees the Buddha – the personal Buddha, the *Dhamma* Buddha, and then the Buddha nature, sees this more and more deeply, more and more thoroughly, more and more correctly. This is what happens when there is *sammā samādhi*.

One most important thing to understand is that this eightfold path is one. It's one single path. What this means is, when we speak of eight factors or eight folds, we don't mean that these are eight things. These are not eight separate things. There is one thing with eight aspects, or this one thing has eight factors, eight folds within it. This means that our practice must encompass all eight of these factors. But they must be brought together, integrated, harmonized as one.

As long as we see them as eight factors, we haven't really seen the path. The path is one. It's one path, leading to one goal, practiced by one person. This single path leading to the single goal of a single practitioner. It's all one. You can't separate these things. And until it's one we haven't really understood the path. So all eight aspects of this one path are there in *ānāpānasati*. So these are the things we need to understand about how *ānāpānasati* and the path are the same.

Now if there were eight things, meaning that there were eight paths, it's impossible to walk all eight paths at once. So obviously if we think of eight different things, it's impossible to do them all. But if it's one path where these eight things come together (they never were separate anyway, unless we're confused), but when these eight come together as one path, that is something we can walk, we can follow, we can practice. So whether we speak of it in terms of the three *sikkhā*, the three trainings of *sīla*, *samādhi* and *paññā*, or we speak of the Noble Eightfold Path, it's not the name that's important. What matters is that we can practice it. That it's real. And if it's real we can do it, we can travel this path, and it will take us to the goal. The important thing is that we can practice it, that it is practical.

This point, we can summarise by returning to the question we brought up in the beginning: why were you born? For what purpose were you born? If one has realized these worldly and transcendent benefits, then one will be able to answer this question immediately. But we will emphasize that the real question is that now that we are born, here we are born into this world, what are we going to do? The answer to this will be obvious; we will have no doubts about how to respond, when we have arrived at both the mundane and the supra-mundane benefits. *Ānāpānasati* is the path that we travel. When we have travelled it all the way, then we arrive at these benefits, and then we know what we are doing here, what this life is for.

Now we'll look in some detail at what these benefits mean. First on the worldly level. In terms of worldly things, our studies (all of us, especially when young, undergo studies), there are no more problems regarding our studies. We can undergo them and succeed in them. Then we have the work of our lives. All of us have some function to perform for the benefit of society. We can perform this work without any problems. And then all the other duties and responsibilities of worldly life – families, friends, communities – all the duties we must perform in ordinary life, there won't

be any problems in doing so. These are the worldly benefits we carry out and successfully fulfil; our studies, our work, and all the responsibilities and duties of our lives in this world, without any problems.

In ancient India they have a very interesting word. This has a very surprising meaning. This word is *jīvita saṃvohāra* which means ‘the business of life’ or ‘commerce through life’. What we mean by ‘commerce through life’ or ‘business of life’ is like our lives are an investment. You think of life as a business. Then we have these lives that we are given. This is our basic investment. Then we trade, we work, we sell and buy, so that we’re constantly getting a return from our investment, so that this life is growing and developing always, so that we can develop this life as far as we can.

All of us have been given these lives by nature. All of us have these lives. And we can invest our lives, and then in order to get the maximum return, to get the most out of life that is possible. This is what is meant by the commerce through life or the business of life: *jīvita saṃvohāra*. To invest one’s life in the best possible way, in order to get the most that is possible from our life. To put it a little more directly, nature has given us life as a basic stake or investment. Or you could say God has given us life in the form of an investment. When we are born, these lives that we are given are not yet profits. We don’t see life as some profit we’ve been handed. But life is the basic investment, and it’s up to us to invest life properly. To take this investment and make the most of it.

This is what we’re here for. At least we’ve been given this basic capital, and now it’s up to us whether we invest it or not, whether we invest it properly. If we don’t invest this basic capital, then there’s no way we’ll make any profit for life. We just get some capital and then that’s all. And if we go through life without investing properly, without this commerce or ‘business of life’ being developed, then there’s no profit in life, which is the same as saying we’ve wasted our life. We haven’t really gotten anything out of this basic capital. So the thing to do of course is to make the most out of this capital.

So the thing to do of course is to make the most of this capital, to invest it, to reinvest it, to trade, to do this, until we’ve increased our original stake as much as we can. To do this we need to practice *Dhamma*. To make the most of this is to practice *Dhamma* as we have been describing all along.

We hope that you are very successful in this business of life, so that you get the most profit from life. All of that are the worldly benefits of the path.

Now let’s look at the transcendent or *lokuttara* aspect. This is easy to see just by taking the word *lokuttara* to be ‘beyond the world’. Just think about the meaning to be ‘beyond the world’, ‘above the world’. This is to be beyond all the problems of the world. There’s nothing in this world that is a problem for us anymore. None of the old problems are problems anymore. The world cannot be a problem in any way for us. This is what it means to be above the world, beyond the world, to be beyond all the problems of the world.

We can summarize the discussion by saying that ‘we will have a life which is cool and useful’. The life will be cool and beneficial. This is the result of practice. Notice that there are two things. One: life is cool. There are no more problems for this life. But just being cool doesn’t do much good unless the result is also that this life is of great benefit for everyone. If life isn’t of use to anyone,

then what good is it? But when life is cool, it can also be of the highest benefit. IT can be most useful for all sides, for everyone. This is what it is to arrive: when life is cool and of benefit to everyone. So there is starting, there is walking, and there is arriving at the goal of life which is cool and of benefit to all.

Fools say that Buddhism is only for saving oneself. People who are quite stupid claim that Buddhism is just a way to save one's own skin, to end one's own suffering. These are the words of someone who does not understand the facts. Buddhism teaches how to save oneself, that is true. But the salvation or the liberation of Buddhism is one that benefits everyone else also. In this liberation, all others are liberated as well. So one should not look at Buddhism with prejudice or with narrow opinions. One should try to understand that the correct goal of Buddhism is not just saving one's own skin, is not just freeing oneself from one's own problems. The goal of Buddhism is to liberate oneself from *dukkha* and to liberate all others.

In short, life is cool. Life no longer bites its owner. The positive and the negative in this world don't bite the owner of life, the one who lives. Greed, hatred, anger, fear, confusion, doubts, envy, jealousy, possessiveness, worry, anxiety, guilt, boredom, excitement – none of these can bite one ever again. This is what it means to arrive at the goal. Life no longer bites its owner. We will end with a sentence which you may or may not understand, which you will probably have to investigate further. But when one has really arrived, then life no longer has an owner. Life isn't the owner of anything, nor is life owned by anything. This is what it is all about. When life is no owner, life has no owner. This is to fully arrive in voidness, total freedom, where there's no need to laugh and to cry anymore. Where nothing can hold life, nothing is owned by life. There's just life. Life that has been given by nature. This gift of the universe – life, is developed to get the most out of the original investment. But there's no more owner. There's nothing owned. This is what it is to really arrive. If you don't understand now, don't worry about it. One day you will understand. If you continue investigating and practicing *Dhamma* as we've been considering here, then one day you will understand. There's no need to worry about it, just keep trying to practice *Dhamma*, and one day you will understand. Thank you all for listening, it's been more than two hours, and we hope that you've enjoyed it. Thank you all for being such good and patient listeners.

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Chapter 4 - Precision, gentleness and letting go

Chapter 10 - Not too tight, not too loose

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Sister Ayya Khema

Spiritual growth

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