

THE NOBLE EIGHTFOLD PATH

Sermons by
Venerable Luangpor Pramote Pamojjo

Translated by
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EIGHTFOLD PATH**

Venerable Luangpor Pramote Pamojjo's
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PREFACE

This book “The Noble Eightfold Path” is a collection of three sermons by Venerable Luangpor Pramote Pamojjo. The first chapter is about the Noble Eightfold Path, from the sermon on Saturday December 24, 2017. The second chapter is about *Anapanasati Samadhi* or breath awareness meditation, from the sermon on Asalaha Bucha day (Saturday July 8, 2017). The third chapter is about *Sampajanna* or clear comprehension, from the sermon on Saturday May 6, 2017.

About the Noble Eightfold Path, Luangpor Pramote stated that the sermon covered most aspects of the Noble Eightfold Path, and that it should be transcribed into book form. So, the publisher did as instructed, and added two more which we think would benefit dhamma practitioners. Correct breath awareness meditation would lead to development of the

four foundations of mindfulness. The Buddha taught that by rigorously doing correct breath awareness meditation, the Four Foundations of Mindfulness will be complete. By developing correct Four Foundations of Mindfulness, the Seven Factors of Enlightenment will be complete. By developing the Seven Factors of Enlightenment, wisdom and nibbana¹ will be complete. The last part of this book is about clear comprehension, which is the knowledge, the wisdom that will guide us to walk correctly on the Noble Eightfold Path.

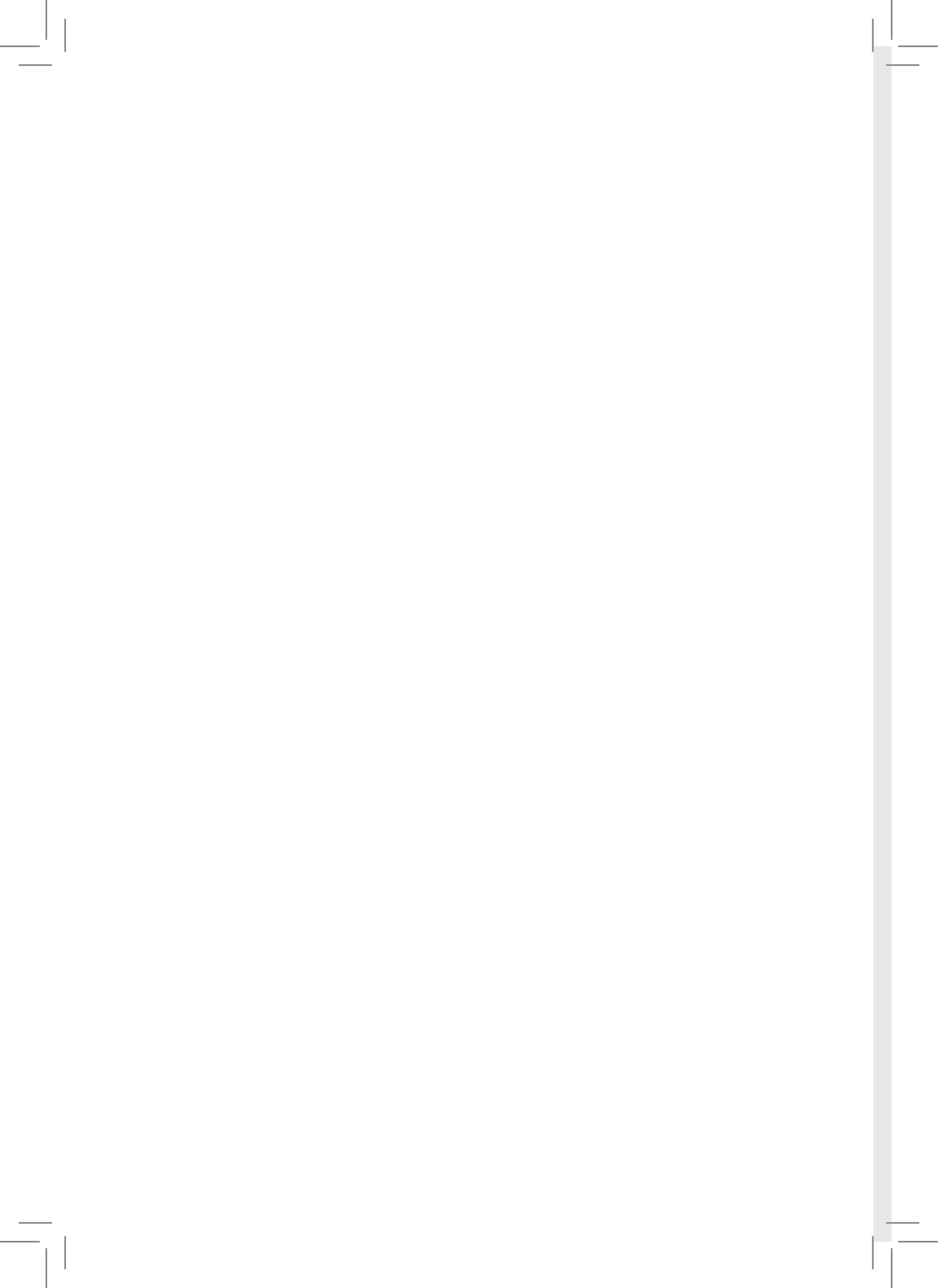
We hope that this book will be beneficial to dhamma practitioners who seek to eradicate suffering, by helping them to better understand the way to walk towards the supramundane, which is the Noble Eightfold Path, in short morality, concentration, and wisdom. By being mindful and cultivating wisdom until all the

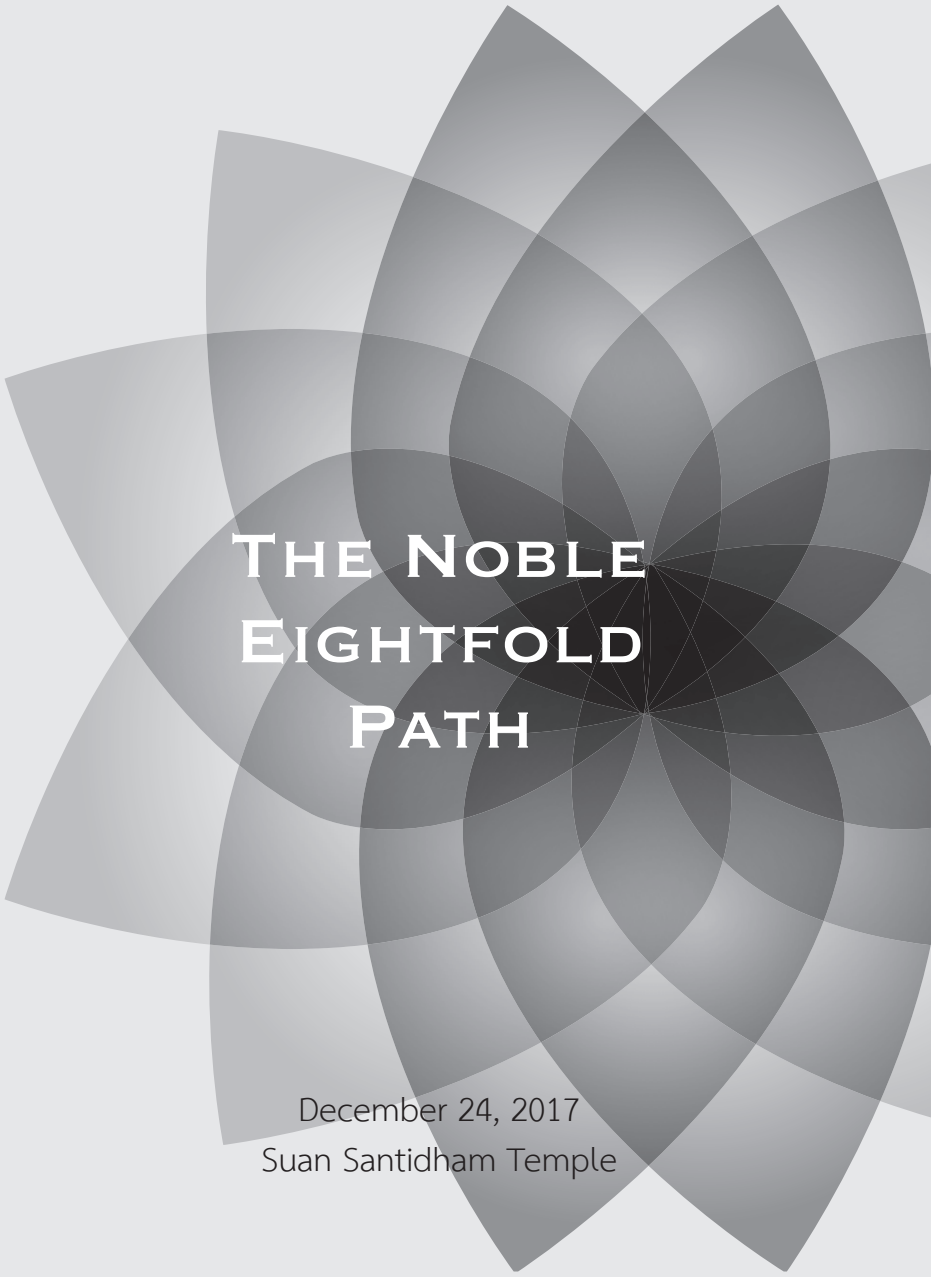
¹nirvana

virtues are perfected, with morality, concentration and wisdom perfected, all the wisdom-factors perfected, wisdom will be perfected and enlightenment attained.

If there is any error resulting from the making this book, we would like to sincerely apologize to all readers. And we would like to beg our master's forgiveness for whatever mistake which may arise.

Luangpor Pramote Pamojjo's
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March 1, 2018
Maka Bucha Day





**THE NOBLE
EIGHTFOLD
PATH**

December 24, 2017
Suan Santidham Temple

Practicing dhamma is not difficult. First, you have to have right understanding. Know the rules of dhamma practice. Have right conduct, physically and vocally. Then cultivate mental discipline, or the Noble Eightfold Path, which is grouped into the following three categories.

First is right understanding, called *sam-maditthi*. Believe in kamma¹ - volition and its consequences. This is knowing that our action will have direct effect on us. Like if we practice dhamma, striving to eradicate suffering, the ultimate result will be end of suffering. If we try to fill ourselves with worldly desires, the result will be more suffering. We have to know the law of kamma, and the Noble Truth. Know that suffering is this body and mind, the five aggregates. We want to eradicate suffering, when actually it is to do away with this body and

¹karma

mind, the five aggregates, which we cannot rid because it is the outcome. We have to eradicate its cause.

Suffering is *rupa nama*, or this body and mind of ours. Our duty towards suffering is to know it as it is. Be aware of it as often as possible, until the mind becomes weary and releases its attachment. Once the cause of suffering is severed, craving will be eradicated. To make this body and mind happy and away from sorrow is impossible because it is suffering. Only when suffering is fully realized will craving be eradicated. Without craving there will be no suffering, and nibbana will be attained. Nibbana is the condition which is void of craving. **To attain nibbana we have to diligently follow the Noble Eightfold Path.**

First is *sammaditthi*, to have the correct principles. By this I mean believing in the law

of kamma. To practice with the intention to depart from this world, we have to study the noble truth. **Therefore, right understanding is subdivided into two groups. First is kamma, or volition. Second is the noble truth.**

Like to know that all actions have consequences, this is the law of kamma. Then we have to have right thinking. Once we have right view, we then have to have right thinking. First is to think of ways to depart from this world. This means to rid sense-desire because the world we live in is the world of sense-pleasures, or the sense-sphere. In the Thai language it is *kamaloka* or *kamabhumi*. We have to have the right mindset to leave behind sense desires. If we still search for worldly pleasures, still enjoy worldly sights, sounds, smells, tastes, touches, live with the world, we will be attached to it. This is the law of kamma. If we want the

world, we will acquire the world. If we want dhamma, we will acquire dhamma. This is the law of kamma.

Some of you are so preoccupied with worldly pleasures, and complain that you have practiced dhamma for so many years but are still far from enlightenment. This is because the thinking is still wrong. Right thinking is to think of ways to leave the world, leave sensual pleasures. Some people have constant resentment towards others. If nibbana is the goal then the resentment needs to be stopped. Be kind and have compassion. Don't take advantage of other people or animal. To think of exploiting others is called *vihimesa vitakka* (cruel thought).

If we have right thinking, we would know the law of kamma. Know we have to know suffering in order to rid its cause, and become

enlightened by walking the path. Have right thinking, wanting to leave sensual pleasures and not be preoccupied with them. Have no vengeance towards others. Have compassion towards all. Think well of others, and don't exploit them. Don't have thoughts of exploiting them. This is the first part, right thinking.

Once the thinking is right, and the view is right, then let's look at action and speech. Let's examine ourselves. Is our speech good? *Sammavaca* means to have right speech - no lying, no instigating. To instigate is to provoke others into disagreement. To lie, to instigate, to curse, to babble. This includes babbling with our fingers. These days we do it all the time through social media (Line and Facebook). This is babbling, a type of false speech. It taints the mind, distracts the mind. Talking all day makes the mind muddled. Even without lying,

the mind becomes muddled if we talk all the time.

I don't like people who talk too much. Some people submit such lengthy homework to me. It's like telling the Ramayana story or some other saga. This is futile, too much talking. Do speak only when necessary. Speaking requires lots of energy, and distracts the mind. So speak only when necessary. Do not lie or provoke an argument. Don't muddle, don't swear. This is right speech.

After right speech comes right action.

Right action is called *sammakammanta*. What is right action? Refrain from taking lives. Observe moral codes by not harming other people or animals, this includes not harming the self. Committing suicide is wrong because we are a living being. To kill is to take life. Abortion is to take life. It is a serious sin, killing a human being. Killing an innocent being, this is sinful.

So observe the precepts, do not steal. This is right action, to not take things belonging to others. Earn an honest living and abstain from sexual misconduct. Fooling around is unacceptable. If you indulge in sensual pleasures, how can you invoke on a journey to leave the world. Trapped in worldly pleasures, there's only one way, which is downward. This is because we keep fulfilling our desires.

So we must have right view, with right speech and right action. Right action is the same as observing the first, second, and third precepts.

Next is making a living. Choose a right profession. This means do not exploit the self or others. Some jobs are self-exploiting, while others exploit other people. So abstain from them. Make an honest living. No need to become a millionaire. Just make enough money to live

comfortably. To be rich in dhamma wealth and noble treasures is far more important. Worldly riches can be enjoyed in only one lifetime, that is all. But noble treasures will be with us through to our next lives. So right living is also important.

These are all about how to live our lives. To speak, to act, to earn a living, these are all in the Noble Eightfold Path. If we overlook these points, we will not succeed in our practice. So if our profession is not righteous, quit if you can. Some people have a fish farm or shrimp farm, this is exploitation. If you raise chicken or cows for meat, it's exploitation. Quit if you can. Choose a new profession. You may not be as rich, but your lives will be bright and prosperous. You will be content, and advance in dhamma practice.

If you have special abilities, like clair-audience, clairvoyance, or have knowledge of the decease and rebirth of beings, know where this person will go after death, you will not do wrong. You will respect the law of kamma, and be afraid and guilty of wrongdoing. Fear of consequences of bad deeds. Have moral shame and moral fear. But since we don't have these special abilities (to foresee), we have to rely on the Buddha's teachings. He's all-knowing. He understood the workings of the world, and set up guidelines for us.

So let us live a purified life. Let us speak well, act well, live well. If we fail at any of these, we will not be able to progress in our practice. We will keep struggling along, going nowhere. Especially, if we have wrong view, we will be misguided. This is the worst case. Therefore, right view is first on the list. We must first have

the right view. Understand the law of kamma. Understand the noble truths. Understand that suffering is matter and mind. Once we understand all this thoroughly, craving will be extinguished, Nibbana will be realized, and we will be enlightened. From right view, what follows is about livelihood. Have right speech. Have right action. Observe the first, second, and third precepts. And then have right living.

Once our foundation is good, next is the inner working. Contemplation is work of the mind. To contemplate we must have right effort, right awareness, and right concentration.

Right effort is to understand the purpose of the dhamma practice, that it is to end suffering, to completely extinguish suffering. Know that suffering arises because of defilements. Therefore, our task is to practice dhamma - to do away with defilements and accumulate wholesomeness.

Once wholesomeness is perfected, awareness, concentration, and wisdom will also be perfected. The factors of enlightenment will be perfected. So keep being mindful and cultivate wisdom, and the Seven Factors of Enlightenment will be perfected. Wisdom will be gained and nibbana realized. Therefore, the purpose of mindfulness practice is to cultivate the Seven Factors of Enlightenment.

What are the Seven Factors of Enlightenment? They are mindfulness, truth-investigation (which is mindfulness development or vipassana meditation), effort (constant awareness), zest, tranquility (calmness of mind), concentration, and equanimity. The last factor is equanimity.

As I always say, the mind has to be stable and equanimous. The mind that is stable and equanimous is the mind with perfect factors of enlightenment. Once perfected, the mind will

have equanimity towards all things. Wisdom will arise, and the mind will be liberated. Wisdom is thoroughly knowing the noble truths. Liberation is the mind that is free from clinging to matter and mind, attaining nibbana. This is our ultimate goal.

The path is there; the steps are all laid out. If the Buddha just said nibbana is good, but didn't show us the way, then nibbana would be just a utopia, unrealistic. But nibbana of the Buddha can actually be realized. He showed us the way. It is the Noble Eightfold Path that I relay to you all. Have right thinking, right speech, right action, right livelihood, and strife to lessen defilements and accumulate wholesomeness. This is called right effort.

How can unwholesome deeds decrease and wholesome deeds increase? With mindfulness! Learn the foundations of mindfulness. Constantly

be mindful of our body and mind. When mindful, unwholesomeness will fall away automatically. When mindful, wholesomeness will flourish automatically. Therefore, try and be aware of the body and mind.

I often say that dhamma practice starts with awareness. So begin your practice with awareness. Be aware of your body, be aware of your mind. This is right mindfulness. It is the four foundations of mindfulness. There for when we do mindfulness practice, which is mental exercise, we start from being mindful of our own body and mind. When there's awareness, the present bad action will stop, no new one will arise. When there's awareness, good action will arise. We will become accustomed to wholesomeness, and so will the mind. Good actions will arise more frequently and more readily. An example is trying to wake up early to give alms to

monks. At first, every morning we have to force ourselves to get up early to give alms. Eventually, we become accustomed to it. The mind becomes accustomed to making merits and waking up early becomes easy.

Someone once asked the Buddha whether between good and bad actions, which is easier to do. Most would answer that doing good is harder than doing bad. But the Buddha never said that. He said for a good person, doing good is easier than doing bad. And for a bad person, doing bad is easier than doing good. It's all up to each individual, it's the law of kamma. Whatever we accumulate, we will become like that. This is the law of kamma. So be aware often, the mind will become accustomed to it. Aware of the body and mind often, and mindfulness will become automatic. Wholesomeness will be accumulated, unwholesomeness dissipated. Right awareness and right speech will be developed.

Next is to develop concentration, or stability of the mind. I always tell you the mind has to have a base, and have stability. **I always stress about awareness of the self, as this is right awareness.** Have the mind be stable, be the knower, the awakened, and the joyful. The mind becomes just an observer. This is the mind with right concentration, the mind with a home base.

The mind out of its base is an unstable mind. It wanders off, swaying back and forth. It is muddled. Sometimes the mind becomes fixed at the breath, the abdomen, the feet, the hands, or at thinking while chanting *buddho*. This is the unstable mind; this is the mind with no concentration or samadhi. So we must practice until the mind has samadhi, at its base and stable.

So, there are two exercises for the mind. First is to have awareness, possibly all the time, as often as we can. Second is to have stability, to become the knower, the observer. And once the mind is stable, becomes just the knower or the observer, be aware of physical and mental factors. When happiness or aversion arises, be aware of the feelings.

At first be aware of whatever arises with a stable mind. And once stable, sometimes the mind likes or dislikes something, know it. Like happiness arises and the mind likes it, or suffering arises and the mind hates it, wholesomeness arises and the mind likes it, unwholesomeness arises and the mind dislikes it. Whatever arises, be it liking or disliking, be aware of the emotions. Aware of the present emotion, and forget about what happened before.

Once we are aware of liking and disliking, we will eventually become neutral. The mind will become equanimous. That's why I use the phrase 'to be aware of the body and mind as they really are, with a stable and neutral mind'. This phrase 'be aware of body and mind as they really are, with a stable and neutral mind' covers right awareness and right concentration. And if we are diligent and aware often, it will also cover right effort. Therefore, these are the three main tasks for the mind. They are right effort, right awareness and right concentration.

Right effort is the willfulness in ridding defilements. Be aware often and wholesomeness will progress.

Right awareness is being aware of this body and mind, not forgetting our own body and mind.

Right concentration is the mind which is stable, at its base, and be just the observer. Eventually the mind will become neutral towards all objects of consciousness.

So, if we all walk this path, I'm stressing the Noble Eightfold Path today, if we walk the Noble Eightfold Path, we will eventually be enlightened. Actually the Noble Eightfold Path we practice is just the preliminary step towards the Path, called *pubba bhaga magga*. *Bubba* is preliminary, *pubba bhaga* is the preliminary step which will lead to the Noble Path. Therefore, we keep on practicing so that one day we may actually walk the genuine Noble Path.

Once our morality, concentration, and wisdom are perfected, **like when we are aware of matter and mind as they truly are, with a stable and neutral mind, we will eventually gain**

right understanding that is totally genuine, right understanding that is transcendental. Preliminary right understanding is to know about kamma, it's cause and effects, about the concept of the noble path. This right understanding is still mundane. But once we start to be aware, with good foundations of mindfulness and concentration, and aware often, "often" means effort, right effort is to be diligent and keep practicing, the Seven Enlightenment Factors will be fulfilled. The Noble Eightfold Path will be perfected. Wisdom and enlightenment will consummate. And we will gain genuine right view.

Right view, right intention, right speech, right action, right living, right effort, right mindfulness, right concentration, all these are noble and supra-mundane. They will arise automatically. What we have been doing, practicing



mindfulness through the body, speech and mind, is just the preliminary path, called *pubba bhaga magga*. So do differentiate between your practice and the Noble Path.

Practicing a lot is walking the preliminary path. *Pubba* means preliminary, *bhaga* means part, which is the preliminary part of the path. Keep practicing lots as I instruct you to. Have right thinking, right speech, right action, right living, right effort, right mindfulness, and right concentration. Once we have perfected all these qualities, genuine wisdom will arise.

If we are mindful of our body and mind as they really are, with a stable and neutral mind, eventually we will know that whatever arises will eventually pass away. We will gain wisdom that all preconditioned reality that arise will fall away. All things arise from a cause. When there is a cause they will arise. Once the

cause is gone they will fall away. Nothing is under our control.

It's the phrase I often say, that **when there's a cause it will arise, and once the cause is gone it will fall away.** When we truly comprehend this, which is the knowledge of a stream enterer, the mind will know the truth that there is no permanent self, no such thing as us. This 'us' is just a thought process, a word, a rhetoric. Does an arahant really have a self? No, but he uses the word *attama* to denote the self. This self is just a rhetoric, a medium to convey a meaning. In reality he knows there is no self. From a stream enterer, there is no more self. We however still believe there is a self inside this body. This self dictates all our actions and our thinking because we are still just ordinary people.

If we are mindful of our body and mind as they truly are, with a stable and neutral mind, with the right preliminary conditions, right thinking, right action physically and verbally, right living, and constantly mindful of the body and mind as they truly are, with a stable and neutral mind, in the end we will gain wisdom. Genuine right understanding will arise. Right mental attitude, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness, and right concentration. All of these will arise simultaneously. And when enlightenment happens, it happens within one mind moment. It happens when the mind enters absorption concentration.

For us, when we practice, aware of the body and mind, and the mind is scattered, we concentrate on the breath or iterate '*buddho*'. We can't even do deep meditation. But once

our faculties are strengthened, with perfected moral conduct, concentration and wisdom, the mind will automatically enter absorption concentration. This is the attainment-concentration of the Noble Path. And when this attainment-concentration of the Noble Path occurs, the remaining Seven Factors of the Noble Path will combine together. The seven factors will combine with right concentration in this single mind moment. Therefore, do not underestimate concentration meditation. Keep practicing.

Some people cannot concentrate, or they fix their attention on the rise and fall of the abdomen. These are all focusing outward. They are wrong. They will never reach enlightenment in years or lives to come. Their best bet would be to become mindless Brahman. The mind just shuts down from too much stress, like doing walking meditation day in and day out, and

become stressed. And when the stress reaches over the limit, the mind will just shut down, turning one into a mindless Brahman.

Do not assume that nibbana is mindless. During enlightenment the mind is present. It is called the enlightened mind (*magga citta*) and the fruition mind (*pala citta*). Sometimes they say the mind just shuts down and all feelings cease, no more body and mind. That is in fact the mindless Brahman. It is the *asannasatta bhumi*.

During the attainment, when the Noble Path is reached, there is the enlightened mind (*magga citta*). During the fruition of the Noble Path, there is the fruition mind (*pala citta*). You must have heard of the 4 *magga* and 4 *phala*. And if combined with absorption (*jhana*), there will be 20 *magga citta* and 20 *phala citta*. Altogether there are 40 of these special mind types. So it's not that there is no mind, the

mind is present. In brief *4 magga* and *4 phala*, in detail *20 magga* and *20 phala*.

There is no need to go into details though. They will arise automatically when we are mindful of our body and mind as they truly are, with a stable and neutral mind, given the right conditions I talked about earlier. The culmination is when the mind enters fixed-concentration and gains wisdom while in this state.

At this point of attainment-concentration the mind will be triggered. Triggered for only two to three mind moments. The mind will yield and comply, just aware of something arising, just know, just see, without judging, without distraction. It will yield and comply to whatever arises without any expectations. This occurs for only two to three moments. Then the mind will stop awareness and review itself.

This revision is called *gotrabhu nana*. It is when the mind crosses over from an ordinary person, but not yet become a noble one. Then the noble path arises for just one moment, one moment at each level. When this happens, the noble eightfold path is complete and balanced. This is all automatic. Nobody can make this noble process happen, remember this - the noble process happens automatically when moral conduct, concentration and wisdom are perfected.

This is the Teaching of the Buddha, so don't go searching for ways to make it happen. Enlightenment will not occur just by wanting it to. But if you keep being mindful of the body and mind as they truly are, with a stable and neutral mind, and with the correct conditions in living your lives, then enlightenment and its fruition will occur consecutively.

Once enlightenment occurs, it will fall away, followed by the noble fruition. The mind will experience voidness. This is *maha sunnata*, voidness of nibbana. It is the aura of the mind, which is bright, free and joyous. *Nibbana* is the ultimate joy, ultimate happiness. The mind is free, bright and joyous. Nibbana is not the mind, it is a reality. The mind arises and falls away, but nibbana does not arise or fall away. The mind that experiences nibbana, or the mind of the arahant can handle nibbana. When an arahant reminisces of nibbana, he doesn't need to make the mind enter that state. He just gives attention to nibbana and it is there, because it's place is with the mind.

Keep practicing, and one day you may receive this miraculous gift, more precious than all things on earth. Earthly treasures are all temporal. We enjoy them in just this life, and

have to leave them to others. But noble treasure will be with us in this life and future lives, until we can break loose from the cycle of rebirth. At that point you will know that life will stop, existence will stop. Cultivation and dhamma practice is complete. You yourself will know. So in the Tripitaka, the scripture says life has ended, the holy life and practice has ended, the task is complete. There is no more task for purification and extinction. These words are powerful because the mind has been enlightened.

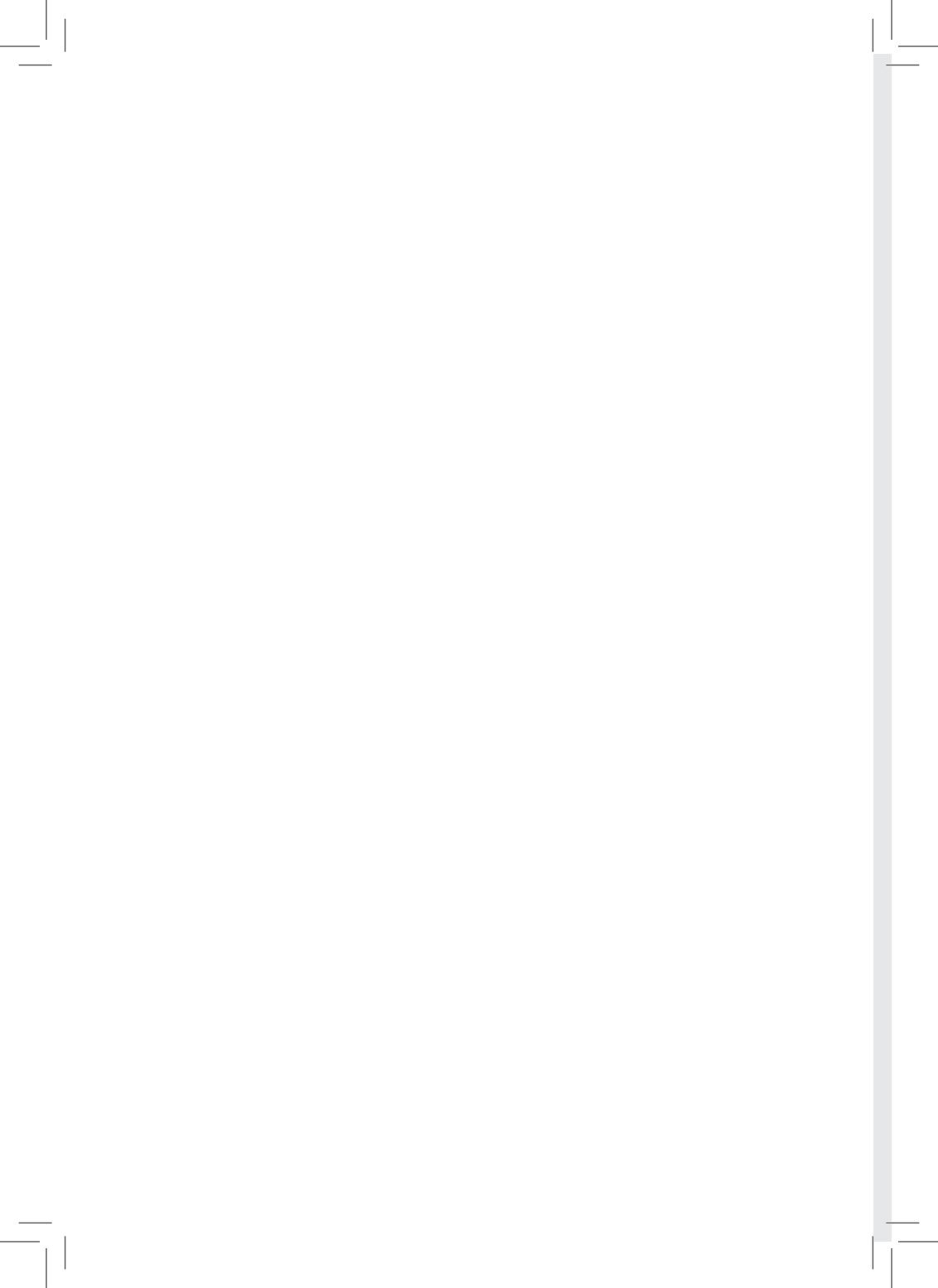
So go and practice for yourselves. And don't just focus on the mind, because action and thinking also have to be right. If you are too preoccupied with worldly matters, then don't even talk about enlightenment. It will not happen. Missing any part of the path, like acting immorally, sly, instigating, babbling, and you will not succeed. So go train yourselves. If you have a business that exploit

other people, other animals, or yourself, then try to quit. Change jobs if you can. But if still can't, then be aware that what you are doing is not right, and reason with yourself that one day you will have to change.

Doing wrong without knowing, the resultant sin is detrimental. Doing wrong and knowing that it is wrong, the sin is less severe. This is the law of nature, which is rather odd. Do wrong and knowing it's wrong have less consequences. He compares this to when you see coal that is red hot. Nowadays it's hard to see burning coal because we use gas or electricity. Do you know it? In the old days we use it as fuel for cooking. When we light it, the coal becomes red hot. If we know it, and are forced to hold it, unwilling to hold it but forced to, one who knows and one who doesn't will hold the coal differently. The one that knows it's not good to hold will

hold it as light as he can. While one that doesn't know will grab on, resulting in more burn. Same with doing wrong. If you unwillingly do wrong, like forced to hold hot coal, then do it wisely.

Like a husband who has a shrimp farm, and the wife frees all the shrimp into the river to make merit, the husband will certainly beat her up right? So if you still have to do a shrimp farm, then reason wisely, that you are raising these shrimps, and not that you want to kill them. Know that to kill is wrong, know what is right or wrong, and your sin will be less, less than those ignorant of the consequences.





ANAPANASATI SAMADHI

July 8, 2017
Suan Santidham Temple

If we're just idly sitting there, then let's observe our breath instead. Don't just waste our breath away for nothing. Let's use the breath as our mindfulness practice. This is a universal technique suitable for all temperaments. If we can do correct mindfulness through breathing, it can also yield *anapanasati samadhi* or concentration through breathing. The Lord Buddha taught that *anapanasati samadhi* is for us to develop and grow. Its progress can help perfect the Four Foundations of Mindfulness practice. The more we cultivate the Four Foundations of mindfulness, the more complete will the Seven Factors of Enlightenment be. When the Seven Factors of Enlightenment are accumulated Sufficiently, we will attain the wisdom to enlightenment and liberation.

We can never tell when all the merits will reach their requisites, consequently, we need

to continuously accumulate them. We achieve these through practicing mindfulness and do it often. Doing it once in a while wouldn't yield any result. Do it even during those limited time that we have.

It's understandable that time of laypeople isn't as available as that of the monks. Monkhood is more supportive to practice. For monks, each morning routinely starts with prayer and meditation, such as walking meditation for instance. Then it's time for the alms-collection. During the alms collection, they still carry on with the practice. Every single step, be aware. Practicing being mindful with each and every step. Be mindful of the self, and of the body. If the breath is the principle object, then be aware of the breath while walking. Inhaling, exhaling, we never stop breathing, do we?

During the meal, some days the food isn't really fulfilling. It isn't fulfilling because sometimes

they don't get anything from the alms-collecting. There's no food, therefore not fulfilling! Then some days the food isn't satisfying. There's food alright, but it's not to the person's liking. The heart is not content. If they practice mindfulness, they'd see when the mind is not content. When they get what they like and the mind is happy, they'd see that happy mind. So for monks, every routine activity they do help to facilitate and reinforce the dhamma practice. Monks don't have to think about making a living.

Making a living takes almost, if not all, of laypeople's lives: This is especially true of those who are never satisfied with what they have. They would never have enough time to improve their quality of life. All in all, work should not be an obstacle to practice. We should however take the most advantage out of each few minutes that we have. If we can't really do anything

substantial, let's be mindful of our breathing. The mind is the stable observer, observing the body breathing. To have a stable mind observing the body breathing is not to focus on or to follow the breathing. Note the distinctions.

There are many approaches to breathing meditation. One is where we give our attention to following the breath. After a while the breath would turn into light. The breath is the preliminary sign or *parikamma nimitta*. When the breath becomes light, it's called abstract sign or *uggaha nimitta*. With more stable absorption, we can manipulate the size of that light. This stage is called conceptualized image or *patibhaga nimitta*. Reaching this level of meditative absorption, we reach the access-concentration or *upacara samadhi*.

When the mind is relishing the light, the mind is having thought conception. With the attention to the light, the mind is entering the discursive thinking state. Then rapture and bliss occur, holding the direct attention further, the mind enters the primary state of *Jhana*. But practicing *Jhana* does not induce development of the four Foundations of Mindfulness. It's for gaining concentration, tranquility, or possibly some special abilities.

Take breathing meditation for example. Observing the breath is primarily air element meditation. If the focus is at the nostrils, then the meditation shifts from air to space element. Space then transforms to light, and we observe that light. The light becomes our meditation object. In fact, in the end all types of meditation objects will become light or brightness. All ten of them will turn into light. At this state, the mind

will enter the *Jhana* (absorption) and bask there. It doesn't contribute to the development of the Four Foundation of Mindfulness.

Yet breathing meditation can be done in ways that is conducive to mindfulness cultivation, if we breathe with the mind in a stable observer state that is. The mind is a stable observer, watching the body breathing. Practicing like this and after a while we will see the separation of the body and mind. We can also see that this body is impermanent, suffering, and not self. Even the mind itself is impermanent, suffering, and not self.

Having awareness of the body breathing, is mindfulness practice on contemplation of the body. The key is the mind that is an observer. When we are aware often, the mind will feel contentment. We then are aware of that happy feeling. Exhaling, happiness arises, be aware

of the happiness. Inhaling, happiness arises, be aware of the happiness. Be aware of all these with the stable observer mind. This is mindfulness practice on contemplation of feelings. In short, if we do the correct breathing meditation, we will also practice mindfulness.

It's truly appropriate to use the term *anapanasati samadhi*, as the concentration is achieved from being aware of the breathing. And it is the correct type of *Samadhi* to that. Unlike the concentration practiced by hermits which gains only brightness. With a content mind, we will see when happiness arises. When it does, the mind becomes happy and content. Let's be aware of that happiness. If we are aware of that happiness, we are doing mindfulness practice on contemplation of the mind. Be aware of the mental fabrications. Sometimes it's wholesome, sometimes unwhole-

some. Sometimes craving will follow, liking the happiness that arose.

Continue practicing, the more we observe the more we will see that both physical and mental phenomena are not ‘us’. The body that’s breathing, happiness, sadness, impure emotions such as contentment have defilement hidden in the shadow. All of these are not ‘self.’ Even the observer mind that knows all these phenomena is not ‘self’. Witnessing all these, we are doing mindfulness practice on contemplation of phenomena, observing both physical and mind - object.

In short, mindfully observe our breathing often can help perfect the Four Foundations of Mindfulness. Cultivating the Four Foundations of Mindfulness is also cultivating mindfulness, one of the Seven Factors of Enlightenment, or *sati sumbojjhanga*. *Sati sumbojjhanga* is directly related to Foundations of Mindfulness. It is not

worldly awareness that helps prevent us from walking off the road.

It is mindfulness cultivation when we observe the changes occurring within our body and mind. Observing the truth that they are temporary, suffering, and not under our control. Learning and observing the truth is also to cultivate investigation-of-states, or *dhammavicaya sumbojjhanga*. Now, when we keep observing the Three Characteristics, we engage in *dhammavicaya*. We are doing investigation of the Truth.

This is an ongoing commitment. We observe in every possible moment. This is the cultivation of energy. When there's mindfulness, there's right effort and cultivation. Without mindfulness, there's no cultivation. In other words, *viriya sumbojjhanga* is not about mundane effort in making a living. *Viriya sumbojjhanga* is

fundamentally about energy or effort in cultivating mindfulness or *vipassana* practice.

With constant practice, the mind would feel rapture arise. It's the rapture from realizing dhamma, and not from concentration meditation. It's the rapture from wisdom cultivation. Every now and then during our practice, we realize certain wisdom. When we gain some dhamma understanding, the mind feels joy. Has anyone ever experienced this? This is not while in a meditative absorption. It is when we happen to gain certain understanding. The moment that realization happens, the mind becomes joyful. This is rapture in one of the Seven Factors of Enlightenment.

We keep on being mindful, aware of rapture simmering down. We then enter tranquility state, becoming calm and stable. The mind then gains concentration. This concentrated state is the

result of the mind which has developed wisdom to the utmost degree. With wisdom fully cultivated, and with the mind in the concentrated state, the mind then enters equanimity state, equanimity resulting from wisdom. It's not just any equanimity, for *bojjhanga* is fundamentally about wisdom cultivation. It starts off with practicing mindfulness as foundation for wisdom cultivation. Once we gain sufficient mental quality we do research on dhamma, it's all about cultivating and attaining wisdom right to that point.

To have endeavor is to be attentive in cultivating wisdom. Finally, the mind reaches the essential point which is equanimity. Though if we diligently practice, but wisdom has not arisen, the mind will not reach equanimity. And enlightenment is impossible. When the mind attains some wisdom, like while we are breathing for instant, if happiness arises in the mind, we

know so. We continue breathing and the happiness disappears, and we know so. Or if suffering happens in the mind while we are breathing and we know so. Keep on breathing and the suffering falls away and we know so. Know these phenomena, be it happiness or suffering, arises and falls away, repeatedly, time and time again, and eventually the mind will realize that happiness and suffering are the same. Happiness and suffering are equal.

Good or bad are equal as they both arise and fall away just the same. They are equal in the aspect of the Three Characteristics of Existence. They share the same nature in terms of the Three Characteristics, but not in terms of morality. Good and bad are not comparable in terms of morality. However, in the path of *vipassana* practice, they are equal in terms of the Three Characteristics. They all arise and fall away, and are beyond our control.

The mind would realize this truth that happiness and suffering are equal. When happiness arises, the mind wouldn't get too wrapped up with joy. When suffering happens, the mind wouldn't get too overwhelmed and crushed. The mind enters a stable and unswayed state, having equanimity.

This is very important here. Once the mind attains equanimity, there's no more rebirth. The mind no longer seeks and creates any more states of existence. Without equanimity, the mind still seeks and sways, resulting in the drive to reactivate the mind. The mind creates more states of existence, and this goes on.

Be mindful. Can we all see now that we are so ready to be neglectful? When something comes up, we forget about being mindful, only ready to see what's going on. When we hear something funny, we forget to be mindful, only

paying attention to hearing, right? We are wrapped up in hearing the story. In smelling, tasting, and in tactile contact, we abandon mindfulness all the time.

So don't you complain that you have practiced for seven years and seven days now, and still have not yet attained the stream enterer state of enlightenment. Leave alone the arahant or even the non-returner wisdom! The stream enterer wisdom is not even in the vision. Well, all those who claimed seven years from the start of the practice, the number of hours may not be very substantial. It may be just seven days long during those seven years. And even during those seven days, the truly correct practice may even be less. Some might practice only a little, and during practice they may be mindless more than mindful. Or they might spend time over focusing.

For instance, they may over focus on the breath when observing breathing, or pointedly over focus on the light when it appears. In these scenarios, enlightenment or nibbana will never be possible. It's rather unfortunate that many who practice concentration fall into these traps. One reason why not many attain fruitions or enlightenment from *anapanasati* is because they do it incorrectly.

Anapanasati is not that simple. I myself practiced for twenty two years before I can claim that I'm rather skilled. I can meditate either for calmness, or for right concentration where my mind is a stable observer, awake and joyful, seeing the aggregates at work naturally. Normally my mind has the quality of the stable observer, not wanderer or dreamer. I am mindful when I look left or right, or when the body is moving. This is mindfulness of the body. I know when there's comfort or

suffering within my body. I also know when there's contentment or equanimity within. I can regularly observe the phenomena whether they happen in the body or mind. This is mindful contemplation of feelings. Sometimes the mind gains some wisdom, sometimes not.

Observing the mental phenomena is called mindful contemplation of the mind. Let us not breathe away for nothing. Observe the mind, and the body that's breathing. Practice seeing with the mind as an observer. The body is breathing; the mind is the observer. We breathe all the time, right? We breathe when we are at home too, do we not? So it's not necessary to come to the temple to practice. We also breathe when we are at home. Then breathe and be aware, breathe and be aware. If joy arises, know that it does. If you can't feel the joy, just be aware of the body that's breathing. It's an object being seen and

observed, not a self. Seeing it like this is correct. It's not difficult, is it? It's the matter of whether you have the intention to practice. Do it often, accumulate the experience. The noble path, the fruition of the cultivation and nibbana are inevitable.

When all Seven Factors of Enlightenment are fulfilled, transcendental wisdom and liberation will certainly appear. Let us diligently cultivate these Seven Factors of Enlightenment. Fundamentally we need to have and cultivate correct mindfulness. Learn the truth of our body and mind. Doing so is developing the Seven Enlightenment Factors.

When we develop them enough, we will attain *vijja* and *vimutti*. *Vijja* is transcendental wisdom. It is the thorough knowledge and understanding of the Noble Truth. *Vimutti* is the truly liberated mind. When the mind

wholeheartedly realizes the Noble Truth, it detaches itself from matter and mind, from all attachments and all aspects of the body and mind. If the Noble Truth is not fully realized, the release and liberation will not happen. Therefore, as long as there is no thorough knowledge of the noble truth, no liberation, no transcendental wisdom, there will be no liberation and no freedom from suffering.

Early in my monk life, I did feel disheartened as well. Yes, that happened to me too. Turning left or right, I was fully aware. Even sleeping, tossing and turning, I was fully aware. My mindfulness was at its peak, but why wouldn't it yield substantial result? Why there were still defilements. It was really discouraging. I knew that the pieces weren't all there, but didn't know what was missing. I got stuck with that dilemma. Knowing that it wasn't enough, something was missing, but

had no clue what it was.

Actually, what was missing was the true and complete insight of the Noble Truth. The missing piece was *vijja*, the transcendental wisdom. Without the complete wisdom, *vimutti* or true liberation won't happen. Once the true and complete understanding of the Noble truth is reached, liberation will blossom automatically. The mind releases its hold on both matter and mind to the world in that instant. The complete insight and wisdom immediately follows, to revise and relive what has just happened. What impurities were cleansed and what were left, and what impurities were completely gone. It will contemplate on this aspect all over again. There will no longer be any doubt whether we practice correctly or not.

This is the path. It starts off with having mindfulness. Being mindful when exhaling. Being mindful when inhaling. Seeing the body breathing.

By observing the body breathing, we will see the separation between the body and the mind. The body moves while the mind observes. In doing so we are practicing mindful contemplation of the body. Breathe and observe the body that is breathing. If happiness arises, be mindful of it. The mind observes when feelings appear, the mind is aware. This is practicing mindful contemplation of feelings.

Observe both physical and mental phenomena throughout the day. Seeing the continuous changes, we are practicing contemplation of phenomena. Observe either physical or mental phenomena and see the Three Characteristics of existence. Understand that all things happen from certain causes.

Observe all phenomena and we will gain deeper understanding that all phenomena arise from certain causes, including hindrances. Oh yes,

there are hindrances along the way. Unless we attain the wisdom of the nonreturner, hindrances can still arise. If any hindrance appears, obscuring the mind, just be aware. We will be able to see the cause of such hindrance. We will know how to avoid hindrance.

We will increasingly walk the correct path, gradually enhancing the factors of enlightenment. And we will know why they are enhanced. We will know what are the causes and the results they bring. In short, the contemplation of phenomena isn't just about simply seeing the phenomena. It's also about knowing the causes and effects of these phenomena. We observe until the mind gains full insight, and as a result, releases all attachments.

Is this too difficult? Even if it is, we still need to learn. It's better to get a head start now than wait until the time of Buddha Ariya Metteyya.

It might be difficult today, but will be easy by the time of Buddha Ariya Metteyya. If we meet and listen to His Teaching, it may take only a little effort to attain the ultimate wisdom. And we will stand and proudly declare that His Teaching is truly crystal clear, like turning over what is upside down. But as of now, we might declare it is truly confusing, just like flipping face down what's once up. Persevere despite the difficulties. Don't whine. It would be much worse if we had to find the path ourselves. Even though the Buddha's Teaching is somewhat difficult, with perseverance and patience, we can progress.

Isn't this fun? More fun than the morning session, isn't it? What happened this morning? It was raining! It was really difficult to listen to dhamma right? Moreover, there were a lot of people... By people I meant those who didn't practice. There were lots. The nature of dhamma

also depended on the audience. If I taught difficult dhamma, they would get scared. Probably wouldn't want to learn dhamma ever again. dhamma this morning, therefore, was to reach these people. Sometimes we have to please them also. Hopefully, they will catch on and progress onto this same path we are walking, we who are getting old, sick and will soon pass away. We need to give them opportunities. If the teaching is too profound or complex, and they feel it's not approachable, they would feel disheartened and reject it.

Remember the time of the Venerable Buddhadasa? There were only a small number who could actually follow his teaching. His was so different from other masters at the time. It was easier to take in chanting *Buddho*. But when it says there's no such thing as a self, or all phenomena are undependable, it's complicated and too much to take in. It's easier said than

done, impossible to accomplish. This was the common sentiment. Similar to what I teach sometimes. If the audience is in proper state, the nature of dhamma would be a little more profound. Yet if the quality of the audience is not quite there, dhamma would be different to suit them. It's like catering to the appropriate target market.

Now, do we know we were not mindful just now? Now can we feel that the mind is more energized? Can we feel that the mind is stronger? This is what listening to true dhamma can do. The mind becomes stronger. I doubt the video can capture this energy. It can capture our physical movements, but not the energy. Perhaps someone can invent something that can capture this energy. Many of us right now feel the increase in energy. The mind is fully aware. With this energized mind, don't be wasteful. Use it to practice mindfulness, observing the body breathing.

Can we feel the body breathing, doesn't matter whether it's inhaling or exhaling? Be aware of the body breathing, with the mind as the observer.

Once the mind has sufficient strength, it can be the stable observer. Lacking strength, the mind cannot be stable. With the strong and stable observing mind, can we see the body that's breathing isn't us? The body is an object, something that the mind is aware of. Can we see that the body isn't a self? Keep observing, see that happy and unhappy feelings come and go all the time. Similar to the body, the mind also feels happy and unhappy.

I suggest we observe the mind principally. It's easier because everything happens only in one place, the mind, whereas in the body it can happen in so many parts of the body. The mind that observes it then has to run around. It's more difficult to see. If we observe feelings

in the mind, we only have to focus at the mind and nowhere else. When we are aware of happiness or unhappiness within our mind, it's easy because the mind doesn't have to run around so much. We can see pleasant or unpleasant feelings, or *vedana*, rotating within.

It can be indifferent sometimes as well. As such, we are practicing mindful contemplation of feelings. When we see happiness arises and it pleases us, for instance, if our mind is full of energy, this pleases us and we know it, we are then practicing mindful contemplation of the mind. We will see that both happiness and suffering are not self. Wholesomeness or unwholesomeness, such as satisfaction or dissatisfaction, all are not self. We explore deep into it, seeing the true nature of the phenomena, this is mindful contemplation of mind-objects.

Keep on learning, observing. Don't rush. Fruition to the noble truth is not far off. As the Buddha said, as long as we practice mindfulness, wisdom to liberation is inevitably possible. But if we don't cultivate it, there's no way to attain the fruition. So let us try our best to be mindful of our body and mind.

This past twenty five minutes was really intense. The translators must be depleted for days to come. Unless they have already attained equanimity, they probably are at their limit at this point. Let's all observe the breath, don't waste it in vain from now on. I myself have been doing *anapanasati*, mindfulness on breathing, every day since I was seven. In the beginning, I practiced until the mental image of light appeared. I wasted some time having fun with it. But I stopped after a while, trying to observe within myself, aware of my breathing and not wandering out.

When I went to visit Venerable Luangpu Sim, he referred to me as ‘the knower’. He didn’t know what my real name was, so he called me ‘the knower’. ‘The knower, do it like this, don’t do it like that’, for instance. This was because my mind has become the knower. Can we see that most of us here are over-focusing right now? Over-focusing is not knowing. The mind has to be the knower. Right now, many are the over-focuser, not the knower. Also, there are those with wandering mind. Let’s be aware now. And be aware often.

It has been half an hour now. This half an hour of dhamma gives us a lifetime of homework, maybe even to the next life. If we persevere, continuously cultivate and progress, eventually the Seven Factors to Enlightenment will be fulfilled. Keep on practicing these factors, and the progress will become automatic, and eventually

wisdom and liberation will be attained, with full understanding of the Noble Truth. We will know exactly what is suffering, which are the body and mind. When we come to fully understand suffering, the mind will become equanimous. As a result, the cause of suffering will be eliminated.

When we gain a thorough understanding of suffering, we will consequently gain the understanding of its cause. The moment we gain the understanding of the cause, we at that very moment will attain the cessation of suffering or nibbana. The wisdom gained from understanding suffering yields the break away from what caused it. When we break away from the cause of suffering, we will reach nibbana. Nibbana exists right before our eyes. Nibbana isn't only in front of me. Nibbana doesn't exist only where the Buddha led us to. Nibbana is omnipresent. It is everywhere. It never disappears. Nibbana is



eternal. It exists right before our eyes. But we can't see it because the quality of our mind isn't good enough. Our normal state of the mind can only see mental fabrications. It is not refined enough to see beyond the fabrications. Yet it's achievable if we persevere.

For the enlightened beings, be it the stream enterer, once returner or non-returner, they can relive the experience of nibbana through insight meditation. For example, they would observe the body breathing with the mind as the observer of the body. Once it is aware of this action, the mind then moves from observing the body to observing mental phenomena. Then once aware of the mind observing mental phenomena, it then let go of mental phenomena. In that moment, free from attachment, the mind experiences nibbana.

However, the approach is different for the arahants, or the fully enlightened ones. Because their mind no longer identifies or attaches to either physical or mental formation, contemplating on nibbana will lead them directly to it. We here have yet to attain this quality. Keep on practicing. We are still homeless. Homeless has its literal meaning as without refuge.

We have yet to attain our refuge. We are still helplessly swirling in the cycle of rebirth. There's no guarantee what may come with the next rebirth. Which means we still have no refuge. It's only when we attain the wisdom of at least the stream enterer, only then that we have a refuge and can rest assured that if we die, the next life will have to be better than this one. That's because our mind has the sanctuary: safe comfort and secure.

To earn such wonderful reward, we need to work at it. We have been listening to a lot of dhamma now, it's time to actually practice and be mindful. Even if we don't start doing, at least try to remember it. However, don't use dhamma for unsubstantial debates. Now, can we feel that we are lost in thoughts? Then we start to control ourselves? It's either wandering off or over-focusing right? Alternately. Just be mindful.

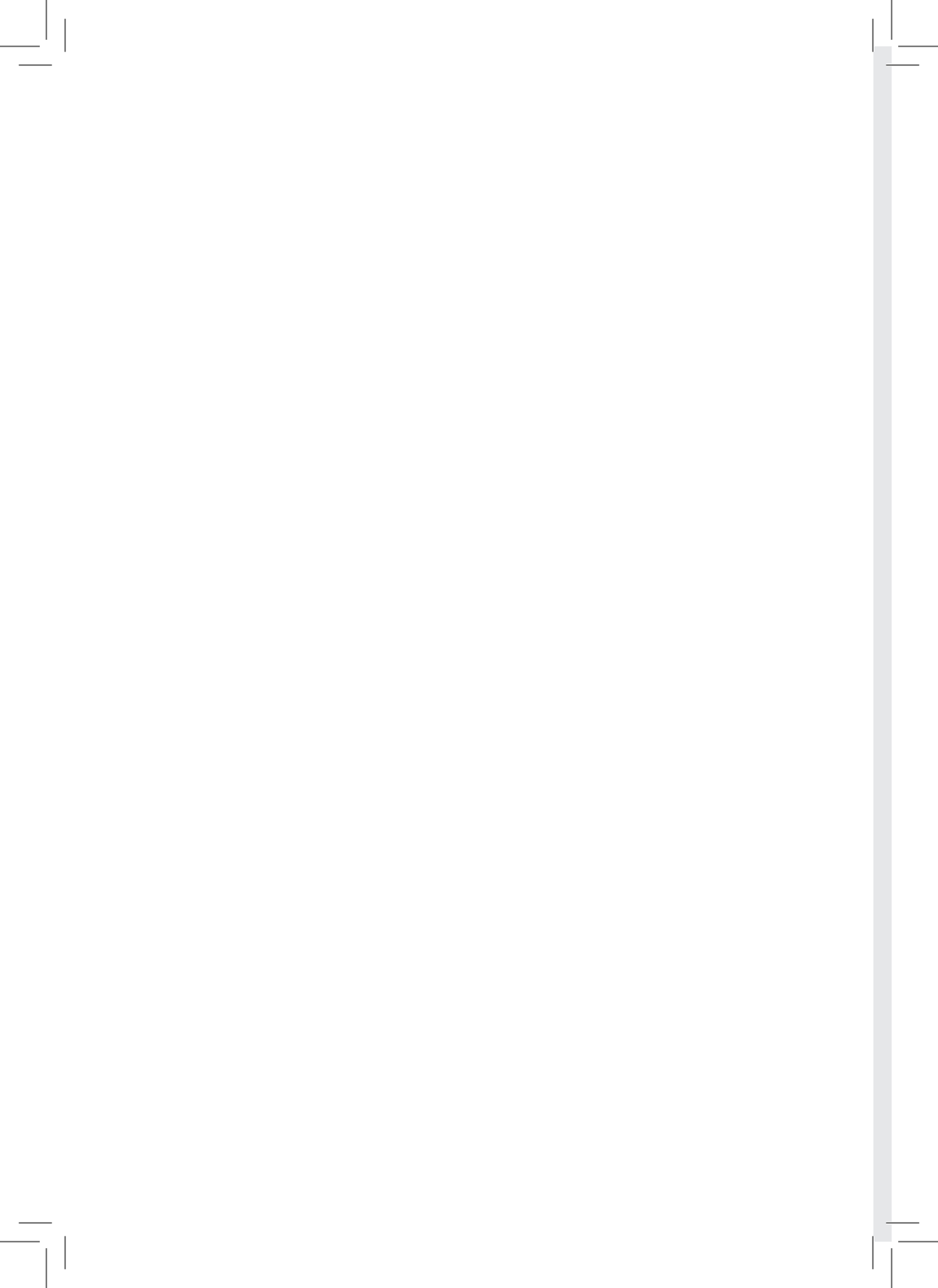
Next we shall listen to prayers by the monks. While listening let's do breathing exercise or *anapanasati*. While hearing the prayer, also be mindful of the body breathing. Praying can stimulate good energy. That's because our mind humbly pays salutations to the Triple Gems. Being among good clean energy can help make the practice progress more easily. If we are to be in a bad place with negative energy, the practice will be much more difficult. Take a shopping mall

for an example. It's a very noisy, crowded, and confusing place, with a lot of teenagers. Full of negative energy. If anyone can truly do and sustain *Samadhi* in a mall, you've got my respect. I myself, when still a novice practitioner, didn't dare go to such a place. I was fortunate to be around great masters.

In a good, positive, and clean surrounding, it's much easier to practice mindfulness, concentration, and cultivate wisdom. However, if we are at home, not with the masters, we should have our own private time, our own routine and time to practice. And during the practice time, we leave other tasks and chores aside. By doing that, we create a suitable and supportive environment for ourselves. Leave other matters behind for a while, while practicing mindfulness. Leaving other matters doesn't mean leaving responsibilities unattended. It's about temporarily

leaving behind trifle matters that are bothering our mind. But if we have to clean and tidy the house, wash our clothes, water the plants, give our pet a bath, we work on these chores and have mindfulness while doing them, we are in fact practicing.

If our goal is for such sacred reward, there's no free pass, we have to work for it. In a little while, we will do the candle light procession. The procession isn't just to pay salutation with offerings like flowers, candles and incense sticks. More importantly it is to pay salutation with our practice, by having mindfulness while walking. Doing it here at our temple, if we do it with only item offerings, it's considered petty. So pay salutation with our practice. Let us be mindful with each and every step we take.





CLEAR COMPREHENSION

May 6, 2017
Suan Santidham Temple

Do not lose awareness. Train yourselves to be mindful often. If we just let ourselves go, whenever free just let the mind drift away, forgetting our body and mind, it will become a habit. So try to be mindful as often as possible. If you have three minutes, or five minutes, be aware. Many of you have improved. In the old days, when I entered the room and sat without talking, you would still be talking or your minds would be distracted. But now when I sit still and scan the room your awareness comes back.

The task of ridding suffering is not a trivial matter. It should in fact be the main goal in life. We are so fortunate to be born a human, why be drown in suffering all our lives. It's normal for people who have never heard of the Buddha's Teachings to be drown in suffering because they have no way out. But we know the way.

When I was still a layperson, I practiced dhamma and saw the mind being trapped in a cramped space, trapped since birth. I refuted, thinking why I had to be trapped like that. I didn't realize then what was containing the mind, and tried to break it through meditation. That was the only tool I could think of. The containment temporarily went away, leaving behind a mind which was clear, bright and expanding. But once the concentration declined, the trap came back. Neither concentration nor mindfulness could destroy this entrapment of the mind.

Prior to this I've heard *Venerable Luangpu Dule* said that the mind was encased. He called it *ruparamanu vinnana*, which was his own vocabulary. He said nothing could destroy it except nibbana. So I concluded that what I experienced must be what he called *ruparamanu vinnana*, word of the meditation master who knew the meaning,

but whose students may not have understood. Especially if the student listened to many masters he must have collected many more words explaining the same phenomenon. So my goal was to attain nibbana so I could be free from this encasement. I practiced and practiced. Sometimes when the mind was fully concentrated the encasement broke away briefly, and quickly formed again. It happened like this many times. Seeing the mind bounded, imprisoned since birth, this was unbearable and I was determined to be free one day.

It's like being born in a prison, a special prison where a pregnant prisoner is allowed to bear and rear her child inside. The child only knows life inside the prison. His world is within the prison walls, and he is not troubled by it because he thinks this is the world. Outside the walls is another world. One day he peaks out

through the prison door and sees wide open space outside. Now the prison becomes very small and unbearable. He has to find a way out.

My mind was trapped like that kid who was born in the prison and saw the way out. The mind did not want to be trapped forever, and searched tirelessly for the way out. I finally found the way, and it is through dhamma practice. When morality, concentration and wisdom gain strength this encasement will be destroyed. But to gain strength we must be diligent, be mindful. Mindfulness is essential. Without it we will not achieve morality, concentration and wisdom.

Therefore, it is essential to constantly be aware. We Thai translate awareness with *sampajañña* when in fact it is slightly different from being mindful. *Sampajañña* is clear comprehension, clarity of consciousness, and is subdivided into 4 parts.

The first is clear comprehension of purpose, in *pali sātthaka sampajañña*. It is knowing what is beneficial and what matters. So we know that nibbana is the goal we have to aim at.

Second is clear comprehension of suitability or *sappāya sampajañña*. Examples are suitability of food, the air we breath, dwelling, people, or dhamma, whatever is suitable for us, which may be different to each individual. For me, if I want to do concentration meditation, breathing meditation is suitable for me. For you it may be different. I do insight meditation by being aware of the mind because it is suitable for me. It's different for each person.

Next is about the domain, or *gocara*. Wherever is suitable for us go to it often. Be diligent. When it is time to do concentration meditation then go and do it, do it often. Don't waste the opportunity. When it is time to do insight meditation then do it, don't forget to do it.

The last one is clear comprehension of non-delusion, or *asammoha sampajañña*. It is awareness without any delusion. We say be aware and don't be deluded when doing concentration or insight meditations. This is because some do concentration meditation and become deluded, forget the self and become unaware, or do insight meditation and become deluded and distracted, resulting in wrong understanding. The knowledge has gone too far.

So be aware often. Examine which meditation method is suitable for each of you. But first keep in mind that the goal is to be free from suffering. Why be stuck with suffering all your lives. People who have never heard of the Buddha's Teaching suffer all their lives, which is pitiful. But it has to be that way because they don't know the way out. We know the way.

It is the Noble Eightfold Path, in short morality, concentration and wisdom. Right view and right thought fall under wisdom. Right speech, right action and right livelihood fall under morality. Right effort, right mindfulness and right concentration fall under concentration. Therefore, if you are mindful it means you have concentration. If the mindfulness is correct, then concentration arises automatically and simultaneously. So in short it is morality, concentration and wisdom.

For morality, the most important are the first four codes. The fifth is an extra. Right speech is the fourth moral code. Right action covers the first, second, and third moral codes, which are not to take life, not to steal, and not to have sexual misconduct. Right speech is not to lie, to deceive, or to babble. These days we babble a lot, all day long with our fingers through social media, sending greetings and jokes, all of which are futile.

Therefore, know that only you can help yourself out of suffering, with nibbana as the goal. Make ourselves worthwhile as human beings, or *manussa* in *pāli* which means one with an uplifted heart. If born in the animal realm there is no chance of reaching enlightenment, one just have to cycle endlessly and endure suffering. We have a chance, being born as human with all the faculties, not crazy, deaf, dumb, mute or blind. Is anyone here crazy, deaf, dumb, mute or blind since birth? One who has any of these qualities since birth are born from two causes, non-attachment and non-aversion, but still have delusion. It will be difficult for these people to practice dhamma. If deaf or blind since birth it will be difficult to hear dhamma, to experience the surrounding. This is unfortunate. It is the result of past kamma.

Any of us can become unfortunate from doing bad at any time. So do good, observe the precepts, be moral and keep practicing, as we are so fortunate to be born humans. No one here is unfortunate. Or has any of you committed a grave sin like killing your parents or an arahant? It's difficult nowadays to know if a person is an arahant. So if you haven't killed anyone then you are already relieved from many serious sins. As a layperson you cannot instigate disagreement between the Sangha. Only monks are subject to such wrongdoing. So you've never killed anyone, never instigated disagreement between the sangha, never hurt the Buddha. Though if born during the Buddha's time you might have hurt Him, we'd never know.

We probably don't have the five sins with heaviest and immediate punishment. We are not born unfortunate, we haven't committed

heavy sin, therefore if we practice dhamma there is a chance that we can reach enlightenment. So we have to be diligent and study the foundations of the practice well. Once we know how we need to keep on practicing. Practice if you have five minutes, practice if you have ten minutes. Be mindful even if you only have two or three minutes.

When I was a layperson I practiced like that. Whenever I had free time I would practice mindfulness. Even at work, which required lots of analytical thinking, and my head was spinning like mad. I took short breaks to the men's room and practiced while walking to and from there. If I could not be aware of the mind because it's too muddled, I would be aware of the body walking. Even while standing and relieving myself, which is the norm of non-ordained Thai men to stand, once done I would be aware of the feeling of happiness that arose.

Can you be aware of this? If not, then next time try and see whether this is true or not. Go and relieve yourself and see happiness arising, or if you become distressed because you cannot move your bowels, see worry arising. This is being mindful of the mind. Just a simple action of going to the toilet and you can practice mindfulness. So if on the way going to the toilet you cannot be aware of the mind, be aware of the body. And once relieved, on the way back be aware of the mind.

If free for five minutes, do not waste the time. Practice mindfulness. Accumulate the effort. Sometimes you walk pass someone, just act normal and socialize. Do not act serious as if meditating, otherwise they'll think you are mad. This world is full of mad people. They are the majority. So be wholesome and practice dhamma discretely. There is no need to show

anyone, just walk normal. **Practicing dhamma is exercise of the mind. It is not about postures.** Being aware of the body when walking is in fact doing walking meditation. There's no need to walk slowly in a composed manner. Walk naturally, and say a word or two when you pass by people you know. Be aware of your feeling when the person makes a joke. Sometimes you pass by someone you dislike, be aware of the uncomfortable feeling that arises.

I know a person that makes you all uncomfortable – “me”. You are all tense in my presence, thinking “why did I choose to sit in front”, or “what homework should I submit”, or thinking along this line and becoming more and more tense. So be aware when you meet some-one and stress or happiness arises. This is practicing dhamma.

It's not about how to do walking meditation, or which posture to make in sitting meditation, or how to do breathing exercise. These examples just touch the surface. Some say there are fourteen steps in doing the hand movements, or six to eight steps for walking meditation. These people don't know how to practice dhamma. **It's not about how many steps or which posture. Rather it is about being mindful when the body moves, being mindful when the mind moves. This is dhamma practice. It is not about the procedure, but rather the mind. Aware of our body and mind that are constantly changing, aware often and in a relaxed way.**

Yesterday I stopped by to see the resort where many of you are staying. I've heard of the place a long time now, but never been there. Now I know why you like to stay there. It's all concrete. People now a days are afraid



of trees. Too many trees and they think there must be lots of ghosts. Ghosts can be anywhere. They like to stay in buildings, just like us. They no longer stay in trees because it's difficult to find trees these days. We are afraid of nature. We are too removed from nature. Nature is beneficial, especially for dhamma practitioners because it is not deceitful. Be in manmade environment can be tricky.

When I was a layperson, I did mindfulness meditation in precarious places like caves known to be haunted by evil spirits. As it turned out, my meditation went very well because I was alert, on guard of ghosts that might appear. During the day everything was fine, but as it got dark my heart was pounding. I was afraid of ghosts. Sometimes I would stay at temples. The monks would kindly suggest I sit and meditate by the graveyard, right at the entrance.

At night I would hear footsteps going in. I would imagine ghost relatives from outside coming to visit the ones at the graveyard. Then I heard chewing sounds. Freaked out I opened my eyes, beamed the flashlight in that direction, only to see dogs. These dogs went in to get food offerings such as pieces of chicken, and I imagined a ghost was gnawing its teeth. I learned a good lesson, if a dog was not afraid to walk into the graveyard, and it didn't even practice dhamma, why should I be afraid. I gathered strength and walked in and around the graveyard, even though it was scary and I was alone. Northeastern Thai graveyards place ashes in clay urns, and these urns were all over the place. So keep practicing dhamma, keep on learning.

Sometimes during meditation, a ghost would knock repeatedly on the door. Actually it was the sound of a gecko banging its prey,

trying to weaken an insect before swallowing it whole. This lessened the chance of the insect from escaping. And I was terrified, thinking it was a ghost knocking the door. So, practicing in and with nature without any knife or gun for protection made me very alert. It was practicing for survival. So when you are scared, chant ‘*buddho*’. The frequency depends on how scared you are – if very scared the chanting becomes very fast, and if less scared the chanting becomes slower. By chanting ‘*buddho*’ fast, the mind will not think of anything else but the word ‘*buddho*’. Then you will realize that you are scared because of thinking. Try and observe.

When we are in a natural environment we will feel small. Like when we meditate on the soil, the surrounding landscape is so vast. We are just a tiny speck. Nature is a good dhamma teacher as it refines us. It can be a strict teacher.

These days there are no tigers or elephants. I'm not afraid of tigers. There are lots of them near the temple, though they are in confinement of the zoo. I'm also not afraid of crocodiles, as there are lots of crocodile farms around here so they cannot attack us. But to really be in a natural environment with no defense except for dhamma, we would be too terrified and could easily lose our minds and go crazy.

In the past there was a branch temple of Venerable Luangpu Tes. The temple is still here to this day. It is surrounded by mountains and five caves. Some caves are uninhabitable because they go underground, with lots of mosquitoes. Some are spacious, with rocks scattered around. There was a nun who went to meditate in one of the caves. She planned for a seven day retreat. Not long after she started her practice a ghost appeared from a rock, half-bodied,

and it smiled at her. The nun was shocked. She was about to run away, and as she started to move her leg forward she regained her senses. She remembered her intention to be in the cave for seven days. She brought so many things and food, how could she run away just because a ghost came to greet her. This would have gone against her intention. This nun was reputable. Confronted with the ghost, she chanted '*buddho*' nonstop. This was the last resort she had. On the seventh day, after fulfilling her words, she fled and screamed all the way down from the cave. If she had run the first day she would have broken her words. This cave was later given a special name by a senior monk, called '*sadja kuha*', meaning the cave of commitment.

When we struggle in our practice, we have to really have a strong will. If we are weak we will never succeed. Sometimes we are too

easy-going. For women though I don't recommend going to dangerous places to meditate. Ghosts and animals are not that dangerous, but human can be. We cannot trust anyone, not even monks, novices, or nuns. These days there are lots of immoral monks or *alajji* who transgress the canons. The word *alajji* is a *pāli* term, meaning shameless. It's not safe for women to just wander about. So when you practice at home, make your home a good place to practice dhamma. It's all in our minds. Have the will to practice today, all other things can wait. Be determined and you can succeed.

Nowadays forest grounds are dwindling, with encroachments. Even monks are having a difficult time going into the forest. These days the Department of Forestry does not encourage monks to wander into the forests. At one point they even banned monks to enter, but Venerable

Luangta Mahabua was able to claim the rights back. The Buddha was enlightened in the forest, so why stop monks from going there. Actually the reason behind the prohibition was because once the monks entered the forest, they started to build temples, then laypeople followed and built villages, and then cut down the trees.

Be strong and determined, and one day you will be free, really free and joyous. Trapped in the prison you will never be happy. Only the free will have true happiness. A trapped mind is polluted and bound, making it receptive to defilements. Only when this covering is destroyed will it be free from defilements. It's just like an amniotic sac covering the fetus in the womb. Once the fetus is fully grown, ready to come out into the world, it will have to break open this sac. Same as the mind, which is covered in defilements. One day we have to break free, and we will realize

that the trapped mind, bound by defilements, is so pitiful. So keep on training.

This path we walk is the path of morality, mentality, and wisdom. For morality, the fifth item of the five precepts supports the other four. If we fail this, we will lose awareness easily. Once without awareness the other four precepts will be more difficult to observe. The noble path contains four of the precepts, but to abstain from drinking alcohol helps with being mindful. If you drink or take drugs, awareness will be weak, leading to failure to observe the other four precepts.

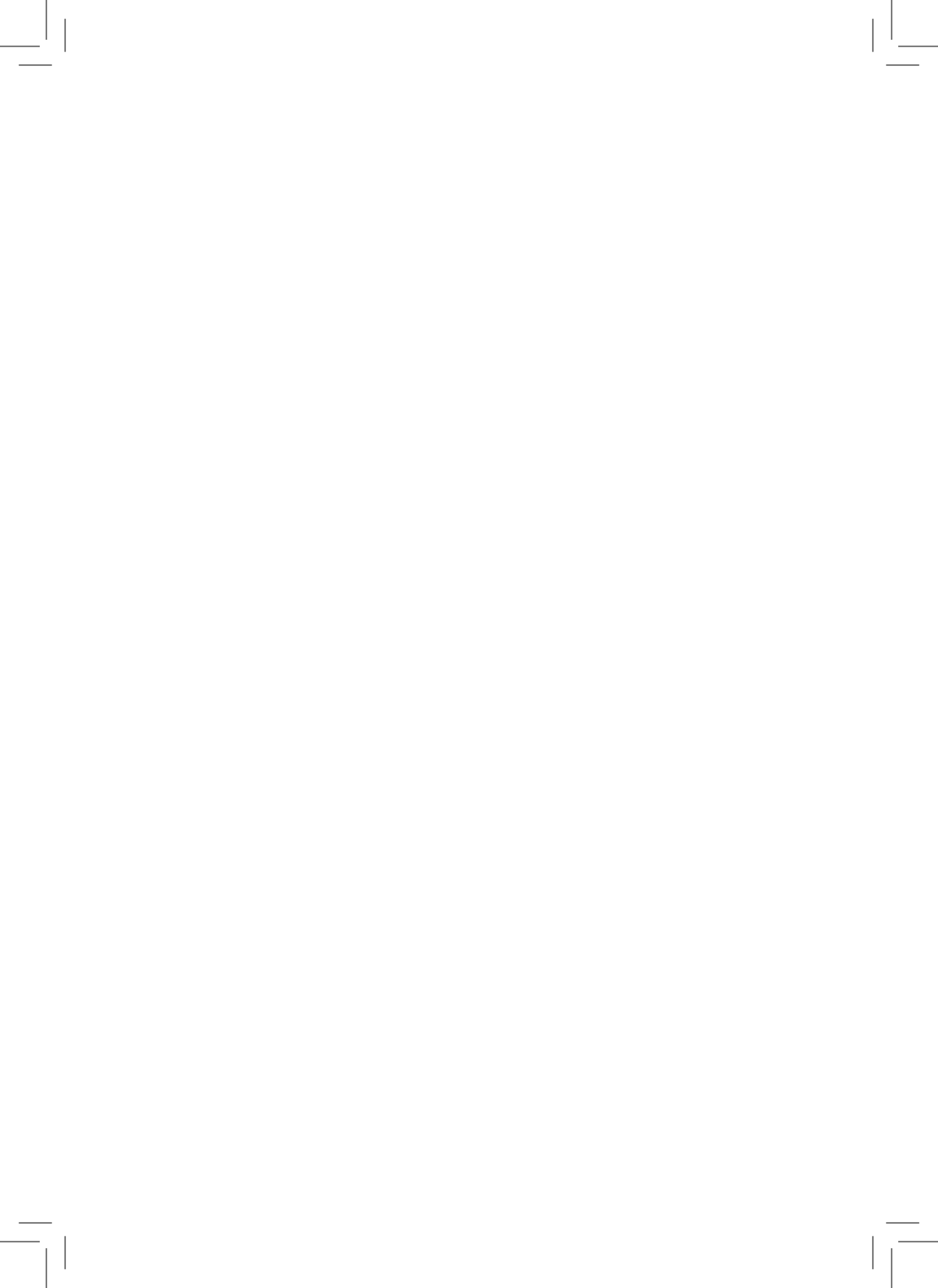
A weak mind cannot have concentration. The mind will be scattered, and wisdom cannot arise. So it is very harmful. Even the fourth precept, we do not see it being harmful. We babble on and are unaware. In fact, this makes the mind unfocused. The practitioner will realize that all

the precepts are important. Unable to keep them and the mind will not be calm. Concentration, or stableness of the mind, is also important. Aware of the unstableness of the mind and good quality concentration will arise because at the moment of awareness the mind is stable, not lost, not muddled. *Samadhi* will arise automatically. And with constant awareness, seeing the mind lost then aware, lost then aware, we will eventually gain wisdom. The lost mind is impermanent; the knowing mind is impermanent.

The lost mind is not under control; it is lost by itself. The knowing mind cannot be kept. Nothing is under our control. This is the wisdom gained. Therefore, keep being mindful and protect the mind. Be diligent. We still do not possess the special abilities to safeguard the mind, so keep practicing. Begin by utilizing awareness to protect the mind. **The function of *sati* or mindfulness is**

to protect and guard the mind. Therefore, don't waste time. Practice often. If you have five minutes and let the mind wander off the whole five minutes, only to start practicing again once the day is over, then this is unproductive. The whole day is wasted because the mind wanders off. It is accustomed to wander off. So train to be mindful.

Do not wait until I start to talk to have mindfulness, and lose your mind before I come out. If you think like that then you are still far from the goal, still inattentive. So, whether you see me or not, try to be aware of your body, aware of your mind. Practice like this and you are closer to me. If when I'm away you do not practice, you are still far from me.



Map to Wat Suan Santidham

