



The Path to Enlightenment I

Venerable Luangpor Pramote Pamojjo



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Preface

Preface

The Path to Enlightenment in Buddhism is entirely concerned with being mindful. There is no alternative path.

To be mindful is the most direct way to free ourselves from the world of conditioned reality, the world of thinking, which hinders us from seeing the Absolute Truth. Once we can separate ourselves from the world of thoughts we will be able to see the true nature of things, how they all arise and then pass away. The mind will evolve and eventually become equanimous, freeing itself from all defilements. It will gain wisdom and understand the Absolute Truth beyond conditioning.

However, this realization cannot be achieved by practicing dhamma with volition, even if the action is wholesome, like giving alms, observing the five precepts, or doing concentration meditation. (These actions are considered unwholesome if done with delusion and craving). Examples are: when stinginess arises, try to overcome it by giving alms. When greed or aversion arises, try to prevent doing physical or verbal harm to others by following the five rules of morality. When

distracted or restless, try to calm the mind by doing concentration meditation. When sensual desire arises, try to suppress it by meditating on the decay of corpses. These wholesome actions are good, but cannot eradicate defilements. It is like trying to suppress an illness temporarily with a painkiller instead of finding the cure to eliminate the problem at its root cause.

To arrive at the Absolute Truth, we must first wake up from the world of conditioned reality, encounter all mental and physical phenomena, even of the most unwholesome varieties, with a completely unbiased mind, without being transfixed or getting lost in thoughts. This is the only way in which conditioning can be minimized, until finally diminished altogether. Only then will the Absolute Truth be revealed. But to be awakened from the world of thinking is something we are not used to. This is why it is so important to study, understand, and begin the mindfulness practice with an open mind.

This book is a compilation of writings by His Venerable Luangpor Pramote Pamojjo who, when the book was first published on November 1, 2001, was still a layperson by the names of Pramote Santayakorn, Santinun, and Ubasok Niranam. All four chapters share one common theme, mindfulness

practice, in varying degrees of difficulty. Chapter 1, “For You, the Newcomer: A Simple and Ordinary Essay on Dhamma”, is for any interested reader and does not contain any difficult Buddhist terminology. Chapter 2, "A Brief Guideline for Practicing Dhamma", is an elaboration of the first chapter. Chapter 3, “A Guideline for Practicing Dhamma”, explores an approach in mindfulness practice of a student under the guidance of Pra Ratchavutajarn (Luang Pu Dune Atulo). Chapter 4, “Observation of the Mind: Meaning, Method and Outcome of the Practice” is an explanation of mindfulness practice in academic terms with Pali vocabulary so that practitioners and those who study the scriptures can come to a common understanding.

May all Buddhists find this Path to Enlightenment, the Path that the Buddha has so carefully paved for us all.



CHAPTER I

CHAPTER I

For You, the Newcomer: A Simple and Ordinary Essay on Dhamma

It is difficult for us to see that Dhamma (the Teachings of the Buddha) is simple and ordinary. This is because the ways that we perceive Buddhism and Dhamma are often less than ordinary. To begin with, Dhamma teachings are often full of words in the Pali language and contain a multitude of technical terms. Therefore, understanding the terminology alone is a challenge to everyone.

Once we are familiarized with the terms, there is another obstacle in that there are many volumes of the Buddha's Teachings and an overabundance of interpretations by His disciples. In addition, when someone wants to begin practicing, he will be faced with yet another challenge: there are many meditation centers and most of them suggest that their teaching methods most accurately reflect the Buddha's Teachings on the four foundations of mindfulness or Satipaṭṭhanā. Some places even accuse others of deviating from the actual Teachings.

We have all faced these difficulties. And they are what led me to question myself as to whether it is possible to study Dhamma in a more simple way: without learning Pali, without reading books and without having to join a meditation center.

Actually Dhamma as taught by the Buddha is quite easy and simple, as his disciples exclaimed, "It is so explicitly clear my Lord! Your sermon is like turning an inverted object right side up." This should not come as a surprise because we are all born with Dhamma, live with Dhamma, and will all die with Dhamma. We just don't realize where Dhamma is until it is revealed to us through the Teachings of the Buddha, which provide us with a simple path to follow.

Another point to note is just how wise the Buddha truly was. He could make the most complicated topic simple and easy to comprehend. He had the ability to convey the essence of the Dhamma in a way that was most suitable for His listeners. And language was no obstacle, as He was able to communicate clearly without relying on complicated terminology. On the contrary, many people who have studied and taught Dhamma in later generations have turned Dhamma into something complicated, out of reach, and not easily applicable as a tool to end suffering. Even the language used

in their teachings is too difficult for any ordinary person to understand.

The truth is that Dhamma is extremely close to us. It is so close that we can say it is about ourselves. The Dhamma's aim is simple – how to be free from suffering.

When we study Dhamma, we should look directly into "where suffering is, how suffering arises and how to end suffering." To be successful in the study of Dhamma means to practice until suffering is eradicated. It is not about the amount of worldly knowledge acquired or the ability to explain Dhamma elaborately and beautifully!

The truth is that the suffering we experience lies within our body and mind. The field of study for Dhamma is actually inside of us. Instead of looking to the outside world for learning, we may look inwardly at our own selves. The method is simple: just observe our body and mind closely. We can start by simply looking at our physical body.

The first step is to relax. There is no need to be tense or to think about practicing Dhamma. We just watch our own body. It does not matter how observant we are, just be as natural as we can.

Once at ease, we can see the whole body. We watch it as if it were a robot... walking, moving, chewing, swallowing food and excreting waste.

If we can watch as a neutral observer at this robot-body, which we call "ours", performing its tasks, we can see that the body is not really ours. It is something that is constantly changing. It's components have substances moving in and out all the time, such as air when breathing in and out, food and drinks when we consume, and waste matter when we go to the toilet. It is dynamic and unstable. By simply observing the body, our clinging to the wrong view that the body is "ours" will eventually fade. Then, we will see that there is some other nature, which we call mind, that is aware of this body and resides within it.

Once we can see that this body is just an aggregate of constantly changing elements and not ours, let us study further and try to observe what is hidden inside it.

What we will see are feelings, sometimes happy, sometimes unhappy and other times indifferent. For example, as we observe this robot-body moving around, soon we will see aching, pain, thirst, hunger and some other discomforts arising. However, once these unsatisfactory feelings pass, we will

again feel comfortable. This is happiness arising. Or when we are thirsty, we drink some water and the unhappiness caused by thirst is gone. Or when we sit for a long time and begin to feel the pain, we feel the discomfort. Once we adjust the body position, the unpleasantness goes away and again we feel happiness arising.

Sometimes when we fall sick, we are aware of physical suffering for longer periods of time. For example, when we have a toothache continuously for days, if we closely monitor the pain we will discover that the discomfort arises from somewhere between the tooth and gum. Though both the tooth and gum do not suffer. The body is like a robot, it is not in pain and yet the discomfort is there.

The body does not feel happy, unhappy or indifferent. Though these feelings arise from somewhere within. Moreover, these feelings are being observed the same way as the body itself.

And when we study more deeply we can see that as suffering arises, the mind becomes agitated and unhappy. Some examples are: when we are hungry, we get upset more easily; when we are tired, we get angry more easily; when we have fever, we get agitated more easily; and when our

desires are not met, we get irritated more easily. We can be aware of the anger that arises when faced with suffering.

On the other hand, when we see beautiful sights, hear pleasing sounds, smell pleasant fragrances, taste delicious flavors, feel a soft touch or a comfortable temperature – not too hot and not too cold – or think of pleasant thoughts, we will feel liking and satisfaction with such sights, sounds, fragrances, tastes, touches and thoughts. Once we are aware of pleasant and unpleasant feelings as they arise, we can similarly become aware of other feelings such as doubtfulness, vengeance, depression, jealousy, disdain, cheerfulness and tranquility of mind as well.

When we study these feelings further, we will begin to realize that they themselves are not stable. For example, when we are angry and become conscious of the anger, we can detect the constant change in the intensity of this anger. Eventually, it will fade and disappear. Whether or not the feeling of anger disappears, what is important is that the anger is seen as an object to be observed, not belonging to us. There is no "us" in the anger. We can observe other feelings with this same understanding.

At this point we can see that our body is like a robot. And, the feelings of happiness, unhappiness and all others are just objects to be observed and do not belong to us. The more we understand about the process of our minds, the more evident is the truth that suffering only arises when there is a cause.

We will find that there is a natural impulse, or force within our mind. For example, when a man sees a beautiful woman, his mind may start to develop a liking for her. This creates a compelling force towards that woman. His mind will then focus at her, seeing only her, and he will forget about himself.

When we have doubtful thoughts about how to practice Dhamma, we will notice that we have the urge to find a solution. Our mind will then wander into the world of thoughts. This is when we forget about ourselves. The robot-body is still here, but we forget about it, as if it has disappeared from this world. There may be other emotions inside as well; however, we might not be aware of them because our mind is busy thinking, searching for answers to the doubtful thoughts.

Regarding the subject of the mind wandering, a person who only studies from textbooks may be

puzzled. However, if he also practices, he will see just how far the mind can wander, as described word-for-word by the Buddha himself.

If we observe ourselves more often, we will soon understand how suffering occurs, how to be free from suffering, and how it feels to be without suffering. Our mind will rectify itself without having to think about meditation, wisdom or the path that leads to the end of suffering.

We may not be well versed in Dhamma or Pali words, but our minds can still be free from suffering. And even though we still experience suffering, it will be less intense and for a shorter period of time.

I wrote this essay as a small gift for all those who are interested in practicing Dhamma in order to convey that Dhamma is ordinary, it is about ourselves, and can be self-taught without much difficulty. So we should not feel discouraged when we listen to people who are so proficient in Dhamma talking about theory. In reality, we do not need to know anything but how to be free from suffering, because this is the heart of Buddhism. It is indeed the most important lesson of all.



CHAPTER 2

CHAPTER 2

A Brief Guideline for Practicing Dhamma

Many friends come to practice Dhamma with me, and I have seen some common problems that incur when they set out to practice. Some are afraid that they will not be able to practice Dhamma correctly if they are not with me. The Bangkok folks are more at ease because they know where to find me; however, my friends living abroad and upcountry are more concerned because of the distance. They asked for a brief guideline with clear instructions on how to practice Dhamma correctly so that when I am not around, they can still practice with confidence.

Some friends listen to my talks, but get confused and do not understand correctly. Some would apply advice that I have given others to their own meditation. This is often an inappropriate thing to do as the person I'm advising may be at a different stage of the practice. The result of applying the answer to another's question to oneself is no different from taking another patient's medication. A related problem is that some of my friends have

argued amongst themselves about appropriate practices by quoting my suggestions taken from different occasions and at different times.

I have therefore been requested to systematically put together all of my teachings on Dhamma practice in order to clarify any misunderstandings. I feel that there is a need for a brief Dhamma guideline to summarize the practices that I have suggested to my colleagues and friends. This is to clearly show the whole picture of Dhamma practice from the beginning onward, in order to avoid the above-mentioned problems.

1. To Understand the Scope of Buddhism

Friends who have little background in Buddhism need to know that Buddhism is not a medicine that cures all illnesses in the universe. It is not the only tool necessary to survive in society. Therefore if you are a college student, you do not need to quit college just to study Buddhism, because worldly knowledge is essential for everyone to lead a normal life in this world. A student of Buddhism needs to be well rounded in other fields of study as well. Do not misunderstand that Buddhism is the study of something other than suffering and how to be free from (mental) suffering. Buddhism is not limited to providing answers relating to superstition, fate,

past lives, future lives, ghosts, angels and other mystical phenomena.

2. Tools for Practicing Dhamma

Those who already know the Buddhist teachings on suffering and how to end suffering have already been introduced to the tools for practicing Dhamma, which are mindfulness and clear comprehension (*sati* and *sampajañña*).

My advice for us is to be aware of the feelings that are happening in our mind. Some examples are feelings of doubt, greed, worry, happiness and sadness. This is the practice of being mindful, which is the tool to be aware of the objects of consciousness that arise.

We are all encouraged to be aware and not to get lost through the six sense doors, namely, the eyes, ears, nose, tongue, body (tactile sense) and mind, of which most common are through the eye and the mind doors, intently focusing on an object or getting lost in the world of thoughts. By consistently being aware, not getting lost in thoughts or over-focusing, we can achieve clear comprehension, clarity of consciousness.

3. Foundations of Mindfulness

Once we have the tools or weapons for practicing Dhamma, the next step I would like to invite us to do is mindfulness practice or satipaṭṭhanā, which is to have clear comprehension of the body, feelings, mind, and/or mind-objects, depending on each individual's natural tendencies. Examples of this are mindfulness of bodily movement while doing walking meditation and of the breath in and out while doing sitting meditation. In the beginning, we can do concentration practice or samatha, focusing at the body in a relaxed way. Once focused, bodily movement and movement of the air when breathing in and out become just objects of meditation. We can see that they change constantly, cannot stay in one state and are not under our control.

Through this mindfulness exercise, the mind gains strength and clear comprehension. And when a mental object arises, the mind will automatically be aware. For example, when happiness, sadness, wholesome or unwholesome state arises, the mind will know, the same way it knows any physical object.

For those who are good at knowing mental objects, continue with the exercise. Otherwise just observing physical object is also acceptable.

When the mind is continually aware of mental and physical objects, it will gain strength and insight. The mind will naturally react to these objects with content, discontent or indifference. Be aware of these feelings. They will arise and fall away just like all other mental and physical objects we have been observing. The mind will then let go of these feelings and become equanimous. At first it might only experience this evenness for a short time. Once more skillful however, the mind will become equanimous more often and for longer periods, and it will eventually be aware of the equanimity itself. It will be able to distinguish the five aggregates or khandha, which make up the body and mind, in greater detail, seeing them distinctly as form, feelings, memory, mental fabrication and consciousness.

At this stage in mindfulness development, many practitioners often have one of these two reactions: some become bored and stop the practice, while others are unsure of what to do next, and again stop the practice in search for answers by using analytical thinking.

Actually once the mind becomes aware of the equanimity, all we have to do is continue to observe. Once mindfulness, concentration and wis-

dom (or sati, samādhi, and paññā) mature, the mind will advance by itself.

This concludes the brief guideline for the Dhamma practice.

4. Incorrect Methods of Mindfulness Practice

Even using the above guideline, when we start to practice Dhamma, we are often faced with many different problems resulting primarily from incorrect mindfulness practice.

For many of us, the more we practice, the more we divert from the goal. The main mistake is, instead of being mindful of things as they are, we tend to create a new object of consciousness and then get stuck in it.

This can happen when we think that our mind is too distracted and therefore need to do concentration practice first. We then do it incorrectly, instead of developing right concentration or sammā-samādhi, we develop wrong concentration or micchā-samādhi. We focus in on one object, letting the mind get absorbed and attached to it instead of just being aware with ease and comfort, and not getting lost or over-focusing.

With wrong concentration, the mind becomes attached to the object that it has fabricated. And once we progress from concentration to mindfulness practice, because of its attachment this mind will no longer be able to see the actual truth.

Another common mistake is, instead of being aware of whatever arises in a simple and natural way, many people force the mind to be alert, especially in my presence, thinking that this is mindfulness. Thus their minds become too tense and on-guard. This feeling is no different from a runner at the starting line.

The third most common hindrance is to practice Dhamma with craving, such as a need to show off and to gain praise and acceptance from friends, or a desire to be enlightened quickly. The more we want to excel, the more we try to accelerate the effort instead of allowing mindfulness and clear comprehension to develop consistently and naturally. (In actuality for Dhamma practice, to develop mindfulness and clear comprehension consistently and naturally all the time is the true meaning of accelerated effort.) When we practice with craving, the practice is strained. Though it may look like there is progress, the mind is not at peace. These three mistakes are what cause many of us to get lost in or attached to a mind-

object, and mistakenly believe that we are fully aware when we are actually not. Many of us are now able to detect these mistakes and get back on course to just be mindful of things that appear at the present moment.

There is a funny story of one of my pupils whose mind was fixed to a mind-object. My suggestion was for him to be aware of this and free the mind by being aware of external objects, hoping that the fixed mind would loosen up. This young man was very troubled by this suggestion as he thought I meant to stop being mindful and let the mind wander off. Fortunately, he came back to clear the misunderstanding with me. Otherwise, had he mentioned this to the elders, I would have been expelled from the temple!

Actually, when a person becomes attached to a mental object, the mind already wanders off from being mindful. I tried to help the young man see that by over-focusing he was letting the mind wander off, in this case to the object of meditation.

Another problem that a few may face is to get lost in the side effects of meditation, such as getting lost in nimitta, or an inner vision of light, color, sound or even in bodily jerks and gyrations. When these conditions arise, some take pleasure in

the experience while others the opposite. I have to guide them further to be mindful of these feelings. With repeated practice the mind will eventually become neutral, instead of unknowingly focus on these pleasant or unpleasant sensations.

To avoid mistakes in practicing Dhamma, we must strictly adhere to the rule, which is to be aware of defilements when they arise, until eventually one day the mind gains wisdom and breaks free. If we practice Dhamma to satisfy our desire to know, to see, to become, to get, to stand out, to be famous or even to attain enlightenment, then the risk for getting off track is higher, all because the mind often times fabricates a new set of conditions instead of simply being aware of things just as they are.

We need to be observant of the mind. If for example it becomes weightier than the surrounding, then this means that the mind has unknowingly become attached to something. The natural state of the mind should not be heavy, but be the same as its surroundings. It feels heavy only because it is carrying the extra weight. Relax and look around. Everything we see, be it building, table, chair, tree, is not heavy because we are not carrying it. The mind, however, is sometimes heavy and other times light. This is because of clinging. The

more we cling the heavier the mind becomes. It is this weightiness that causes the mind to appear separate from nature. This extra weight is created by the mind when it fails to notice the defilements.

Once the mind becomes proficient at being aware, observe further and see how it reacts to these external objects, whether with liking or disliking. Continue the practice until the mind becomes impartial to all objects of consciousness, until the inside and nature are of the same weight, until eventually there is no more weight to carry.

The Buddha taught that the five aggregates that we assume to be our body and our mind are heavy. Anyone carrying this weight will never find happiness. His Teaching is the absolute Truth. The five aggregates are truly heavy for those with the faculty to see.



CHAPTER 3

CHAPTER 3

A Guideline for Practicing Dhamma

by

Pra Ratchavutajarn (Luang Pu Dune Atulo),
Wat Buraparam, Surin Province

Compiled by Ubasok Niranam

1. Introduction

Luang Pu Dune Atulo was one of the first pupils of the Venerable Pra Ahjarn Mun Puridhatatera. After he completed his years of wandering asceticism, he went to stay at Wat Buraparam in Ampur Muang, Surin Province until the end of his life. Luang Pu was a devout and disciplined Buddhist. His generosity can be seen through his tireless efforts in teaching monks and laypersons alike, resulting in many attaining the highest goal in Buddhism. Actually, the teachings are not his own, nor are they his predecessor's. In fact, they are teachings of the Buddha. Luang Pu simply skillfully selected certain doctrines that he felt were appropriate for each of his students.

Luang Pu typically taught about the mind. This misled some to think that he only taught contemplation of the mind and mind-objects (cittānupassanā and dhammānupassanā) when in fact his teachings were more diverse. If a student was good at contemplation of the mind, then he would base his teaching on the mind. But if he was not, then Luang Pu would teach contemplation of the body or of feelings (kāyānupassanā or vedanānupassanā), just like Venerable Ahjarn Mun, his predecessor. In fact students doing contemplation of the body were far greater in number than those of the mind.

2. The Reason behind the Study of the Mind

Luang Pu saw that all things fall under the Four Noble Truths and that the Four Noble Truths can be understood through contemplation of the mind. This is because suffering arises from craving, which originates from the mind. And freedom from suffering can be achieved once craving is extinguished. Even the Noble Eightfold Path, which can be reduced down to morality, concentration, and wisdom, or sila, samādhi, and paññā, all start from the mind. Sila is the normal state of the mind which is unaffected by conditioning. Samādhi is the mind that is firm and stable. And paññā is the mind that has gained wisdom. Luang

Pu boldly concluded that all dhamma could be learned through understanding the mind. And this is why the study of the mind is so important in his teachings.

3. Contemplation of the Mind

3.1 Preparation of the Mind

All practice-oriented monks who learned from Pra Ahjarn Mun Bhuridatta Mahathera stress the same teaching, that in order to practice insight meditation or vipassana we need a firm and stable mind, or samadhi, as a foundation, otherwise the mind will be clouded by desire and will not see things as they really are. Luang Pu Dune taught the same principles, and he often suggested the method of meditation whereby one recites the mantra “bud-dho”. Sometimes this would be done in conjunction with mindfulness of in-and-out breathing, or ānāpānasati, whereby upon breathing in, “Bud-” is recited, and upon breathing out, “dho” is recited.

The key to successful meditation is to be tranquil. We should not think about gaining wisdom, and simply practice breathing in and out and reciting the mantra in a relaxed way. We should not “want” to be tranquil, because the nature of our mind cannot be controlled. Often times the

more we want it to be tranquil, the more restless the mind will become.

Once the mind is in a tranquil state, it will naturally let go of the mantra. When this happens just be aware, until the mind eventually returns back to a normal state.

3.2 Differentiation between the conscious mind and the object of consciousness

When the mind reaches a state of tranquility and the mantra is let go, we should continue to observe tranquility and see that it is just another condition to be aware of, with the mind being the observer. The lesson here is to differentiate between the conscious mind and the object of consciousness.

If mantra practice or any other meditation techniques prove difficult, we may try an alternative method to distinguish between the mind and the object of consciousness:

Just think of the mantra “Bud-dho” or any familiar chant. Observe the internal mental chanting and notice that the chant is the object, separate from the observer. We can even be aware of our own thoughts echoing inside our heads, and notice that these thoughts are being observed. The observer, or the conscious mind, is separate.

Another strategy is to continuously be aware of movements of the body, or to follow feelings of happiness, unhappiness or neutrality that arise. (In short, we can choose anything within our own body, and observe frequently.) We will see that whatever is being observed is the object of consciousness, with the conscious mind as the observer.

Phra Acharn Thate Desarangsi, a senior pupil of Phra Acharn Mun, taught of a tactic – to hold the breath for a moment, and to be aware of the resulting feeling of stillness. Be mindful of this feeling frequently. Eventually the mind and object of consciousness will separate. Once this is mastered, the next step is to further develop mindfulness and clear comprehension.

3.3 Development of mindfulness and clear comprehension

Continue to observe the mind with ease. We should not over-focus, search for, or examine the conscious mind, just simply be aware. The mind will eventually focus on to a new object and we will be able to see the transition clearly. For example, the mind is unfocused, and then the thought of a person arises, followed by a feeling of love or hatred. We should be aware of this and know that it is something to be observed, and that the conscious mind is present, but separate. Continue to be

mindful of any object of consciousness that arises, and at the same time do not get carried away with the thought process. The moment when the mind is no longer lost in an object of consciousness is called awareness, or clear comprehension.

Mindfulness is not difficult to understand. It means paying attention to whatever arises. For example, when we read a book, we have to stay focused on the reading in order to understand what is written. Or when we drive a car, we have to be attentive and stay focused on the driving. So naturally, we are mindful whenever the mind is attentive to an object of consciousness. But right mindfulness, or *samma-sati*, only occurs when it is accompanied by clear comprehension, or *sampajañña*, which is awareness without getting lost in the object of consciousness.

This type of awareness is the most difficult to understand. When we ask someone if he has awareness of whatever he's doing, the answer is always yes, though in actuality the mind is almost always clouded by delusion. Clear comprehension used in mindfulness practice must be clear comprehension without delusion, or *asammoha-sampajañña*.

For example, when we watch a soap opera on television the eyes see forms, the ears detect

sounds, and the mind processes and understands the storyline. At that moment, we are watching TV, but we may not have clear comprehension because the attention is being sent to the eyes, the ears and thought processes. We forget the body that is sitting in front of and watching the TV. This means we have no clear comprehension, or no awareness of self.

Some, when doing walking meditation, concentrate on the movements of the feet and body. There may be awareness, but no clear comprehension because the mind is so absorbed in the movements of the feet and body that it forgets about the self. At that moment, the self and the conscious mind seem to disappear from this world.

It is awareness without getting lost in external objects that we call clear comprehension. The best way to achieve this is by doing concentration meditation, for example by reciting “Bud-dho”, until the mind is stable and tranquil. Then continue to be aware in this state of mind. Now when an object tempts to divert our attention through the eyes, ears, nose, tongue, body or mind, we should continue with the meditation, and not get lost in these objects and forget ourselves.

3.4 What will we achieve with mindfulness practice?

By being aware of our mind continuously and with ease, we can see all kinds of objects of consciousness pass through the mind. The mind will select the object that is most prominent at each moment. Therefore any of the four foundations of mindfulness can be practiced. On the contrary, if we cannot distinguish between the mind and the object of consciousness, then development of the four foundations of mindfulness will be difficult. When we say concentration development is the basis for insight development, or concentration is the proximate cause of wisdom, is because wrong concentration development will make the mind be influenced by the object of consciousness. Right concentration development will make the mind gain clear comprehension, unbiased by the object of consciousness and, therefore, clearly see its true nature, how it arises and passes away, as follow.

3.4.1 Awareness of the body (kāyanupassanā)

When there is awareness of the body, such as sensing the breathing in and out, or noticing the cold air making contact with and cooling the body, or feeling the body get tired and perspire on a hot sunny day, or observing the body move as we do

in walking meditation, those who have developed the conscious mind will see that the body as a collection of many elements that moves around just like a robot, and that there is not a single part that can be called ours. When doing walking meditation until the legs get sore, we can see that the legs themselves do not complain. The separation between body and mind become distinct, and we can see the three characteristics of existence of the body with clarity.

3.4.2 Awareness of feelings (vedanānupassanā)

Sometimes, when we are aware of the mind, we also become aware of feelings, sometimes through the body and sometimes through the mind, depending on which is more prominent at that moment. For example, when doing walking meditation our legs become stiff, if the conscious mind is present, we will clearly see that this feeling of stiffness is not the legs, but is something that is hidden within the legs. Or when sitting in the heat a cool breeze passes by, we feel comfortable and relaxed. This feeling of comfort and relaxation arises from somewhere within the body, but is not the body. The body itself does not feel the comfort. Or when we have a toothache, if our conscious mind is present, we will clearly see that this aching feeling is not from the tooth, nor from the mind, but

is another thing, another aggregate or khandha. The pain is not constant, but changes in intensity all the time, showing the three characteristics of existence of feeling, or vedanā-khandha.

Feelings can be clearly seen through the mind. For example, pain from a toothache can be felt through the physical body, and sometimes through the mind as well, such as feeling sad and worried in this case. Sometimes when we eat something we like, even before tasting the food in the mouth, we already feel happy.

When aware of feelings while being aware of the conscious mind, the three characteristics of existence of feeling can be seen with clarity.

3.4.3 Awareness of Mind (cittanupassanā)

Awareness of mind is actually not awareness of the conscious mind, or the “absolute mind” (also called “one mind” or “pure mind” in Zen) but rather awareness of mental formations, of thoughts and emotions or citta-saṅkhāra that arise. An example is awareness of the arising and passing away of anger, desire, confusion or happiness. These mental formations are not the mind, but just objects of consciousness. Awareness of mental formations while being aware of the conscious mind is

the clearest way to see the three characteristics of existence of mental formations.

3.4.4 Awareness of Mind-Objects (dhammanupassanā)

With awareness of the conscious mind, whatever arises will show its true characteristics. For example, while being mindful, if the mind thinks of a loved one, it will become absorbed in the thought process. We will then clearly see that the mind clings to the notion of mind as self because it ignorantly identifies itself with the object of consciousness. This sense of self, aggregate, or heaviness arises from nothingness initially. However, if we are aware that whenever the mind grasps on to something, suffering arises, we will let go and return to just being mindful. The aggregate, heaviness, denseness, or suffering will eventually disappear. This in fact is the realization of the Four Noble Truths. We will see that when there is craving, an urge to grasps on to an object of consciousness, the sense of self arises, followed by suffering. If there is no craving, then suffering cannot arise.

Awareness of natural phenomena while being mindful of the conscious mind is the clearest way to see the three characteristics of existence of the mind. We will see that the mind is not in our

control. It goes out and grasps on to objects by itself. And when the mind realizes that grasping causes suffering, it will eventually stop. Nothing is within our control.

An example in mindfulness of mind:

1. Mr. J is washing his clothes. Suddenly a memory of his girlfriend pops up. His mind creates craving, which in this case is the feeling of love towards her (even though she was not physically there). Awareness of mind does not mean that Mr. J should only be mindful of his hands doing the act of washing, but Mr. J ought to see the defilement that has arisen in his mind. He should not hate this defilement or want to get rid of it. Instead he should watch all this with equanimity, and the defilement will pass away by itself. And once gone, Mr. J ought to be aware of it.
2. From the above example, if Mr. J has craving from thinking about his girlfriend, sometimes the defilement is too strong that even after being mindful, it does not disappear. Moreover, his mind has shifted, from being mindful to getting lost in thinking of her. At this stage, Mr. J should be aware that his mind is no longer the conscious

mind but has become one with the object of consciousness. All he needs to do is just simply be aware.

3. Once Mr. J's mind has craving, or loses itself in the object of consciousness, Mr. J. might wonder whether or not he should practice contemplation of the body in order to help free the mind from this strong craving. For the practitioner who has been practicing contemplation of the body, this method may be used in getting rid of the craving. But, for those of us who practice awareness of mind, we should not go through the thinking process, but rather just be aware of the mind continuously. The truth is, the mind changes all the time. If we observe carefully, we will see that craving is sometimes strong and at other times weak. Thoughts of the loved ones appear and then disappear. The mind may sometimes grab objects of consciousness, and other times return to being mindful. The three characteristics of existence can be seen in all these processes.
4. Once Mr. J is continually aware without going through the thinking process, he, an intellect accustomed to solving problems by thinking, may wonder how is it possible to

gain wisdom by just being aware of the mind. Will he turn dumb or amnesiac if he just watches? At this stage, Mr. J should be aware that doubt has arisen. There is no need to find answers to these questions, but just be aware of doubt arising. Eventually it will disappear, just like all other objects of consciousness.

The truth is, the mind which can observe all objects of consciousness with equanimity will see the three characteristics of existence all the time. It will also see the Four Noble Truths, which is the ultimate wisdom that will free the mind from suffering. Wisdom resulting from reflection, or *cintā-mayā-paññā*, which is the formal learning process that Mr. J or any other intellectual like him is accustomed to, cannot free anyone from suffering. But wisdom resulting from mental development, or *bhāvanā-mayā-paññā*, which is the development of mindfulness and clear comprehension, can. This is the difference between the two types of wisdom.

5. As Mr. J washes his clothes for a long time and his hands and arms begin to ache, he will experience unpleasant bodily sensations or *dukkha-vedanā*. Through further obser-

vation, we see that, in reality, it is not Mr. J's body that is aching. The aching feeling is something else that resides, or hides within the body. And the conscious mind is another thing – it can be tranquil and content even when the body is in pain. This is seeing the reality of the aggregates, broken down into their individual parts. When looking at each part separately, we see that there is no one part that can be called Mr. J. With practice in mindfulness of mind, seeing this separation of aggregates is not difficult.

3.5. Mindfulness of mind may alternate between concentration and insight meditation

When observing the mind or body, the mind may switch back and forth between concentration and insight meditations.

In most textbooks, concentration and insight meditations are differentiated based on the subject of meditation. For example, if we practice the 40 subjects of meditation, such as the 10 recollections or anussati, we are doing concentration meditation. If we practice the four foundations of mindfulness, which are awareness of body, feelings, mind and mind-objects, then we are doing insight medita-

tion. If the object of mindfulness is conventional or relative reality, then we are doing concentration meditation. But if the object is ultimate reality, then we are doing insight meditation.

In actuality there is more to all this. Distinction between concentration and insight meditations can be made based on the type of activity of the mind. For example, whenever the mind is mindful of one object continuously, this is concentration meditation. Continuing to be mindful until the mind rests on that object without any added control or intention, the mind will become one with the object, resulting in bliss and tranquility. This is a state of meditative absorption, or *jhāna*, a direct result of concentration meditation.

However, when we are mindful of any object of consciousness that naturally arises and at the same time has clear comprehension, this is awareness of mind. In other words, when the conscious mind and the object of consciousness are clearly distinguished, we will see the arising and passing away of ultimate reality. This is insight meditation. At some point in practice, once the mind no longer needs to hold the intention to be aware of objects or to maintain the conscious mind, it will develop mindfulness and clear comprehension on

its own. When it all happens automatically, then this is genuine insight meditation.

A person doing concentration meditation is like someone who has fallen into a river and, swimming in it, is unable to see things clearly. Whereas a person doing insight meditation is like someone sitting on the bank of the river and, watching the current passing by, is able to see with a clearer perspective the river and all the things floating in it, some of which may be clean and beautiful, while others dirty and unattractive.

This is why it is essential to be able to distinguish between the conscious mind and the object of consciousness before doing contemplation of the mind or contemplation of the body.

An example is contemplating on human skeleton by focusing the mind on features such as length or shape, concentrating on one of the four basic elements – earth in this case. Focusing the mind on the white color of the bones would be concentrating on the color. This focus of the mind until it attains tranquility and becomes fixed on the bone's shape or color is concentration meditation. Even by contemplating on the bone as an element, an aggregate or part of a decaying body, we are still

doing concentration meditation because the whole process is still a thinking process.

But if we are aware of the bones, with the conscious mind stable and separate, and contemplate on the bone's three characteristics of existence, then this is the beginning of insight meditation. And while doing insight meditation through awareness of the body, sometimes the mind is fixed on to a certain part of the body, briefly switching over to concentration meditation and then back out to awareness of the body again. Or sometimes the mind goes overboard and focuses too strongly on the awareness and becomes scattered and restless. When this happens we must step back and do concentration meditation until the mind regains strength and able to separate itself from the object of consciousness, and then resume with insight meditation.

Mindfulness of mind can be both concentration and insight meditations. If we intently focus on the emptiness of the mind or transfix on any particular part of the mind, this is concentration practice. If, however, we are aware of ultimate reality, which is the arising and passing away of all objects, with the conscious mind clearly separate, then this is insight practice. In fact, when we are aware of the mind doing insight meditation, the

mind will occasionally focus on a certain object, switching to concentration meditation on its own.

We should be able to differentiate whether the mind is practicing concentration or insight meditation. Otherwise, we may mistakenly think we are practicing insight meditation while actually practicing concentration meditation. For practitioners whose teachers lack intuitive knowledge of the states of students' minds, it is easy to get off track without knowing. For example, while doing walking meditation and focusing on lifting, moving, and placing the feet, the mind may be fixed to the feet or get lost in thinking about the lifting, moving, and placing of the feet. This is purely concentration meditation without clear comprehension, or awareness of the mind.

Another danger in not being able to differentiate between concentration and insight meditation is it may lead to a refined form of defilement, called defilement of insight, or *vipassanupakilesa*. This may happen during insight meditation, when the mind switches back to concentration meditation and experiences something that misleads it into thinking that it has been enlightened. Some examples are mindfulness of object of consciousness with a mind that is stiff and unwholesome, as opposed to a mind that is soft, light, pliable and

conducive to insight meditation. The mind may reach a wrong understanding and cannot differentiate between conventional truth, or *sammati-sacca*, and absolute truth, or *paramattha-sacca*. Or it may have a wrong view that there is no such thing as the Buddha, there is no such thing as parents, and everything in the world is empty. This is in denial of the existence of conventional concepts, thinking that there is nothing at all. With regard to the conventional world, these concepts do exist and should not be denied.

In fact, when practicing awareness of mind, the mind naturally switches back and forth between concentration and insight meditations, enabling some practitioners to attain absorption automatically, without any special training at all.

3.6. To advance from common objects of consciousness to refined state of void

Once we are skillful at being aware of the mind, we will see that any object that arises in the mind will eventually disappear, just like a moth flying into the fire. At first, we will detect only common emotions, such as anger. But with further practice we will notice with clarity the faintest irritation or satisfaction that arises. For example, on a hot day, when a cool breeze blows softly on the skin, the mind feels pleased and liking arises. Or when we

need to go to the toilet, just as we start to release, the mind already feels happy. Or when we are hungry, once we see food approaching, the mind is already satisfied. The examples are numerous.

Once refined objects of consciousness can be detected, there is less opportunity for coarse ones to arise. This is because coarse objects of consciousness arise from refined ones.

One very important principle, which needs to be stressed in observing the mind, is simply to be aware. We should not try to let go of any object of consciousness, because that would be moving in exactly the wrong direction. All objects of consciousness are aggregates, are suffering. Therefore, we should just be aware, without desire to rid of them. Otherwise this would contradict the Noble Truth, in which the Buddha teaches “be aware of suffering, and eradicate it’s cause.” The more we desire to rid of anything, the deeper will we be lost in wrong view. For example, when anger appears in the mind, the Buddha teaches to simply be aware. However, sometimes we try to find a way to get rid of the anger and it disappears. Then we falsely conclude that we are able to eradicate defilement, that the defilement or the mind is self because it can be controlled. When in fact the defilement disappears because it’s cause is gone.

Another example is when we get scolded. As we think of the reason why we get scolded, anger arises and grows in intensity. And if we think of ways to get rid of this anger, then the cause of the anger, which is the thought of the harsh words, is no longer there. Once the cause is gone, anger automatically subsides and we will again wrongly believe we can get rid of anger. Repeatedly when we encounter a new defilement, we will try to get rid of it, creating unnecessary burden for the mind.

Once we become aware of the objects of consciousness with more frequency and clarity, accordingly these objects will also become more and more refined. We must understand that the mind, objects of consciousness, mindfulness and clear comprehension, and even concentration development, are all subject to the three characteristics of existence. Therefore, once the mind reaches a state of refinement, it will inevitably switch back to being coarse again. Do not be alarmed, as this is natural. Keep on with the practice. It is all right and the mind will continue to progress.

Once the objects of consciousness reach a state of utmost refinement, the mind will appear to be in a state of void. At this point, we may falsely believe that the defilements are completely gone,

when in fact this emptiness is just another object of consciousness, though in its most refined state.

These days, there are many who proclaim to live their lives with void minds. However they don't know the true meaning of a void mind and they don't realize that even this void mind is not a true refuge because it is still subject to the three characteristics of existence. More importantly, those who strive to attain a void mind are very far from this state because they do not even understand the common objects of consciousness.

3.7. To let go of the void mind and reach the ultimate reality

Once the mind has reached a state of utmost refinement, the next step remains the same, which is to continue to be aware. There is no need to doubt or investigate to find ways to let go of such void. This is because all of these thought processes are distractions to the mind. All we have to do is simply be aware.

Awareness without thinking is insight meditation in its most refined form. Please note that the liberated mind will let go on its own once it knows the truth directly. Through the thinking process, which is based on memories and recollections, we can only gain conventional knowledge. As for the

ultimate truth, the mind must learn on its own. We need only to prepare a supportive environment for the mind to progress. Do not interfere with the mind, and be mindful with clear comprehension. Be aware without thinking or searching for anything. Eventually, the mind will realize that even a void mind is of no importance. As long as we believe that the mind is self or that it belongs to us and needs to be set free, then craving, which is the cause of suffering, will keep creating the environment for the void mind again and again.

Let us be clear that, at this stage, the mind will do insight meditation automatically – it is no longer the work of the practitioner. Therefore, we can say that no one can intentionally or deliberately reach enlightenment or nibbāna, because it is all the mind's doing.

3.8. To attain the first stage of Enlightenment, the Stream-Entry, or Sotāpanna, and follow the Path to attainment of Holiness, or Arahatta-magga

When the mind is fully aware and without any thought processes, at some point, when something arises in the consciousness, the mind will not attribute any meaning to it and simply be aware of its arising and passing away. This is the most refined stage of insight meditation. At some point, the

mind will go through a major transformation, the details of which will not be elaborated upon here because the reader may try to use the information to mentally fabricate such a phenomenon.

To enter the Path to Enlightenment, awareness must always be present without any thinking processes and without giving any significance to the arising of refined mental formations. Some teachers wrongly state that when one attains enlightenment, the mind totally loses consciousness. This is because of misinterpretation in the Buddha's teaching that "the absolute truth of Enlightenment is void, or Nibbānaṃ paramaṃ suññaṃ." This particular wrong view of void is the nihilist view, or uccheda-diṭṭhi. The attainment of enlightenment is not like this. Loss of consciousness is another kind of becoming, or bhāva, called asaṅṅi, associated with living unconscious beings that the ancient Thais call "phrom-lookfak", or realm of non-percipient beings.

Immediately after the realization of the first stage of enlightenment, the stream-enterer will deeply realize the way of Dhamma – that all that arise will pass away. An entity continues to exist, but there is no longer self, not even a remnant. Seeing the truth that body and mind is not self is the knowledge that is gained at the stream-entry

stage. However clinging to self is still there because to release all clinging requires a higher level of understanding.

After reaching what is conventionally called stream-entry, the practitioner should continue the practice as before. The conscious mind will become more and more prominent until reaching the once-returning or anāgāmī stage, where the conscious mind will be fully eminent because it is free from all sense-desires. This behavior of the mind, where the mind is aware of only itself, shows the full power of concentration meditation. At this point, the primary hindrance to concentration, which is sense-desire, is eradicated from the mind. If a practitioner is to die at this point, he or she would only be reborn in the fine-material or immaterial (Brahma) world and would no longer return to the human realm.

Numerous practitioners, who do not have the guidance of a teacher, will think that once this stage is reached, where the conscious mind does not have any impurities, there is no more work to do. On the contrary, Luang Pu Dune Atulo further instructed that once the knower is discovered, destroy him; and once the mind is discovered, destroy it too.

This statement is not just a play on word. The true meaning of this teaching is that we need to again let go of clinging to the mind. This process is so refined that if the awareness is not refined enough, we will not know what to further let go of. Since even the knower or the conscious mind is subject to the three characteristics of existence, sometimes it will have some slight impurity, just enough to reveal the three characteristics. A practitioner under good guidance will just see this attachment without reacting. The mind will maintain awareness without engaging in thinking or searching for anything. It will be utterly still, until at one point it will let go of attachment to itself. Only then will the mind be totally liberated, boundless and free from all objects of consciousness, which is the cause of rebirth.

4. Summary of the teachings of Luang Pu Dune Atulo

4.1 Ultimate reality is understood by the mind.

4.2 Recite a mantra in order to focus on one sense-object, and observe who or what is reciting, “Bud-dho”.

4.3 Understand the thinking process and observe defilements that arise.

4.4 Do not let the mind grasp at external objects. Do not let the mind remain lost in the thought process or external objects. Observe the reaction of the mind when receiving objects of consciousness through the six sense doors.

4.5 Gain insight, or *ñāṇa*, by observing the mind, just as the eyes see objects. Be aware of the mind's activities.

4.6 Gain awareness by not thinking. Stop thinking and just observe because thinking will not lead to wisdom. But we still have to rely on the thinking process, so do not intentionally stop the thinking process altogether.

4.7 Isolate matter (and eliminate fabrication) to reach void. Isolate void to reach the great void (*maha-suññatā*).

4.8 Summary of the Noble Truths of the Mind:

The mind sent outside is the origin of suffering. (Therefore do not send the mind outside.)

The result of the mind being sent outside is suffering.

**The mind seeing the mind
clearly is the path to the
cessation of suffering.**

**The result of the mind seeing
the mind clearly is the cessation
of suffering.**



CHAPTER 4

CHAPTER 4

Observation of the Mind: Meaning, Method and Outcome of the Practice

People often have questions such as: What is awareness of the mind? How do we do it? What do we get from doing it? Answers vary from person to person, and can be arranged into various categories and broadly summarized as follow.

What is awareness of mind?

The phrase ‘awareness of the mind’ was prescribed by a group of practitioners in reference to contemplation of feelings or *vedanā-nupassana-sati-patthanna*, contemplation of mind or *citta-nupassana-sati-patathanna*, and contemplation of mind-objects or *dhamma-nupassana-sati-patathanna* (those types which are related to mental phenomena). In short, it means to practice insight meditation by being aware of mind and mental phenomena.

Method for practicing insight meditation (awareness of mind)

Practicing all types of insight meditation, including awareness of mind, is not difficult. All

we need to do is to be aware of phenomena of the mind that arise, as they truly are, with a stable and equanimous mind. But to be aware correctly, one must (1) have the right quality of mind and (2) have the right object of consciousness. The qualities of mind necessary for practicing the foundations of mindfulness, or insight meditation, are the minds with right mindfulness (*sammā-sati*), clear comprehension or right understanding (*sammā-diṭṭhi*), and right concentration (*sammā-samādhi*). The right object of consciousness is one that appears at the present, and can show the three characteristics of existence, which a practitioner would call a phenomenon while one studying the scriptures would call an object of ultimate reality (*paramattha*).

Once ready to practice, we should:

be aware (or have right mindfulness),

of the object of consciousness, or phenomenon, or object of ultimate reality, arising at the present moment,

with a stable mind which does not wander out and is not controlled

or over-focused (or have right concentration),

and the mind will see things as they truly are (with clear comprehension and right-view).

To be aware means to know when something is arising, changing, and disappearing. For example, when we are happy, know that happiness has arisen; and when happiness gone, know that happiness has disappeared. When there is anger, know that anger has arisen; and when anger gone, know that anger has disappeared. When the mind has craving and clings to sense objects through the eyes, ears, nose, mouth, body or mind, be aware of the force of desire at work.

The object of consciousness, or mind-object, that arises has to be of ultimate reality, not conventional reality. We must be able to differentiate between what is absolute reality, or paramattha dhamma and what is conventional reality, or sammuti.

For example, when the mind is happy, there must be awareness of the state of happiness. When the mind is angry, there must be awareness of the state of anger. When the mind is in doubt, there must be awareness of the state of doubt. As we

continue to practice, we will discover that most mental phenomena arise from somewhere in the middle of the chest, which is regarded as the physical basis of the mind, or hadaya-vatthu. There is no need to search for an exact location, but just be aware of where the defilements arise and disappear. This is because if we focus our awareness at a wrong target, the real truth will never be revealed. For example, if we fix our attention at the middle of the body, two inches above the navel, we will never be able to detect any defilement arising, but instead will only create a mental image or nimitta.

To be truly mindful does not mean we have to question ourselves or to guess whether at this moment there is happiness, suffering, anger, doubt or craving. It is very important to stress that we must be mindful of the actual phenomena of the mind, or the absolute reality, because the mind needs to witness and learn from the actual arising, changing and disappearing of all things on its own, and not via the thinking process.

Once we are mindful of the mental phenomena as they arise, the mind needs to have sufficient stability and firmness to avoid getting lost in thoughts that commonly arise after the awareness. For example, when something arises in the mind, it is ultimate reality. After that, a thought based on

conventional reality arises, labeling this mental state as liking, for example. This formulation cannot be avoided, because the mind's nature is to think and recollect. Therefore, we must not try to prevent or refuse the thinking process based on conventional reality from happening. Just be aware of it but do not get lost in the thinking process. Continue to be mindful of phenomena of mind that arise, such as liking in this case. Only through observation will we be able to see the three characteristics of existence of that condition.

On the other hand, a practitioner who is mindful of the mental phenomena must not focus too intently because this will result in an unrefined mind that cannot gain wisdom. Instead of being aware of mental phenomena as they truly are, when the mind identifies and grabs on to a state, it will become stagnant. We have to let the mind be an observer, like an audience watching a play and not jumping on to the stage to play along with the actors. The mind that has right concentration possesses the following qualities of mind: stability, gentleness, pliability and readiness to work. It does not get lost or over-focused. When there is right concentration, the mind is fully ready for true development of wisdom.

When mindful of objects of ultimate reality, with a stable mind, and not getting lost or over-focused, the mind will learn four ultimate truths as follows:

1. It will learn of the natural phenomenon as it arises, exists and passes away (awareness of the natural phenomenon).
2. It will learn of the role of that natural phenomenon which has arisen (awareness of the function of the natural phenomenon).
3. It will learn of the outcome of that natural phenomenon (awareness of the consequence).
4. And with constant awareness it will learn of the thing that makes that natural phenomenon arise (awareness of the proximate cause). When the mind itself learns through observation, known as investigation of the truth or dhamma-vicaya, this process is in fact the cultivation of wisdom, or clear comprehension and right view.

An example is when the eyes detect an image. The mind processes the image to be a beautiful girl. Then liking arises. To know that liking has arisen is correct awareness. And sometimes liking is so

strong and the mind wants to look some more. At this stage the mind has been dominated by craving, and thinks, acts and desires accordingly. Only if we keep on observing craving with frequency will the mind know that seeing something beautiful is the proximate cause of craving. Therefore it is important to constantly be aware when the eyes see an object.

As for the function of craving itself, with mindfulness, it will reveal its impermanent nature instantly that its intensity and duration are neither constant nor long lasting, and will eventually disappear if there is no new input (such as looking back at the beautiful woman). This shows the unsatisfactoriness inherent in this state of mind. The arising and passing of all things are the result of some set of causes and conditions, not of our wishes or how we would like them to be. Furthermore they are just objects of consciousness and not within our control, showing the non-self nature of craving.

Outcome of observation of the mind and conclusion

The mind that has been practicing towards gaining wisdom will eventually reach a point when it clearly understands that everything, be it mind, mental or physical phenomena, arises, changes and will eventually all pass away. If the mind craves or clings on, it will suffer. This is the wisdom that will free the mind from attachment to self. Suffering will lessen because the mind will gain enough knowledge to steer clear from suffering. Just thinking about the concept of non-self will not eradicate wrong view and allow the mind to let go of attachment to the idea of self. We can think that nothing is us or ours, however the mind still clings to the self. The only way to decrease the clinging is by doing mindfulness practice.

In conclusion, ‘observation of the mind’ does not literally mean observation of the mind, because the mind itself is actually the observer, the conscious mind and the clinger to the object of consciousness. Rather, the true meaning of observation of the mind is doing insight meditation, starting from observing mental phenomena from the moment they arise. Once skillful at this, we will be able to do all four foundations of mindfulness. Therefore, if we don’t like the term observation of the mind, as used by some groups of practitioners with com-

mon understanding of its meaning, we can also say it is the combination of contemplation of feelings or *vedanānupassanā satipaṭṭhāna*, contemplation of mind or *cittānupassanā satipaṭṭhāna*, and contemplation of mind-objects or *dhammānupassanā satipaṭṭhāna*.

However, the use of the term ‘observation of the mind’ has an advantage in that it stresses the prominence of the mind as the most important subject of all. It also serves as a reminder to frequently be aware of the behavior of the mind when being mindful of an object of consciousness. With stability and equanimity, the mind will be aware of itself, matter, feelings and desire with utmost clarity. On the contrary, if the mind is of poor quality, without right concentration, right mindfulness and right view, even if we want to be aware of objects of ultimate reality, we will not be able to do so. The best that can be achieved is just to think about them.

Once we have a clear understanding of the mind, mindfulness practice will be easy. But if we still don’t have a clear understanding, we may easily veer in the wrong direction. For example, we may get lost in over-focusing without realizing, which is equal to doing concentration meditation while thinking that we are doing insight medita-

tion. And if a mental image appears, we may falsely believe that we have gained insight-knowledge or vipassāna-ñāna. We may get lost in the mental objects, in pleasant or unpleasant feelings. Or we may get lost in thoughts, which is conventional reality, but believe that we are being aware of objects of ultimate reality or some mental phenomena. Only through understanding the mind well will we not fall into these traps.

Another benefit of awareness of mind is that it is the only type of insight practice that can be done in all three planes of existence, which are the sensuous plane or kāma-bhūmi, the form plane or rūpa-bhūmi (most often), and the formless plane or arūpa-bhūmi. Even in the 'sphere of neither-perception-nor-non-perception' or n'eva-saññā-n'asaññāyatana, the highest of the formless plane, a noble individual or ariya-puggala born into this plane can use awareness of mind as a tool for doing insight practice until the attainment of Nibbana.

Even though observation of the mind starts with awareness of mental objects, with constant practice we can be aware of all four foundations of mindfulness. Accordingly, this will lead the mind to have awareness and clear comprehension

continually in all daily life activities. When taking a walk, we can have awareness of several things.

First of all, when the feet touch the floor there is awareness of the hardness of the surface, the earth element (external matter), and hardness of the body (internal matter). This is mindfulness of body or *kayanupassana satipaṭṭhanā*. And then, the feet feel the warmth or coolness of the floor, this is awareness of the fire element that makes up the floor.

Once we start to walk, awareness of the pleasant or unpleasant feeling arises. This mindfulness of feelings, or *vedanānupassanā satipaṭṭhanā*.

While we walk, if the floor is rough and uncomfortable and we notice the feeling of dislike or irritation, or if the floor is a soft and comfortable carpet and we notice the feeling of pleasure or satisfaction. This is mindfulness of mind or *cittānupassanā satipaṭṭhanā*.

When walking and fully aware, we will clearly see body, feeling, perception, mental formation and consciousness to be distinct from one another. Sometimes we will see the desire to ponder at the foot. Or, we will be aware of the mind that wants to escape, through the eye, ear, nose, tongue, body,

and mind doors. Or, we will be aware of the existence of self and belonging that arise in the mind. Or, we will be aware of the hindrances just as they arise, before developing into defilements that influence the mind. Or, we will be aware of the presence of mental factors such as awareness, clear comprehension, perseverance, joy and tranquility. All these are examples of mindfulness of mind objects or dhammānupassanā satipaṭṭhanā.

All that has been discussed here may be a bit difficult to understand for people who have never practiced mindfulness. Therefore, if doubt arises after reading this book, just try to directly observe this feeling of doubt or curiosity. Do not try to reason or find answers, but instead be aware of the ultimate reality, which in this case is doubtfulness. We will see doubt as a condition. And when it arises, it will influence the mind to seek answers. The mind in turn will forget to be mindful and try to find answers by thinking, resulting in distraction and instability. With constant mindfulness, we will understand that doubt follows thinking. This is the awareness of the proximate cause, or the cause that provokes doubtfulness.

Furthermore, when aware of the state of doubt, we will see that it is impermanent, unsatisfactory,

and non-self. It arises after thinking. By being mindful and not thinking, doubt will disappear.

With constant practice, we will eventually be able to do all four foundations of mindfulness. We will be able to differentiate between the conscious mind and the object of consciousness; between ultimate reality and conventional reality; and between matter, mind and mental phenomena.

Awareness of mind may not always be the best choice for practice because in reality there is no best choice, but a most suitable choice for each person. Therefore if we are good at doing one of the four foundations of mindfulness, keep at it. If done correctly, we will eventually master all four foundations of mindfulness.



About Venerable Luangpor Pramote

About Venerable Luangpor Pramote

Venerable Luangpor Pramote resides in Suan Santidham (The Garden of the Peaceful Dhamma), Sriracha, Chonburi, Thailand. He teaches the Dhamma to avid practitioners looking to truly understand the middle way and to progress in their practice. Bangkok residents set out on an hour and a half drive in the darkness of the early morning to arrive before sunrise and line up outside Luangpor's center to get a good seat to listen to his teachings, express their concerns regarding their own practice and receive individual advice – a custom that has been coined “submitting their homework” for the headmaster to fine-tune or modify.

He travels tirelessly around Thailand and abroad teaching and helping to wake up the minds of people as he goes, in what is quickly becoming one of the biggest Buddhist enlightenment movements in recent times.

Luangpor became a monk in 2001 after being an avid meditator since he was seven years old. He has had many teachers along the way, but considers himself primarily a disciple of Luang Pu Dune, from North Eastern Thailand's forest monk lineage of Luang Pu Mun Bhūridatto.

May all Buddhists find this Path
to Enlightenment,
the Path that the Buddha has so
carefully paved for us all.

The Path to Enlightenment I

Venerable Luangpor Pramote Pamojjo