



— *Waking up* —
AMERICA

A Collection of Dhamma Talks by
Venerable Luangpor Pramote Pamojjo
in the United States

Translated by
Jess Peter Koffman



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Waking up America

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This is a collection of talks given by Venerable “Luangpor” Pramote Pamojjo on his visits to America in the summers of 2012 and 2013. The talks were translated live by Jess Peter Koffman and edited afterward. Due to the nature of live translation, some content from the original Thai version may be absent and some content may be briefly expanded upon for the benefit of newcomers.

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Waking Up San Francisco, Day I

Wat Buddhanusorn

Fairmont, California

June 9, 2012



It's a very monumental moment when people outside of our Buddhist country become interested in the Buddhist teachings. It gives us the opportunity to expand this beautiful knowledge, these beautiful teachings across the globe.

Don't create an image in your mind of Buddhism being just about rituals and ceremonies. Buddhism is not just about rituals and ceremonies. If we study the truth of the Buddhist teachings, we'll see that actually Buddhism is a field of study about how to develop our mind so that it can be free of suffering. Of course, there are rituals like bowing, flowers, ceremonies and all these different types of things. Yet the essence of Buddhism is about how it is that we free our mind from suffering once and for all.

If we truly understand the Buddhist teachings, what it is that the Buddha is truly teaching us, then it won't take long in order to remove suffering from our mind. It doesn't matter what our religion or our rituals are. If we study the Buddha's teachings and follow them correctly, we'll be able to free ourselves from suffering. If we practice, our belief system becomes irrelevant.

I'm asking for about an hour here to talk about the essence of what the Buddha's teachings are.

It isn't a difficult thing to study one's own mind. When I started practicing at seven years of age, I learned to practice making my mind quiet and still using the in and out breath. Watching the in-and-out breath, I was able to make my mind quiet. Then I would go into the world and do my daily activities and my mind would get busy again. So, I would go back and get quiet and calm, and sure enough, when back in the world, the mind got busy and stressed. It was for about 22 years that I only practiced this. I would just waver back and forth between having a busy and restless mind and then doing some meditation and making a quiet and a still mind. I didn't get to the essence of the teachings of how to free oneself from suffering.

When I was 29 years old, I finally met my teacher that developed me further. His name was Luangpu Dune or Venerable Grandfather Dune. He told me that it's not difficult to practice the Buddhist teaching. He said all we have to do is instead of being just a thinker and someone that is always fabricating stories in one's mind, we come to study the mind itself and see what the mind is doing. We learn to study the mind. That's what he taught me, to watch and study my own mind.

Most people when they think about meditation or dhamma practice, they watch just the body. They watch

the body walking. They watch the breath moving. My teacher taught some people to do that because it was appropriate for them at the time. But he taught me to watch my mind directly.

This is what my teacher was taught by his own teacher, Venerable Grandfather Mun, the legendary forefather of the forest tradition in Thailand's monasteries.

In order to release our mind from being totally immersed in thought, we have to start to see what that means, because when we study the mind, we have to study the truth of the way things are. We have to see things in their true nature. So, when we're doing dhamma practice, if we're still busy seeing things as this or that colour, hard or soft, cold or hot, then we are still working too conceptually and aren't in touch with the real phenomena.

There are many different practices to suit different people. Some people like to watch the body; watching the body move, watching the breath. For some people, they develop more when they watch physical sensations like pain; they get to see the truth of that more easily. As for those who watch pain or physical sensations, only those that are very, very good at deep concentration or stilling the mind are able to do that effectively.

A lot of people misunderstand the Buddha by thinking that it's important that we have to watch the body first or the breath first and then later getting to watching the mind. That's not necessary. It doesn't have to be in that order. It depends on our own aptitudes and what type of mind we have when we determine the most appropriate practice for us at any given time. Those who practice to still their mind, to keep the mind quiet often, have a difficult time studying and watching the mind because they render their minds too quiet and too still to appropriately be able to see the truth of how the mind is working. They fudge the mind, control the mind into a state that's too still and thus are not able to see the true nature of the mind.

The important thing to see is that we are watching the mind to notice how the mind and the emotional states change at all times. We can notice that one moment we're feeling happy, we're feeling glad, and then the next moment we're feeling upset or uncomfortable. As we walk through the world and experience different things and different situations, our mind changes from being in a content place to being in a discontent place, and it moves back and forth between different emotional and mental states.

We really have to take a look at how things are changing. If we like to watch the body, notice that first the body is breathing in and then it's breathing out. The body is sitting. The body stands. The body walks. The body eats. The body brushes its teeth. We can watch how the body changes from one state to another. If we're watching the mind, then we see how the mind changes from one state to another. When the eyes see something and we feel that we don't like what we saw, we feel suffering arises in the mind from what we saw. Then, know that suffering has arisen in the mind from what we saw. If we see something and we like it or we feel that happiness comes up, then we know that happiness has arisen in the mind.

Watching the mind doesn't mean holding the mind still or forcing it into a place where it's not moving or not thinking. Watching the mind means noticing the natural changes from one state to another as we make contact with the world, as our eyes and ears and tactile senses make contact with the world. The mind will change from one emotional state to another. Our job is to notice the emotional state that has arisen. If we are able to watch the mental states often and see them changing, one day the mind will understand the true nature of things; that

everything arises and also falls.

Everything that arises in the mind and in the body, all are impermanent phenomena. Suffering isn't permanent. Happiness is impermanent. If we have a bad feeling inside, that is impermanent. If we have a good feeling inside, that is impermanent. If we are able to see with absolute clarity that everything that arises also falls, then suffering will release itself from the mind or the mind will release itself from suffering. Then all that will be left will be suffering of the body. The mind won't suffer along with it. The body will still get sick and old and die but the mind won't suffer along with it.

Can we notice there is no way that we can truly control the body? The body is aging regardless of what we do. The body can get sick regardless of what we do. The body will die regardless of what we do. We can't command the body to not die. It's out of control. Similarly, the emotions and the mental states are also out of control. When we look at something, a feeling arises in our mind. We didn't create that feeling. We didn't make that feeling happen. It arises on its own. So, we watch the mind and we watch the body in the sense that we are going to be able to see that whatever arises, arises out of its own causes and falls when the causes for it to be there are

gone. There isn't anybody doing this.

The more that we are unable to accept reality; the reality that we are going to die, that we are going to lose friends, that we are going to lose people in our lives, that we'll gain something, lose something, the more we suffer. If we are consistently resisting or unable to accept the fact that we will experience loss, then we'll continue in this cycle of suffering.

Everything is impermanent. Everything is temporary. Nothing lasts. It's normal that the body gets old. If we manage to get old, we're lucky that we're able to live as long as we did. It's only our resistance to these things that makes us suffer.

We have trouble accepting that things are changing, then that things get worse. The beautiful mind that has freed itself from suffering has done so only because of its ability to accept the true nature of things.

We are certain to suffer if we are resisting that which arises in the present moment. Whatever it is that arises in the mind or in the body in the present moment, if there is resistance to it, then we'll suffer.

The dhamma practice is all about watching the mind and watching the body so that we see that everything that arises is impermanent. Everything is temporary. Everything just arises and falls. We keep watching this until the mind is actually able to accept it, not that we and our concepts and our ideas are able to accept it but deep down, that the mind accepts it on its own, that this is the way things are.

Every physical state, every mental state, is impermanent. They all arise and fall. All are temporary phenomena. We have to see that truth of the body. If we see the truth of the body, we will see that it's always suffering. There is always suffering going on in the body. There is no way that we can force or command the body into a state that is never suffering or into a state where it is completely comfortable.

We can't command the mind to be in a place where it never thinks a bad thought and never experiences a bad feeling.

We can't do that. Normally, before we start to practice, we think that our body is a beautiful thing. But after we practice for a while, we'll start to see that there is nothing special about having a body. The body is suffering. Let's test this now. Let's breathe in and only in. Eventually,

we are going to suffer because we have to breathe out. Why do we need to breathe out? Because we need to relieve the suffering. The body is always in a place where it's trying to relieve itself from suffering. It's in a suffering place and it's trying to move out of suffering. The body is oppressed by suffering all the time but we don't normally see that because our attention is outward. If we bring our attention inward and we are able to notice the body and what it is doing, we'll see that the body is being oppressed by suffering all the time.

Similarly, the mind is always suffering. If we don't practice the dhamma, we will think that this body is 'me' and this mind is 'me' and that's a special thing, that maybe even great things for this body are on the horizon. But as we watch the mind and we watch the body, and we see the true nature of them, we'll see that they're always under oppression, that there is always suffering and that we're constantly trying to relieve suffering of some kind. Even when we decide, "Ok, I'm going to practice meditation", we're in the state of suffering on one level or another, hoping to arrive at a more peaceful place. If there is any happiness, we feel it for just a moment, as when we are breathing in. Then when we get to the end of the in-breath, we start to suffer and we have to breathe out again. All states are temporary.

To feel distraught about the fact that everything is suffering is the wrong attitude. We're just taking a look at what is really going on.

On the deepest level, we think that we're just suffering when there is a negative mental state or a negative physical state but actually, just having a body or just being this body or this mind believing that we are this body and this mind, is suffering in itself. So, it's not just when there is a negative feeling that we're suffering. Actually, even when we think that there is a positive state, there is still the foundation of suffering there because there is a body and there is a mind.

They are suffering in and of themselves. The Buddha taught the three characteristics of impermanence, suffering and non-self. If we want to see impermanence or suffering, all we have to do is breathe and notice that the breathing is always changing. Notice that it goes from in-breath to out-breath, notice that there is suffering and happiness oscillating regularly. If we just watch the breath, it is only a concentration exercise and we may feel calm for a while. But if we notice the true three characteristics of the breath, we are moving toward Vipassana or insight meditation.

Basically, it comes down to this: there are these things that we believe are 'us', the body and the mind.

The mind is composed of things like feelings, emotions, the consciousness that is able to be aware of what is going on, wholesome and unwholesome mental states that arise like anger, frustration, loving-kindness, all the good states and unwholesome states. Vipassana is about seeing all these components that we believe are ‘us’ and watching them, seeing them move, seeing them arise and fall and seeing that they all are a bunch of components and seeing that none of them are actually an ‘us’. It’s seeing that there isn’t anybody who owns these things.

When I started practicing, I just watched the breath and I got very good at watching the breath. I would breathe in and say ‘Bud’ and breathe out and say ‘dho’ and then count ‘one’ and then ‘Bud-dho’ and then count ‘two’. I did this because I was just a kid. I wasn’t curious about the why’s and how’s and I didn’t have a complicated adult mind. I was able to make myself very bright and very still quite easily. I practiced it every day.

Then, when I was able to start watching the mind later on, because I had such good skills at making the mind so bright, the mind was able to become a bare witness to everything that the body was doing or the mind was doing. So, even when I started bringing my attention to watching the body and watching the mind, after having practiced

that still meditation for so long, I found that I was able to do this very, very easily. I could see that the mind that was observing was separate from the body and I could see that the emotional states that were arising were again, separate from the mind that is aware of them. I could even see that the mind would be awake while the body was still asleep.

A lot of people like to talk about non-attachment. They say, “just let it go” in the face of a problem. Some say, “I don’t attach to anything anymore”. If however, we are not able to see the truth of the body and mind, that they are totally suffering, and if the mind hasn’t seen that by itself and released it by itself, if this process of dhamma has not yet happened for us, then we’re basically fooling ourself. We are only conceptually saying “I’m not attached to it” but we are attached to it. There is attachment. Why? Because we haven’t seen the truth of the way these things actually are yet in our own experience. Let’s not fool ourself and let thoughts cloud our actual experience.

A lot of people mistakenly believe that they are enlightened, when actually they are not. They believe that they have practiced and have been able to create a mind that is happy all the time. That’s not the case for an arahant or an enlightened master. They haven’t fudged the mind in

any way to create any particular state or any sort of permanent state. What they have done is they have clearly and absolutely, in their direct experience, seen the truth of body and mind: that they are impermanent, that they are suffering and that they are out of control.

Let's take a look at this body and see that it's always suffering. Let's watch it moving. Let's watch and notice how we're shifting and turning all night long to try and find a comfortable position. We're comfortable just for a short time and then we have to turn again. There are pain and itches. The body is deteriorating. Let's notice in a relaxed way that the body is always moving and shifting to try to avoid suffering and to try and relieve itself from suffering.

Don't bother telling yourself and your friends that "I won't attach to this," or telling your friends, "Don't attach to that". That's not the enlightenment state at all. It is just a state of telling oneself that it needs to detach from things. It has to directly see the truth. How do we do that? We turn our attention inwards and start feeling what is going on in the body, feeling what is going on in the mind. We watch the body moving and changing. We watch the mind moving and changing.

Do we notice that happiness only lasts temporarily?

Nobody here has ever had any sort of permanent happiness. What we can do is practice to have a mind that allows and accepts that everything is impermanent, and so happiness comes and happiness goes and we don't try to attach to it or try to keep it there. Suffering comes and suffering goes and we don't try to push it away. The body and the mind are comprised of things that we're incapable of controlling. We can't force or order the body to be in any particular state or the mind to be in any particular state in any real way. We try to make things to work out just the way we want them all the time. That's impossible.

Dhamma practice is really not that hard. That's the first thing my teacher told me, that dhamma practice is only difficult for those who don't do dhamma practice. If we can understand the things that I'm teaching today and get practicing and watching, we will notice very quickly there will be very big changes in our lives and suffering will start to lessen and lessen.

As we become more aware of our mental states, we can see that these mental states actually last for a very short time. If for example, anger arises in the mind and then we notice quickly that anger has arisen in the mind, the anger will drop off very quickly and we suffer a little less.

It's not so hard to do that, to know that we're angry, or to know what mental state or emotional state is going on.

A lot of people think that Buddhism is a philosophy. Buddhism is not a philosophy. It's a field of study of its own. Philosophy is about figuring out things conceptually. Buddhist practice is direct perception or direct experience of what is really going on here and now.

When we have desires, we'll see that our desires are painful. They are a type of suffering as well. When we have mindfulness and we notice that desire has arisen, the desire goes away. Then we still do many enjoyable things in life, but we do what is appropriate to do. For example, coming here today might have been an appropriate action, right? We may think that if we didn't desire to come here, then we wouldn't have come here. But if we notice desire and then the desire drops off, we'll do what's appropriate. So, if it's appropriate to come, we will.

Generally, people in regular everyday life, they think that we suffer because we don't get what we want. That's just the general feeling that people have: it's suffering if we do not get what we want. But the truth is the wanting itself, when it arises, is where the suffering exists. So, we are actually free when we are free of this wanting. The arahant,

or the enlightened master, has completely freed himself or herself from this.

The word ‘Buddha’ means the knower or the awakened one. It doesn’t mean the forcer or the controller or the tryer, or the pusher. It means the knower. It means to be awake or to know what it is that’s going on in the body and mind in the present moment, each moment that we can.

Let’s notice that the people of this world are asleep. They haven’t awakened to the truth of the body and the mind in the present moment. We have to move out of the world of being asleep into the world of being awake or out of unconsciousness and become conscious. We may notice that the mind is thinking all the time. We’re totally consumed by the subjects or topics of our thought or the content of the thought. We don’t realize that in that moment the mind itself was thinking. So, when we are asleep or unconscious, we are just conscious of the content. When we wake up, we realize instead that the mind itself just went into thought.

We may notice that we have a body and we have a mind but we forget them all the time. We don’t know that we have a body and a mind. Waking up is coming back to the full knowledge that there is a body and

there is a mind, both moving and changing.

Let's try to study and learn the truth of the body and the mind. That's all there is to it. This is not a philosophy to think about. This is something to practice right here and right now. Let's start noticing that there is a body. Let's start noticing that there is a mind. Let's start noticing that they are moving and changing.

When we're listening to teachings of any kind, this is other people's intelligence and other people's wisdom that we're listening to and it just becomes information, just concepts in the mind that will never enlighten us or make us see the truth of the way things are. It's only through our own practice of coming back to the body and the mind and waking up to them that we're able to see the truth and fully benefit from the Buddhist teachings.

It's all about just seeing those three characteristics or at least one of the characteristics: that the body and mind are always in state of change, or in a state of suffering or seeing that they are uncontrollable, that they are not anybody in particular.

The mind is heavy and the body is heavy. They have weight to them because we are attached to them. We are holding them up as who we are. The enlightened master has put these things down. They are still there. There is still

a body and there is still a mind but they are not being held. They have weight, but there isn't anyone holding them.

When the mind is not an "us", when it's not just a thought, but when the mind itself clearly sees that the body and the mind are nothing but masses of suffering, the body will release them. The mind will release itself from these things automatically out of its own wisdom, out of its own understanding.

A lot of people misunderstand the Buddha's teaching and think that we should see everything as empty. Or see there is nothing substantial. Everything is just empty or nothingness. Such people proceed to try to see things in this way and think that emptiness is something that's permanent. That's not exactly true. Things exist, but they are just empty of our 'self'. They are empty of a person. We have to walk the path of wisdom, which means beginning to see and learn the way things actually are. We don't pick a concept and then try to see the world through the concept, like believing everything is empty in the sense that nothing really exists, then seeing the world in that way.

A lot of countries are less developed countries and we may they think that the people there are suffering but actually the true measure of suffering is quite different, and is found in the mind that has released itself from

the suffering of the body and the mind. So, wealthy countries are often poor in the sense that there are no people there who are freeing themselves from suffering of body and mind.

We are suffering because nothing is controllable and yet we try to control things. We try to control the body, control the mind, make better states but things aren't controllable and we suffer because we try to control them.

Let me emphasize again that the practice is not difficult. The practice is about coming back to watching the body and mind. It didn't take me long at all. Within seven months of meeting my teacher and him telling me to study my mind, I was able to clearly see that the body and the mind were not 'me'.

We may have heard the Buddha's teachings about the Four Noble Truths: the truth of suffering, the cause of suffering, the cessation or the end of the suffering, and then the path to the end of suffering. The Buddha emphasized that we need to see the truth of suffering, which is the first of the Noble Truths, and that the rest will take care of itself.

A lot of people say it's too difficult to watch their mind. It's much easier to just watch the body. Yet a lot of people who are saying this are actually not able to effectively watch the body. When we truly see the true

nature of the body, we won't see it as things like the eyes or hair or nails or these things. These are actually things in the world of mental concepts. When we see it as it actually is, we just see it as things like temperature, hardness, movement. Only a mind immersed in concepts will pick it up and give it a label or shape. When we see things independently of the senses, and we directly perceive in our attention, we won't see things in a conceptual way anymore. We will have truly come to the nature of the body and just its elements. We can notice the elements of water, earth, fire, and wind even in the breath. When we breathe in, we may feel warmth. That's something true and real, temperature. It is the fire element. There's a movement. That's the wind. There is also the earth element because there is a little bit of weight to the breath.

We learn in school that we can tell what has life and what doesn't have life by way of movement. That which has movement is alive. My teacher taught me differently. Even a rock has movement going on. If we notice the earth element of things, then we can notice that there is heaviness and even if a thing is very light, there is a little bit of heaviness or hardness, which means there is a bit of the earth element. This is the nature of studying physicality in the correct way and seeing that

there isn't a person but just a collection of elements.

It's very easy to watch the mind. Is anybody here able to get angry? Yes, we are able to be angry. Are we able to want? Yes, we are able to want. How about fear? Of course, all these things happen automatically all the time. Our job is just to know when these things have arisen. We will see that they all are impermanent. For example, normally when we see somebody who we love, we just put all our attention on the person for that moment. We have good feelings about that person. Now, watching the mind is just as simple as coming back and noticing that right now we are having the feeling of love. That's all. It's that easy. Whatever feeling arises in the mind, we know that it has. That's watching the mind. When we see the reality of the mind, then we see the reality of the body.

Sometimes it's hard to notice our mind when we're eating. (Everyone laughs.) See, we feel a little light and happy right now? That's all. That's all there is to it.

So, watch the body in what it's doing. Watch the mind in what it's doing. There isn't any letting go that we have to do because the mind will let go on its own when it sees the truth of the way things are. Our job is to just become aware of the body and the mind and what they are doing.

My talks are usually far more difficult talks when I'm in my temple. When I leave my temple and talk at other places, they are easier talks. They are just flowing with the energy of the room.

Those of you (in the audience) who are trying to practice hard in front of me, your chest is tight and there is a lot of pressure. That's because greed has come in undetected. There is wanting to be good and trying too hard. The result is a feeling of tightness in the chest. Sometimes, when we notice what's happening or notice our mental states, then for a moment the mind is very bright and light. We can then notice that it's gone bright and light. A moment ago, it was heavy. And now, it's bright and light.

Buddhism is not a belief system as many might think. It's not really a religion. It's about freeing oneself from suffering, studying within the body and the mind.

Student: This is the first time I've met you.

Luangpor: This is the first time I've met you too! (laughter)

Student: I've been listening to your CDs and practicing according to what you teach. Once I was about to lay

down on the bed and the body appeared as separate from the mind.

Luangpor: Now that’s what I like to hear! Very good.

Student: Then I started thinking, “What are the Three Characteristics the Buddha taught?”

Luangpor: Thinking too much won’t get you anywhere. Did you notice that when you lay down and the mind is the observer, the body never declares that it is you? It is demonstrating the characteristic of non-self. It isn’t us and never was.

Student: Work has been really busy and I haven’t practiced much lately. But whenever I’m thinking too much, it is like mindfulness comes in and reminds me to come back and be aware of myself. I never thought I could do this correctly, but even just sitting down, occasionally mindfulness arrives on its own. What’s next?

Luangpor: Keep listening to my CDs and it will help mindfulness come back quickly. Practicing from here on won’t be difficult.

Student: I am happier. Suffering has reduced. I never knew this would be possible.

Luangpor: Right. People in this world are all perusing happiness through outer means. Those of us who are students of the Buddha, we find happiness from the inside out! The mind is expansive, awake and aware. The world is suffering tremendously. Even in our lives there are many problems, but we can be happy amidst all of this.

Student: I feel as if I can accept anything; I can take on anything.

Luangpor: But don't be reckless.

Student: Oh, I'm not to that point. I still get lost often, but mindfulness then knows so.

Luangpor: Good. Mindfulness arises by itself.

Be careful. You are holding to the observer mind. Don't maintain it. It has to arise and fall away just like everything else. Let it do so. If you stick to it like you are now, you won't be able to progress further.

Take a look and see that right now there isn't a self anywhere. The idea of self just comes from thinking.



Waking Up San Francisco, Day 2

Wat Buddhanusorn

Fairmont, California

June 10, 2012



When our mind is calm and content, we start to be mindful and see things as they are, beyond any bias. We will see from a perspective that transcends the world. There is an example of a big businessman who is on top of the world. He thinks he has it all; assets, properties, money. He has brought his life up to a certain standard. But when a disaster happens, like a flood or a fire, all of his assets can be burned to the ground. He suffers tremendously from identifying with all of this.

To practice dhamma, all we need is a life. We don't need any assets or anything else. If we don't have enough dhamma in our heart and things change for the worse in our life, we won't be able to cope. When life doesn't go our way, it is difficult to deal with.

We can see that things are very unstable. Things can move to a state of intense suffering very quickly, very easily. Even young people are getting cancer and can die at a moment's notice. Dhamma helps us to release our mind from suffering, and as we practice, our suffering gradually reduces. Problems are always occurring in the world. The world is filled with problems. However, we can free our mind from the problems of this world.

The thing that we love the most even though we may not see it is ourself. A lot of people think that they love

their children more than themselves, but they are wrong. It's not true that we love our children more than us. We think we love them more than us because we love ourselves. They are our children. This is the case for all beings. All beings in the universe love themselves more than anyone else. The unfortunate thing is usually we neglect to notice ourselves. We are always interested in things that are outside of ourselves, noticing other people, noticing other things. It's time for us to come back and notice ourselves, for us to notice what is going on in this body and this mind. We'll start to see that we're spending most of our time wanting this and wanting that. Only when we truly find the truth of ourselves, can we reach fulfillment.

In the Buddha's time, there was a prince who had some of his jewelry stolen by a prostitute. A group of thirty men including the prince went into the forest to track down the thief. What happened was they ended up passing by the Buddha. They didn't know who the Buddha was but asked him if he had seen the thief go by. The Buddha said, "Instead of looking for somebody else, why don't you try to find yourself?" It's not that hard to practice, to find oneself.

Let's notice that we love ourselves and we're always thinking about ourselves in the future or in the past. We're never in the present moment. Primarily, we're totally lost

in the content of our life and aren't noticing that we're lost. When we come to practice dhamma, we need to see the truth of the way things are, in the body and the mind in the present.

In general, there are no people in this world who are truly conscious. Usually, everyone is lost in the future, lost in the past, forgetting to recognize this body and this mind in the present moment. In order to find oneself, we need to learn to become conscious of this body and this mind. We use the word 'lost' to describe 'not being conscious', 'lost in thought' about the present or the past, lost in our mood and story and without awareness of that fact.

When it comes to meditation, people often make a mistake of becoming unnatural. Normally, we breath naturally, and we don't force our attention down to the breath. However, meditators often get too serious, and change their breath patterns and slip their mind down into the breath. They try to force themselves, force their body, force their mind into an unnatural state that they think will be better. Many of them walk and even eat at unnatural paces and in controlled ways. A lot of people are mistaken that dhamma practice is something where we have to force the body to be a certain way or certain posture, force the breathing to be a certain way, and force the mind into a certain space.

People who only practice to control themselves, keep certain posture, force themselves to adhere to a specific technique, will not achieve much success in their dhamma practice. If we are forcing the body and forcing the mind to be in states that they are not presently in, then we cause stress and are interfering with the natural state of things. Interfering with the true nature of things is incorrect. When we interfere with the natural way of the body and the natural way of the mind, we are not able to see things as they truly are. We're distancing ourselves from the truth by interfering with the truth. Very often, meditators force their minds to be more still than natural.

Practicing dhamma is about becoming conscious of what is going on. Can we notice that when we go off to think, the mind wanders away? Let's notice that when we have wandered into thoughts and daydreams, we have no idea there is a body and no idea there is a mind. Can we see this? In such a moment, there is consciousness only of the contents of the thoughts. We can call that mental state 'forgetting oneself'.

What we need to become aware of are the two extremes that a meditator will find him or herself in at any given time. These are the two things a meditator will go back and forth between over and over again. One thing

is the same as the rest of the world who aren't meditating, when the meditator is lost in thought just like everyone else. Here, we are basically following the impurities of the mind and our desires. Lost in the world of thoughts and the emotions and moods they bring. The other extreme is the one where we try to control: make the mind still, hold onto an object in consciousness or make the body still. This is interfering or controlling. It's a form of creating suffering for oneself. These are the two extremes: trying to control, or totally letting go, letting the mind wander, lost in its delusions and its desires. The middle way is to be in-between these two extremes, where we are conscious of what's going on. It is the place where we notice the mind that gets lost and notice the mind that tries to exercise control.

A lot of people tend to over-focus when they meditate. Let's notice now that we are really paying attention, trying to understand. We try to listen and understand for a moment, and then another moment passes and we go off and think about what I said. So, let's notice that when we're busy listening to what I'm saying, we forget about our body and we forget about our mind. Also let's notice that when we go off to think about what's going on, we will also forget the body and forget

the mind. We shouldn't, however, hold our attention and see what's going on in the body and in the mind in advance. It is wrong to watch and wait. It's just a matter letting the body and mind work naturally, do what they do naturally and then feel what is going on, mindful of what it is that they are doing. If we over-focus and try too hard, there will be heaviness and tightness in our practice. That's not the right way to go. That's the same type of thing as over focusing or holding attention. That's exercising control. We have to be more relaxed and more free than that. A conscious mind is very light, bright and free.

Let's not think that dhamma is something that is not natural or ordinary. It's a very normal and organic thing. The Buddha taught in one of his discourses; when the breath is long, know that the breath is long, when the breath is short, know that the breath is short. What is so difficult about that? It's not a very hard practice. The Buddha didn't say, "Control the breath." He said, "Notice that the breath is long. Notice that the breath is short." He wants us to know, to know, to know!

The Buddha said to sit cross-legged with a straight back. The reason the Buddha said such things is because in India at that time people sat on the ground. If the Buddha was around today, he would likely say to have a

seat on a chair. So, we mustn't think that the only correct techniques are when we are sitting up straight on the floor.

A lot of hermits make sure that they breathe in a certain way and sit in the most perfect of postures. A lot of them don't get anywhere doing that. It's all about knowing, becoming aware of oneself, and we have to know in a very relaxed way. The Buddha never taught to make sure we over focus, make sure we control the breath, make sure we get lost in beautiful states of mind and never come out. He never said any such thing.

A lot of people think that 'peaceful' means to be lost in a happy or dreamy state. A nice and beautiful state appears in meditation and then we hold to that, losing ourselves in it, and we believe that's correct and peaceful. Actually, it's a completely different thing than peace. We don't get anywhere doing those kinds of things. We have to be aware that the mind has gone into a daze or if it craves to stay with a certain state. We have to become aware of what is going on in the mind. If we're sitting, we just know that the body is sitting, or if we're lying down, we know that the body is lying down.

There are two ways to know or to be conscious of what is going on: knowing with mindfulness and knowing with wisdom. Most meditators have neither mindfulness,

nor wisdom in their practice. When we have mindfulness of the body, then we know there is the body sitting or standing or walking. If we see with wisdom, it is something that happens spontaneously. We'll see that this body that's walking, sitting or lying down isn't anybody in particular. It's not us that is lying down. It's just the body or a physical mass that's lying down. Wisdom will see the truth of the body. It will see the body as someone else or just something that's lying or sitting there. We will not see it as a 'self'.

Regarding the mind, the Buddha taught when the mind has craving in it, we should know that the mind has craving in it. The Buddha never taught, 'Monks, make sure that you don't have any craving in the mind.' He never taught that. He taught to know. So, when there is craving in the mind, know that there is craving in the mind. If there isn't craving in the mind, know that there isn't craving in the mind. If there is anger or aversion in the mind, know that there is anger or aversion in the mind. If there isn't, know that there isn't. He never taught, 'Don't have anger arise in the mind.' He never taught that we aren't allowed to let anger arise. He taught to know when anger does arise in the mind.

If there are any impurities that arise in the mind,

then we know the impurity that has arisen in the mind. That's what it is to be mindful of the mind. If we do this incorrectly, what we'll end up doing is controlling ourself. When an impurity arises in the mind like anger or aversion, we'll try and force it away. We'll try to suppress it. Let's just try to know things as they actually are. If we know that anger has arisen in the mind, for example, if we know it properly with mindfulness, then the anger will disappear. Then, we'll have a brief wholesome and happy moment, absent of impurity or defilement, before the next one arrives.

There isn't that much that we have to do. An impurity arises in the mind and then we know that it has arisen in the mind. What will happen is the impurity will disappear and the mind will become a beautiful, bright stable mind for a moment. Actually, for people who have an irritable disposition, aversion arises in the mind frequently and easily. That's a mind that is very conducive to an easy dhamma practice because it's a very clearly visible mental state. Anger is a very clear thing to see. So, when it arises, we can see that it has arisen. When it's not there, we can see that it's not there.

In fact, just that is enough to enlighten us. To just see that is sufficient because we'll see that nothing lasts

forever, that everything comes and everything goes. We'll see that it's out of our control. We are not practicing so that the wanting, desire or anger doesn't arise and we are not practicing to try to make it go away. We're practicing so that we can see that sometimes it's there and sometimes it isn't there. People that have really busy, restless minds can notice again and again that the mind went off to think, that the mind wandered off again.

If we chose this very effective practice, I recommend that we pick a meditation object, just as a little home base so that we can easily notice that the mind goes off to think again and again. We can choose the breath or a mantra, and when the mind wanders off, we can notice it easily. We can notice it quickly and the mind won't get lost for long. It will stray off for much shorter periods if we have an object or home base.

We can use the breath or a mantra like *Buddho, Buddho, Buddho*. We can use these things just as a tool so that we're able to see the mind go off, not to force the mind to stay with the object. We are not practicing so that the impurities of the mind stay away. We practice so that we can see the mind that gets lost in thought, see the mind that gets angry, see the mind that is greedy. All these things are impermanent. The mind changes from one to the other,

to the other. That's why we're practicing, to see that all things are impermanent and out of control.

The minimum requirement is to just pick one mental phenomena that occurs like anger or like the mind wandering off to think. We pick one of them and see when it's there and when it isn't there, when it's there and when it isn't there. That's enough to see that things are out of control and they happen by themselves. It's enough to see that things are impermanent. That's enough to enlighten us.

When we learn about dhamma, we learn how everything in the mind has a pair or an opposite. There is greedy and not greedy. There is angry and not angry. There is a mind that's wandering and a mind that isn't wandering. A mind that's wandering off isn't able to see the truth. It's a deluded mind. The opposite of the deluded mind is a mind that is not deluded and is able to see the truth of the body and mind.

In the beginning, we have to practice knowing and becoming conscious and we can do that by noticing the mind go off to think, wandering off again and again. When we do that, each time we notice the mind go off to think, the mind will be a mind that is not deluded, just for a moment. We do this repeatedly, but we don't even do

this so that the mind is conscious all the time. We do this to see that the mind is conscious and aware, and then it's not, and then it is, and then it's not. We'll see that these states are impermanent.

The mind that is aware and the mind that is off thinking are two different minds, two different states. We'll be able to see the Three Characteristics that the Buddha taught of all phenomena: that they are always changing or impermanent, that they are unsatisfactory or cannot persist, and that they are not 'us'. They are not a 'self'. There is no control. We can see one or all three of these characteristics of the impermanence, unsatisfactoriness and non-self. If such wisdom arises repeatedly, this wisdom starts to be ingrained in our consciousness and our heart may just accept the truth.

We'll see that happiness is temporary. Unhappiness is temporary. The angry mind is temporary. A not angry mind is temporary. We'll also see that if greed or anger arises in the mind, or if it doesn't, is not under our control. It happens by itself. The mind wandering off to think is something that happens on its own. Nobody does it.

This is learning about oneself. This is about seeing clearly. We will see that life consists of mental and physical phenomena arising and falling. We'll see that physicality

is just composed of different elements and we'll see that the mind is just changing and out of control. It is empty of a controller.

The well known term “Emptiness” doesn't mean that nothing really exists. It means that everything is void of a self, that there isn't anybody that's there controlling the mental and physical phenomena. It's just mental and physical phenomena arising and falling. We will see everything in our life arises out of causes and when the causes are no longer there for them to be there, they fall away. When we see this clearly, it doesn't matter what it is that arises in our life, how difficult it might have been in the past. The mind won't be affected because it sees the truth of the way things are. It sees that there isn't anyone there. This is the true meaning of emptiness.

We cannot control what emotions arise in the heart. It's impossible to control our feelings when someone dies. Our husband could die, and we may feel inappropriately happy, or perhaps we feel sad. We can't control that. Whatever arises, arises.

Who here has children? Have we noticed how much fear can arise in the mind when concerned about our children or what may happen to them?

When we consider that people close to us will die, it seems like a very sad thing. Actually, however, when we see the truth of the way things are, it's a completely normal and natural phenomenon that people will come into our life and move out of our life. So, study within this body and this mind and see the truth that everything is impermanent, everything is always changing.

Let's be careful not to fudge the practice in such a way where we pretend that we're practicing, but are really just thinking about impermanence. A lot of people do that. We don't actually see impermanence as a thought. We have to see it in our direct experience of phenomena.

Remember the posture that we're practicing in is totally irrelevant with regards to whether the mind is awake or not. We can sit on a chair. We can sit on the ground. We can practice while walking. A lot of people do practice walking meditation and they do so too stiffly and deliberately. That's not necessary.

It's just about feeling what's going on in the body and mind. It doesn't matter what posture we choose. If there is happiness arising in the mind, just feel that happiness has arisen in the mind. Unhappiness in the mind, feel that unhappiness has arisen in the mind. If we practice walking meditation, for example, and we really try to adhere to a

certain form, we'll find a lot of tightness and rigidity arise in the mind. That is unnatural. That's too much over focusing, too much trying and it will interfere with the natural way of things. We won't be able to see things the way that they actually are.

There are so many ways that we can watch the mind effectively. If we have mindfulness, it will help us to become moral, it will help us to become wise, it will help us to have better concentration. To watch the mind, the key is mindfulness. The way to start doing this, is to wake up. We can practice formally by picking a meditation object like the breath or a mantra and we come to know, again and again, when the mind has gone off to think.

If we practice in this way of getting to recognize what it's like to go off to think, not holding the mind still so that it doesn't think, but noticing that it goes off to think, and then goes off to think again, and again, eventually, the mind will be able to recognize this phenomenon on its own. When the mind goes off to think, mindfulness will see this automatically and the phenomenon will drop off. We will wake up!

The truth of impermanence, the truth of suffering, the truth of non-self that the Buddha taught are ever present. They are always going on all of the time. It's just

our mind that isn't of the quality that is able to see that this is the way things are, that this is what is actually going on moment to moment. So, that's what we're practicing to do, to have a mind that is conscious and unbiased so it's able to see things the way that they really are.

Let's make sure we don't force the mind into a state of complete stillness where we are not able to see what is really going on. It looks like this (The Master makes stiff, serious gesture, and laughter arises in the crowd). I just did something a little funny, and we all feel a little more relaxed and comfortable now. Let's become aware of this.

Happiness arises, and we know it. Suffering arises, and we know it. If we keep knowing in this way, then soon enough the mind will notice on its own when happiness or suffering arises. That is true mindfulness. The mind starts to become conscious on its own. We can see that nobody is doing it.

When we do something immoral, we do it because there are impurities that arise that manipulate the mind. Greed arises in the mind, and we don't see that greed has arisen in the mind, or anger has arisen in the mind, and we don't see that has occurred in the mind, and then we go about harming someone, doing something mean or bad. That's why we break moral precepts. It's because we're

manipulated by impurities that arise in the mind.

One of the good things about mindfulness is that once an impurity like anger or greed arises in the mind, and mindfulness sees it, the impurity drops off by itself. When the impurity is no longer in the mind, then morality will occur completely naturally without any effort because there won't be any greed or anger that is running the show.

So, let's keep noticing the mind going off to think again and again. Let's notice the mental states that change from one mental state to another to another or from one emotion to another to another. Feel these states and mindfulness will start to arise on its own. It will be able to see the truth of the way things are. Let's notice that even as we listen to me, different mental and emotional states arise. Let's notice that the mind goes to listen to what I'm saying and it goes off to think and goes back to listen again. It goes back to think at times to consider what I'm saying.

Everything that arises in the mind and the heart and even including the mind itself, the consciousness itself, are all things that are arising and falling and they are always changing. Happiness and suffering arise in the mind and they fall away. We see that they come and go. When we see that they come and go, that's wisdom seeing it.

A lot of people have faith in Buddhism. Many of us

here are very faithful Buddhists. We can notice that this faith is actually impermanent. One moment there is faith that arises in the mind. The next moment there isn't faith in the mind. Sometimes we have a lot of effort and determination in our practice and then soon after, we're lazy. It's all impermanent. Sometimes, we think "ok, I'm going to practice for five minutes." A lot of effort and determination come up in the mind. Two minutes later we think, "Oh, I'm tired, I'm going to bed." Everything arises and falls. Everything changes. One moment there is determination, and we know it is there. The next moment there is laziness, and we then come to know that it is there.

Let's notice consciousness itself. One moment there is a natural knower of things. The next moment there is a thinker of things. The mind moves back and forth between seeing, hearing, thinking, and being aware if we're practicing mindfulness.

When we practice in this way, we automatically have morality. If we are also able to notice the mind that goes off to think and goes off to listen, becomes aware, goes off to think, goes off to listen, then we'll have samadhi, correct concentration. It's the observer mind that isn't still or forced, but is stable in its ability to see phenomena arise and fall without slipping in to any of them.

Once I was speaking to the late Mae Jan Dee, the sister of the famous enlightened master Luangta Maha Bua. She was a very great practitioner herself. She asked me how it was that I practiced to attain the state that I did. What did I do? I said I used to practice by watching the in and out breath until the mind would get very concentrated and light would appear at the tip of the nose. Then, I would watch the arising and falling of phenomena there.

She said she practiced in a very similar way but instead of using the breath, she used the mantra Buddhho, Buddhho, Buddhho until the mind became very bright and clear, and she would see arising and falling of phenomena from there.

So, we practiced similarly but it all depends on our demeanor or our disposition as to what would be the proper practice for us.

There isn't one practice that is effective for everyone. We have to know the way we are. We have to know our mind and what's appropriate for it. We just have to know the proper principles and we can use any technique once we are founded in these right principles. In the end, we will see that everything is impermanent. Good is impermanent. Bad is impermanent. The observer mind is impermanent. The thinker is impermanent. The

over focuser, the one who is trying and controlling, is impermanent. Everything is impermanent. Everything is temporary. Seeing this truth repeatedly, our mind accepts the truth of it and enlightenment is attained.

If we have mindfulness, then we will have moralities as I described. When we are skilled at recognizing the mind that goes off to think, and goes off to do this and that, then we'll have proper samadhi – the observer mind – to effectively notice phenomena and see the truth of them. When we have that quality mind with samadhi, then we'll be able to gain wisdom, see things as impermanent and the mind will enlighten from there.

Emotions are totally out of control. These things arise in the mind at any time. Sometimes, we can just be sitting there by ourself and anger comes up. We don't even need somebody else to stimulate it.

The enlightened mind has no craving, no desire that arises in it any more. It no longer arises not because the enlightened being has managed to fully control his or her mind or become the master of deciding what it is that arises in his or her mind or anything like that. The reason why impurities no longer arise in the mind is because the enlightened being has totally seen the truth of the way things are. He or she sees that there isn't a self and sees

that things are suffering and impermanent and the mind automatically withdraws from these things, from the body and mind, and frees itself as a result of its wisdom in seeing the way things truly are.

A mind that can free itself from suffering and reach one of the stages of enlightenment, will only do so in very high levels of concentration called ‘jhana’. Even if we have never been able to attain this high state of concentration called ‘jhana’ before, when the mind has enough fortitude and wisdom arising in it for enlightenment to happen, the mind will move in to jhana on its own and the impurities of mind will be cut out of the mind automatically. When the mind comes out of jhana and goes back into a normal everyday life, either all or some of these impurities will have vanished for good.

So, let’s keep practicing until mindfulness starts to arise automatically in the mind, and let’s become conscious again and again of what arises or is happening with regards to the movement of the body and the mind. Mindfulness will arise on its own, and then wisdom will too. We will be able to see the way things truly are. Then, enlightenment is possible for us.

Anger arises. We’ll see that anger doesn’t belong to anyone. Anger is just something that arises. It isn’t the mind.

It is something that arises in the mind.

When we see anger arise, mindfulness sees it. It drops off by itself and it goes away temporarily and it will come back again. But once wisdom clearly sees and directly sees that all things are totally impermanent and that they are not a self, then the anger will never arise again.

The only way we are going to be able to see in this way is if we have proper samadhi. We need to have the mind that is the observer, the bare witness that is the knower of all phenomena and does not interfere with them, does not slip in to anything that arises but is able to see from a distance.

There will always be a body. There will always be a mind. They will function until we die. It isn't necessary that we see these things as 'us'. If we practice in a correct way, wisdom will see that these things aren't anyone in particular. They don't belong to anyone in particular. Suffering of mind will disappear. It's not as hard as one might think.

People are becoming more and more conscious and interested in these teachings. Practitioners are becoming more and more aware all of the time. Thirty years ago, it was extremely hard to find anybody in the world that was aware. I had a group of people back then. About ten of them that would hop in a van and would go

from temple to temple, and they all were practicing Dhamma correctly with me. We would arrive at a master's temple and he would be completely shocked how was it possible that there were ten people here that all knew how to be aware. It was that uncommon. Now, these teachings are becoming understood more and more, and people are walking around with awareness and correct samadhi. I'm teaching now, so that we can reach this state of awareness and walk the path of wisdom from there.

Can we see that the mind is changing from one thing to another, going off to think, moving to the eyes to see, to the ears to hear? Everything that arises also falls. One day wisdom will see this, once we are able to notice what the mind is doing.

Many people here are starting to understand the practice. Can we see that the mind these days is a little different than it was before we started our practice? Let's keep learning and studying within this mind and within this body.

Let's see the truth of the body and let's see the truth of the mind regularly. Let's be mindful of mental and emotional states changing. Whenever have trouble doing that, then we can come to notice the body moving instead. We observe the body doing what it does. If we are

not able to do that at times, then we should practice samatha where we hold our attention at one object and make the mind calm. Once it gets calm enough, then we are able to start watching the mind again.

Really, it's not about controlling the mind. I don't know how to make it any clearer but still, I find that most places I go, people are still trying to control the mind instead of watching it as it naturally is. Sometimes I will have a look at people in the audience to see if they are controlling their mind. Even when know that they are not supposed it, if they see me watching, they'll do it even harder!

It's a good principle to know what the late great Ajahn Mun said. He said to observe the mind as the primary practice. If it's ever too difficult to observe the mind at anytime, observe the body. If it's ever too difficult to observe the body, then just pick a meditation object and focus on it until we are calm enough to watch the mind again. If we remember that principle, the practice will not be too hard. It will develop easily, as long as we observe as often as we can.

If we observe too seldom, then we won't make any real progress. So, let's make sure we are often observing what's going on and seeing the changing that's going on

in the mind, and in the heart. One day we'll see that there really was a Buddha. There really is the Dhamma. There really is a Sangha, a community of enlightened monks. We will see that enlightenment is something that is true and possible for humankind.

Student 1: I feel a lot of tightness in my neck. I listen to your talks thought maybe I'm over focusing, but I don't think I am.

Luangpor: The tightness is the result of karma, of your actions. We act and then reap results. The results bring up impurities or defilements of mind, and such is the endless cycle. So when we want to practice meditation, know that there is wanting. After that, see and know the truth of body and mind, without any expectations. It will be much more comfortable this way. When we want to succeed, it will be tight.

Student 1: My friends tell me I don't speak much. But actually I speak so much – in my own head!

Luangpor: You say this begrudgingly! (Laughter)

Student 1: I talk to myself all day long. Sometimes I even ask it to stop. It is so tiring. I'd like some recommendations please.

Luangpor: The way to stop the mind from talking is samatha. Instead of thinking on and on pointlessly, have it think “buddho, dhammo, sangho...” or something like it. We can't prohibit the mind from talking, so we have it say something else.

Student 1: A friend of mind in San Diego wants to thank you. She was suicidal, but listened to your talks online and started to practice, and now she is much better.

Luangpor: Excellent. It good she listened in time. The Buddha's teachings are remarkable.

Student 2: I am looking for direction in my practice. I have heard many techniques.

Luangpor: What they talk about in this and that centre, is about technique. There are so many. If we take a good look, we'll see that they are teaching the outer form: to watch the abdomen, to repeat a mantra, body contemplation, and

so on. The important aspects are if we have sufficient mindfulness and samadhi. Other than that, we choose any technique that is suitable for us. No matter what centre we practice at, just make sure that we have correct mindfulness and correct samadhi. These can be applied to any technique. If we have mindfulness and samadhi, all techniques are useful. If we don't, then they are all useless.

Student 2: Is there anything I should...

Luangpor: Your mind is too busy. Find an object you find comfortable and stay with it until the mind is relaxed enough to be the observer of mental and physical phenomena. It doesn't matter what technique you choose.

One thing you'll notice once you understand my teachings is that when listening to Dhamma from other Masters, you will understand what they are talking about too! Once we understand the correct principles of the practice, we don't see any technique as better or worse – only as suitable for us or not.





Waking Up Chicago, Day I

Wat Dhammaram

Chicago, Illinois

May 31, 2013



There is a lot of traffic in Chicago on Friday. There shouldn't be so many of us here. (Laughter)

Who here has never meditated or practiced the dhamma? I see most of us are practitioners. If we don't practice the dhamma, Buddhism will be rendered only minimally beneficial for us.

The teachings of the Buddha or what we call the dhamma is something extremely special, but it is only truly special if we practice it and see the results. The reason that we practice is so that we can see the truth of nature, and when we see the truth, we see the dhamma, and we will have a mind that is truly happy, a lasting happiness, and true peace.

The dhamma taught by the Buddha is not just about rituals, just about charity or being a good person. Yes, it's a great thing to be a good person. Practicing morality is also a well-advised. Morality is a great thing to practice but there's a lot more to learn than that. There is something considerably more special than these things that the Buddha taught us. Morality is a wonderful start, however, because people who have a wholesome heart, who like to help others, are happier than those who don't.

Now, regarding meditation, most people believe that meditation is something that we do to quiet the mind or

make it still temporarily. We may ask, is it good to make the mind still or quiet or peaceful temporarily? Sure, that's a great thing to do. But again, it's not the full essence of what the Buddha taught. It's only half-way there. Morality and calmness meditation are things that were taught and well understood before the Buddha came on to the scene in India over 2500 years ago.

Even without the Buddha's teachings, there are plenty of teachings on how to make the mind still, quiet or peaceful. There are plenty of teachings in all types of religions about meditation, about morality, about being a good person. These are all good and wonderful things but the Buddha taught something further.

If we are in contact with the Buddha's teachings, it would be a shame if we just stopped at being a good person and at being able to make the mind still or peaceful temporarily. That's not enough. There are valuable teachings in many religions and spiritual arenas.

The one thing that's very special about what the Buddha taught is wisdom; how to walk the path of wisdom and to see the truth of the way things really are. If we are not able to gain wisdom into the truth of the way things really are, then enlightenment, the end of suffering, will not be possible. Our heart becomes pure

and free of suffering only by understanding the truth, only by what Buddhists call wisdom.

What we have to see is the truth of ourselves. What is it that we consider to be ourselves? This body and this mind. So we have to see the true Three Characteristics of the body and the mind. The true Three Characteristics of the body and the mind are that the body and mind are impermanent things. There is nothing in the body and the mind that lasts. Everything comes and then goes. Everything is also under stress in the sense that it's being oppressed. There is suffering in the body, discomfort in the body and uneasiness in the mind, because it can never stay in the same state. The other truth of these things, of this body and this mind, is that they are uncontrollable, and ultimately the body and mind are things that we can't control and as such, they are not a 'self'. The body and the mind are suffering. Most of us believe that the mind is suffering sometimes and happy at other times. The truth is that even just the state of wanting is already an example of suffering.

Whenever we have desire in our hearts or when we want something, are we content; are we at ease? No, our mind is under stress. It's not content with the present moment and it's looking for something in the future to

acquire. It does this over and over again. So, even an attainable desire is a state of discomfort or a state of suffering. The truth is that if we don't yet have wisdom, we still think that we can make permanent states in this body and mind. We don't see that they are impermanent. We think that the body is something that's supposed to make us happy. So, when the body is old, we suffer because the body is old. When the body is sick, we suffer because the body is sick.

We mistakenly believe that the body is something that can bring us happiness and because we are not wise enough to see that it cannot bring us happiness, we suffer when it doesn't.

Even breathing is suffering. Go ahead. Breathe in. Take a nice long breath, breathe in. Then don't breathe out at all. Just keep breathing in. Can we see that it becomes suffering very quickly? We need to breathe out. Why do we breathe out? To free ourselves of the suffering of breathing in. Why do we breathe in? Because we're trying to relieve the suffering of breathing out. We see that even each breath is an example of the suffering of the body. The body is not in a state of contentment.

Bodies are in discomfort. We can try to sit still for even just a few minutes. As we get older and older, it's easy to see that even just sitting still for a few minutes becomes suffering. We need to shift or change positions. This is the same when sleeping. We think that sleeping is wonderful. That it's not suffering. Yet we can take a look at how many times in the night we turn over this way, turn over that way, just searching for a comfortable spot. This happens because the body is oppressed by suffering. The body is not a comfortable thing.

See the body as it is and an amazing thing will happen. If we're able to watch the body and see the body standing, walking, breathing, turning this way and turning that way, scratching, adjusting and if we can see that the body is suffering, we'll start to release our attachment. We will no longer try to make the body out as something that is happy. This release will result in us actually becoming significantly happier.

There's the responsibility of holding up the body or trying to make it something happy. It's not something special like we thought. The body is just a physical mass. It's just a collection of elements. It isn't anything special. It isn't a person. We watch it walk. We watch it lie down. We watch it in discomfort.

One day when we enlighten to one of the high stages, we'll see that the body is absolutely nothing but suffering. When we realize this truth fully, that the body is suffering, we will release attachment to the body and we'll be free of the body.

So, when the body gets sick, when the body is uncomfortable and the body is getting old, and when the body is dying, it doesn't affect our peace or our quality of consciousness in the least. This is because the attachment to the body is released. It only does that when there is the wisdom that the body is nothing but suffering. This is Buddhist wisdom.

Wherever there is love or wherever there is attachment, there is suffering right then and there. So, what is it that we love the most or attach to the most? The answer is 'ourselves'. That is what we're attached to the most. We're attached to our own thoughts, our own emotions, our own body. When we're sick, are we suffering? Of course, we suffer as a result of the body that is sick or old or dying. Why? Why do we suffer? It's because we love and are attached to our body more than anything.

We try to do everything to make the body healthier and prevent the body from dying. We take medicines, we adorn it with different clothes, nice shelter, a comfortable temperature and environment – we’re always trying to keep this body comfortable.

Yet when we have enough wisdom we will see that this body is just a physical mass; that it isn’t anything special and it’s something that’s always changing. We will see that it’s going to get sick and it’s going to die. If we can watch the body and its characteristics enough, we’ll be able to see the truth that it isn’t anything special.

Sometimes when we’re a female, a teenager or a young lady, we’re pretty and we think that it’s wonderful to be pretty, we’re so happy with this body. Then what happens is as the body gets older, gets wrinkles and marks, we become stressed. How do we get rid of these marks and wrinkles? How do we keep this beauty? There is ultimately no way. It will always deteriorate and die. So, if we are in love with something, in love with the body and attached to the body’s physical appearance or its health, then we’ll suffer as a result of our attachment and our love.

We buy a new house and we feel very attached to it. For example, we love our new house and we have a feeling like “it’s mine; it’s ours” and we have this love for it.

Of course, we'll suffer as a result of that. If it isn't in the state that we want it to be in at any moment, we will suffer. We sacrifice our freedom. We sacrifice our liberty to anything that we're attached to. Everything becomes a burden, becomes a responsibility once we are attached to it or love it. The thing that we're attached to the most and love the most is this body and this mind sitting in this chair right now.

Once we truly are able to observe this body and this mind, and we see the truth that this body and mind are nothing special, are changing all the time and are not under control, we will release attachment to this body and mind. We will be free of suffering. This is seeing the truth in the sense of Buddhist wisdom.

There are three main types of wisdom. The first type of wisdom is by thinking. The second type is through reading and listening. It's by reading the Buddha's teachings, reading the works and findings of spiritual teachers or philosophers. This is other people's wisdom and we're just remembering it, memorizing it, gaining at most just a conceptual understanding.

These first two types of wisdom are not the type of wisdom that creates the conditions for enlightenment. They are just bunches of information. They are just concepts

and they won't liberate us. They are just thoughts.

One great teacher said that the body is just a bag of skin with a bunch of holes in it. Although this may be something true that we can think about and agree with, if we didn't actually see it in our own experience, if it's still just a thought, then it isn't really wisdom yet. It's only wisdom when we see the truth of something in our own experience.

So, if we reflect on this truth we hear and we say "Yes, that's true," then we have not arrived at Buddhist wisdom yet! That's not the type of thing that can wash away the impurities or the pain in our heart. Those are just thoughts, the first type of wisdom, which can be helpful sometimes, but is not true Buddhist wisdom.

Let me give you another example of this first type of wisdom. We all know that we're going to die one day, right? Do we think we're going to die now? Do we think we're going to die today? We think that is something that will happen sometime in the future, right? This is just the wisdom that comes from thought, the knowledge that we're going to die. We don't actually know that we're going to die. We haven't truly realized the truth of death.

So, the way to develop true wisdom is to start to become an observer of this body and this mind. Before

we can actually attain wisdom, we have to start to paying attention to this body and mind and not forget about them. We have to remember that we have this body and this mind and observe their workings.

How many times have we eaten in our life? We have been drinking milk since we were one day old and we have been alive for many years already. Can we answer the question? When we're swallowing our food, are we breathing in or are we breathing out? We have no idea, right?

We have been eating for many, many years and haven't observed our own body and how it functions. So, that demonstrates that we haven't been feeling within our own bodies; we haven't been the observers of our own bodies. We've been forgetting about the body. So, in order to do the work on the first step towards enlightenment and gaining wisdom, we have to get to know the things that the body and mind are doing in the present.

How about the wandering mind? We have to get to know what the wandering mind is like. We can notice that when the mind wanders off thinking about this and thinking about that, we forget that we have a mind that's wandering. We forget that we have a body that is sitting and breathing. When our mind is wandering, we aren't the knower of the mind that is wandering.

Instead, what we do now is we start to recognize the mind wandering when it does. We get to know what that's like. If we can notice that the mind wanders when it does, if we can notice that the body is sitting or breathing when it is, and if we can start building awareness of this body and mind – then, we can start walking the path of wisdom.

In the last 15 minutes that we have been sitting and listening to me, who hasn't scratched? Who hasn't adjusted his or her posture? Everybody has moved, scratched or adjusted somewhat. Why do we have to do that? We do that because the body is suffering and then we try to relieve it. Notice, however, that we didn't even know that we did all this. It just happens unconsciously and that's because we are not aware. We forgot that we had a body. We are not paying attention to it. So, we have to come back to start paying attention to the body and the movements that it makes.

Of course, we can change positions, we can scratch, and do all these things. In order to start becoming aware, we have to become aware that we're doing these things. Eventually, if we keep watching the body doing what it does, we'll see that the body is nothing but suffering.

Eating, suffering. Hungry, suffering. Thirsty, suffering. Too full, suffering. Sleepy, suffering... Suffering, suffering, suffering!

Let's try to study our own body, become the observer and try to watch what it does. Let's study the mind. Let's see that the mind or the heart is, one moment happy and the next moment unhappy and the next moment it is neither – it is indifferent or neutral.

An enlightened being, one that has ended personal suffering, will have neutral and happy states of mind, but won't ever have an unhappy state of mind. Unpleasant mental states don't exist for one who has enlightened. The enlightened being can see that happiness, unhappiness, and indifference are all things that are impermanent. Those of us listening now don't notice that the feelings are changing all the time. What we know is what's happening outside ourselves. For example, if we are a man and a pretty girl walks by, our mind feels excited or happy about it. We'll just be busy looking at the girl, we don't notice that the mind now has excitement or happiness (or if we are a woman– perhaps judgement or jealousy!). So, we have to become the observer of our own hearts.

How about in traffic? Somebody cuts us off in traffic. What do we do? We take a look at the car, the person in the car and we are angry with them. All of our attention goes out to them or to their car. What we do now is we come back to our own heart and see that now the heart is angry. Usually, we don't know that we're angry. All we are is mad at the other person and we keep thinking of the person. We are just interested in the things that we see, the things that we hear, the things that we smell, the things that we taste or the things that we touch, the things that our body makes contact with, and we're interested in our own thoughts. Right? We use the eyes, ears, nose, mouth and body. We are interested in the contents of the story in our own thoughts, right? Think about it. All day, we're spending all of our time looking at everybody else, but not looking at ourself.

Occasionally, we look in the mirror, which is the only time we see ourself. However, that's not really ourself. We're always looking out. So, we have to gradually come back to ourself and become interested in the feelings and emotions that arise in our own heart.

The mind either has a feeling of happiness or unhappiness, or it has a wholesome or unwholesome state, like anger, hatred, or greed. We can notice that all day

long, the mind shifts between wholesome states of mind and unwholesome states of mind.

Sometimes, we think of doing something good, we have a wholesome feeling in our heart about doing something good for people. Sometimes we change our mind about it and say no, I won't do that good thing. Greed comes in and then we're unable to do that thing. The mind changes from something wholesome to unwholesome, very, very quickly.

Sometimes, we think very wholesomely, and we'll do something great. Then greed comes and takes us off the wholesome path. So, even a wholesome mind is something very temporary and then another unwholesome mind comes in; and that's also temporary. Everything that arises in that mind is temporary: feeling stress just comes and goes, feeling restless comes and goes, feeling angry comes and goes, feeling content comes and goes, and feeling generous also comes and goes. The truth is that all these things are temporary, but we struggle because we're looking for just one of these things. We're looking for only happiness and we like to have it all the time. This is impossible because every feeling arises and then falls away.

True wisdom is wisdom that sees that happiness is something that arises and then falls away. It isn't something that can last, so we need to start to have mindfulness to be able to see what goes on in our own minds and see that everything that arises also falls, see that everything that comes up is temporary. We need to watch the body and see that the body is always in perpetual suffering. When we watch the mind, we see that everything is temporary, every mental state or emotional state that comes up – whether we are angry, restless, happy – comes and goes.

When we see the truth that everything is temporary, we will become less intent on trying to make this body and mind happy all the time because we'll see that the body and mind suffer and that no state is permanent. So we start to lessen the burden, little by little, of trying to make these things happy all the time because we see that it isn't possible. We start to release this attachment. We don't feel the burden or the responsibility of having to maintain happiness all the time, to maintain comfort all the time.

When we have pain, physical pain, we want it to go away very, very quickly, right? If we have a negative emotion, we feel upset. We want it to go away very, very

quickly. When we have wisdom, we see that all these things are temporary things and we will lessen the burden of trying to push away any negative feeling, and trying to hold to or keep a positive one. That is a huge burden, a huge responsibility that we can slowly withdraw from as our mind gets wiser and wiser.

We seem to not accept it, to refuse it. We don't accept the truth. We always struggle to try to make things happy. We always want problems to go away. When we want problems to go away, we have wanting in our heart, which is already suffering. There is something that we are upset about first, and secondly we want it to go away. So, we double up the suffering!

For example, finding out that we have first stage cancer, we suffer immediately as we're not accepting that the body and health are impermanent. It's our consciousness that suffers because we cannot handle the fact that the body is something that gets sick, that gets old and dies. We suffer from trying to keep these things healthy, comfortable and content.

Let's take a look and see that everything in the body and everything in the mind are all temporary. When we continue to see this truth, what starts to happen is the mind becomes what is called 'equanimous', which means

that when a bad feeling or negative feeling comes up, the mind doesn't struggle with it. It is not busy disliking it and hating it. When a good feeling or happiness pops up, the mind also is neutral towards it and know it's just something temporary, it's not indulging in it or trying to keep it.

The mind that is equanimous is the mind that isn't busy liking and disliking, bringing in, or pushing away the states or phenomena that arise in the heart. It allows what arises to arise and then lets it fall away without interfering with it or struggling with it. Then, eventually from the state of neutrality or equanimity, there is an acceptance of the truth that everything that arises falls. The mind won't struggle with anything and thus the mind will no longer suffer.

This is a very profound topic. Psychologists now are very interested in mindfulness and the Buddhist way of watching the mind to help alleviate suffering. A lot of psychologists and psychiatrists in Thailand try to help their patients with counselling and medicines. When they are at wit's end and their patient won't get better, the doctors give the patients my CDs to listen to! Sometimes they get better, if it isn't a physical abnormality or it isn't a mental challenge. Ordinary people who listen to my CDs, and follow

along will reduce their suffering. Whatever truth arises right in front of our eyes, if we are able to accept it, will allow a huge portion of suffering to be released right then and there. However, if we are not able to accept whatever is going on in the body and the mind, we'll continue to suffer.

When we are sick, and if we attach to the body then our mind will suffer along with the body. When we get robbed, or when someone breaks up with us and breaks our heart, then our mind will suffer because we are still attached. Generally, we don't accept the situations in our lives as they come. We make problems out of them.

At a funeral, someone came up to a lady whose husband died of old age. The person offered in condolence, "I'm so sorry about your loss." Then the lady said, "Nah. He was a playboy." He was a playboy 50 years ago! She still couldn't accept it, or let go of it. This is an example. The thought that he was a playboy was still there. Even though it was many years ago that he was a playboy, she still could not accept it. So she suffered for years and years because of it.

When the body moves, know that the body moves. When the mind is moving, changing states, know that the mind is moving and changing states, and we'll see that all there is, is impermanence, suffering or disease. One day

the body will be sick, and the mind will be able to accept the truth of death. We will free ourselves from suffering if we accept death fully.

When we separate from the things we love, and the mind can accept when the things that we love leave us or when we can't acquire the things that we want, if we can accept this, we can free ourselves.

Westerners are much better at accepting being away from people whom they love because they separate from their families and live in different cities, in different homes. They are not like Thai people, who all stay together, and live together. It's very hard for Thais to separate from each other.

All we are looking to do is accept the truth. We have to see the truth. Sometimes we get what we wish. Sometimes we don't get what we wish. We are not practicing meditation or practicing the dhamma in order to do any brainwashing, to believe something new, or adhere to a new age philosophy. We are doing this so that we can observe our body and mind and see that they belong to the universe, to nature. They don't belong to anybody in particular.

Let's notice that we are the star of the show in our own life. We are the centre. Everything else is perceived in the way that's related to 'us'. For example, when others

acquire something, we're the jealous ones or the ones that are happy for them. We are looking out at the world and everything relates back to ourself. Our own reactions become most important things in our life.

We are attached to ourselves, to our own emotions, to our own bodies, to our own thoughts and so we suffer. If we're having trouble understanding what I'm saying, there is www.dhamma.com in English. We can listen to my teachings and slowly understand more and more. It isn't easy to understand all at once. We don't really understand it until we practice it correctly.

In Thailand, thousands of people listen to my talks on CD and audio files. They have it repeating in the car over and over, and they are slowly absorbing the teachings and practicing the Dhamma correctly. Dhamma and mindfulness make their way into their lives and they benefit greatly from it.

Sometimes, there is a child in the car when a mother is listening to one of my talks. The mom thinks the kid is too young to be listening or to understand what is going on. Then when the kid does something naughty and the mother turns around and says, "Hey, why are you doing that?", the kid says "Mom, you are angry. Know that you are angry." So, kids are observing their mind sometimes better

than their parents are!

In Thailand, it's hard to count now how many people have benefited from my teachings, mostly by listening to my CDs, and loading audio files from the internet.

People are seeing amazing results. Some people who listen to my talks and practice correctly are able to see that the body and mind are two separate things. The suffering that arises in the heart is just a stranger that comes in and leaves. It isn't us. Some people are seeing that the mind can automatically become the observer one moment and the next moment just the thinker and they see it oscillate between being a thinker and being awake and aware as the observer of what is going on in the body and mind.

So many people in Thailand now are waking up, awakening and seeing the workings of the body and mind, becoming the knower, the observer. So, slowly and gradually listen to my CDs, read my books and practice.

I have some sympathy for westerners who aren't able to learn the true dhamma, which can really help them. Thank you to Jess Koffman for coming and helping.

When I was a young man of 29, I went to see a teacher named Venerable Grandfather Luangpu Dune. I felt I had meditated a lot but never really got anywhere,

never really understood much. I went to Luangpu Dune and said, “I would like to practice dhamma.”

Luangpu Dune rested for a little while, didn’t answer and then finally after half an hour, he opened his eyes and said to me: “Practicing the Dharma is not a difficult thing. It’s only difficult for those who don’t practice. You have studied a lot of books, it is now time to study your own mind.”

When he said ‘to study your own mind’, he didn’t mean interfere with your own mind or change your own mind, to not accept this emotion and try to keep that one. What he said just means to know and learn it just as it is.

The mind is not to be interfered with. We are to just be an observer, and see what is there. This is not to merely feel peaceful or happy, but to see what is there so that we can see the truth of what is there. We see the truth of body and mind: that the body and mind are suffering and they are only temporary. If we release our attachment to the body and to the mind, then we will have released attachment to everything in the world. This is because it’s the body and mind that we are most attached to. So, let’s not just think about it. We have to come to actually see the movement of the body, see the movement of the mind.

Student: I am a new dhamma practitioner. I don't practice meditation, but I do wisdom practice throughout the day.

Luangpor: Wisdom practice will lose momentum if we don't do any meditation at all. Our minds will be too distracted and busy in thoughts. We can't neglect formal meditation. But make sure you do the right kind of meditation, the kind that makes you the stable observer. Stability here means not moving down towards phenomena. This is correct samadhi. Samadhi does not mean peace.

The mind incessantly moves towards thinking. So choose a meditation object and then see the mind that goes to think frequently. If we ponder this and that concept – like how the world is nothing but emptiness, or how we shouldn't attach to anything -- we are still just thinking, lost in delusion, and we will never defeat the defilements of mind. Have you gone off to think yet?

Student: Oh yes!

Luangpor: Is the mind relaxed and comfortable or tight and constricted?

Student: It is tight.

Luangpor: Then know so. Why is it tight? Because you are using force. You are afraid to get lost in thought, so you are suppressing. Try to see this.

Student: I'm nervous and suppressing that.

Luangpor: Everyone seems to be nervous when speaking with me.





Waking Up Chicago, Day 2

Wat Dhammaram

Chicago, Illinois

June 1, 2013



The opportunity to listen to the dhamma of the Buddha, to be taught directly how to practice the dhamma to achieve real results, is a rare one. In most talks, we will hear a technique: to breath, to walk slowly, and so on. No one teaches the fundamental principles of the practice. No one tells us about samatha and vipassana. No one tells us what each are, how we do them, and what the results will be. Instead, we get stuck in the methodology without a clear picture of the scope of dhamma practice. Masters who were successful watching the breath, teach to watch the breath. Masters who were successful using the mantra “buddho”, teach people to repeat “buddho”. Masters who were successful watching the rising and falling of the abdomen, have their students follow suit.

When I was just a boy, Luangpor Lee, taught me to watch the breath. I was very fortunate that watching the breath was the ideal practice for my disposition. If it wasn't right for me, then I wouldn't have had the great results that I did. Then when I was ready for vipassana practice, I met Luangpu Dune, who was an extraordinary teacher.

He would teach each student case by case. He seemed to know what would make each practitioner excel. He taught those who had very busy minds to do samatha first. Some people he taught to watch the breath,

others a mantra. One student he had contemplating his bones all day. While walking or moving he was to picture skeletons around and sense that he was just bones moving. One student, Luangpu Dune assigned to contemplate just one strand of hair! Not two strands, only one was allowed!

That student felt apprehensive about getting such a menial job to do, so he avoided doing it. Months later, frustrated with his lack of success in meditation, he remembered what Luangpu Dune instructed, tried it, and he was able to enter deep concentration immediately!

Luangpu Dune taught me to study my mind. In the first two years of doing so, I developed extremely quickly. After that, my progress stopped for about a year. Luangpu Dune had passed away, so I went to visit one of the great meditation masters, Luangta Maha Bua to get some answers. He told me that I wasn't truly watching the mind right now. I was not able to make it to my mind. And he suggested that repeating "buddho" is the best solution. I tried it, but repeating a mantra was painful for me.

Then I thought about it. Why did Luangta Maha Bua recommend a mantra? I noticed that he was right. I wasn't seeing the emotions or impurities in the heart as before. My mind was very light, expansive and bright. It was happy, but it was displaced. It wasn't rooted in awareness. Luangta

Maha Bua probably wanted me to go back and do samatha, to bring my mind back to seeing the mind. Since I was skilled at watching the breath and not at repeating a mantra, I watched the breath. It worked like a charm. I was able to start watching the workings of my mind again, and I continued to progress. I realized I had wasted a lot of time, with my mind displaced, out of awareness. This is why I emphasize so often that we must learn to be correctly poised in awareness. Being lost in happy state for long periods may sound nice, but there is no development, no wisdom when we are stuck in any state; happy, empty or still.

Sometimes in Buddhism, we hear about concepts like emptiness, teachings that everything is empty, or that all is one. Some such teachings ring true; however having such profound experiences of reality are a consequence of our correct practice. Emptiness isn't what we should be trying to do or to emulate. We should not attempt to make the mind empty, make the mind bright, or anything like that. This is not what we should be practicing. Brightness, peace, and emptiness will all be pleasant results of our correct practice. We have to practice in the correct way so that we achieve such results. We mustn't try to create what we imagine the ideal state to be. What we need to do is

see our own body and mind. We have to take a look at the things that are suffering.

We have to look at what we take to be ourself. What we need to do in order to experience true peace, lasting happiness or this emptiness that is talked about is as follows: firstly, we have to find a meditation object that we can be comfortable and calm with. The mantra buddho can be used, or equally effective is the breath, or watching the movement and position of the body. I was so happy watching the breath as a meditator, that my mind would become calm, alert and aware very quickly and easily. When we find a meditation object that we enjoy being with, the mind will then be relaxed enough to start to learn, to be able to study the body and mind, and see the body and mind as they really are.

The mind is a little bit like a kid. It is a young child who will behave when we give it something that it really enjoys. A kid that is happy with its toy or dessert, will stay put for a while, amused and contented. A child with ice-cream, for example, quietly eats, well behaved. The reason it stays put is because it really enjoys what it's doing. Similarly, we have to find a meditation object that the mind really enjoys being with and then it will remain with it peacefully.

There are only two main mistakes that we can make as we practice. One is to only work at making the mind still, calm, or deeply relaxed without practicing to gain insight or wisdom into the truth of the way things are. The other mistake is to only try to gain wisdom into the truth without being able to make the mind calm or peaceful. In Buddhist terms, our mistake is to practice only samatha or only vipassana, without understanding the need for both. Without samatha, we won't be able to effectively see the truth because our mind won't be calm or concentrated enough. The two things that we need to practice is we need to find the way to make the mind comfortable and relaxed as in samatha, and the other thing that we need to be able to do is learn how to walk the path of wisdom, gaining insight into the truth of the way things are, as in vipassana. It doesn't matter which one we start with. We could start with trying to make the mind peaceful first and once the mind reaches states of peace, then we can start to investigate the truth of the way things are.

The other way we can go is starting by watching our own mind before trying to make it peaceful. Big thinkers, analytical people, aren't able to make the mind peaceful. If this is us, what we can do is start by watching the different emotions that arise in the heart. When the

heart is happy, we know it. When the heart is unhappy, we know it. Sad, we know it. Angry, we know it. When our mind is wandering, we know that. Then we start seeing the truth that everything arises and falls. When we do that correctly and often enough, the mind will start to become peaceful on its own.

We can do the peaceful type of practice, and then work on gaining insight into the truth; or we can start gaining insight into the truth and genuine peacefulness will start to emerge automatically from time to time. There is one more option if we are skilled at both samatha and vipassana. Some people are able to make their mind peaceful and see the truth at the same time. There are many different ways to enter dhamma practice. It's not just about one technique, but rather about what fits us the best.

A lot of people mistakenly believe that we have to be able to arrive at very deep levels of concentration in order to start seeing the truth, but that's simply not the case. The Buddha gave some statistical information in one of his discourses. He said, out of 500 monks who are enlightened beings or arahants, meaning those who have ended their suffering, only 180 are those who have achieved psychic powers and abilities to move into

extremely subtle states. In order to be skilled in such things, the mind must be skilled in jhana, the deep absorption states of concentration. The remaining 320 out of 500 were not skilled in such deep states. They were just regular people like us who have this emotion one minute, and that emotion the next minute. One moment restless and the next content, without any sort of special ability for deep absorption, seeing past lives, seeing where the deceased have crossed over to, clairvoyance, clairaudience or any such skills. All these powers require deep levels of concentration. The Buddha said that out of the 500, only 180 were able to do some of these types of things.

This can be some encouragement for us. We can see that we don't have to have any amazing type of concentration. We don't have to bring our mind to a perfect state of relaxation in order for enlightenment. In order to walk the path of wisdom that the Buddha taught, it isn't necessary to force the mind into a state of beautiful calm or deep concentration.

What we can do instead is start to gauge or observe our own life. When the mind feels happy, we know that the mind is happy. For example, when the eyes see the Buddha image and we feel happy about the Buddha image, we know that the mind got happy. We hear a sound, for

example, the sound of someone's voice, and immediately we don't like it. We haven't even heard what they're talking about yet, but we don't even like the voice, and we already feel that we hate them. Hate arises in the mind very quickly. When hate arises in the mind, then we become aware that hate has arisen in the mind. Whatever emotion arises in the mind, we then get to know that's what is there. When we see something, the feeling changes in our heart, and we know that it has. We see something. We hear something. We smell something that smells very nice like some perfume, our mind starts liking, and we know that the liking has arisen. Then, maybe greed comes in. We want to buy that perfume. We can know that the greed has arisen in our heart. In fact the emotions or the feelings in our heart are changing all the time extremely quickly from one feeling to another, to another, and to another. We can start to see these changes happening.

Sometimes we just like a perfume because of its name. We haven't even smelled its fragrance yet, and we already feel good about it. We can know that the liking has arisen in our heart. Sometimes something smells very bad. Our nasal (olfactory) sense makes contact with the aroma and immediately aversion comes up in our heart. We can know that this aversion has come up in our heart.

As we make our way through the world, our senses make contact with the world. That is how we experience the world. Whatever happens, whether there are tastes, smells, sights, sensations, sounds, and thoughts, there will be reactions in the heart: changing moods, mental states, feelings, emotions. Our job is to gain insight into the truth. It's just to become aware of what is going on in our heart, and see how it is always changing.

I used to work in a government office and go down to the cafeteria every day. I was always a meditation practitioner. Going down to the cafeteria, I'd smell an omelette cooking. I love omelettes, so in my heart happiness would arise. I would know this. Then when it came time to taste the omelette, sometimes it would not be as tasty as imagined it would be. Sometimes it was awful! The happiness would switch to disliking immediately, and as a dhamma practitioner, I would know that the disliking came up. When we are looking to gain insight into the truth, which is what Buddha's style of wisdom is all about, then what we do is we watch our mind and heart. We see what is going on in our own heart as often as we can. Especially for us who are analytical, critical or neurotic thinkers, busy making stories in our head all day, we'll find that we're easily irritated, easily angered,

easily frustrated. That's not a bad thing in the sense of gaining wisdom into the truth because all we have to do is to know what arises in the heart. Anger is very easy to see. It is a very clear phenomenon when it occurs. If we are irritable, then we may be in an advantageous position in watching the mind, because if anger arises in our heart often, then we become mindful often. If our mind only has subtle changes it may be harder to notice.

In the old days in Thailand, we would have to shower or bathe using a big barrel. We didn't have any control if the water would be hot or cold. When the water was too cold and I had to shower anyway, I'd feel scared in anticipation of the cold, and then when the cold water made contact with my body, my heart would be disliking. Then on the hot days, when the sun is beating down, the water would feel nice. My heart would open up, feeling happy. I'd notice that feeling had arisen.

Another thing that happens is we start to think. We think and think and think. Sometimes we think about the future and we feel happy and sometimes we think about the future and we feel sad. Usually, when elderly people think about the future, they feel sad or scared. When young people think about their future, they feel very happy, excited about what it may hold, believing their

dreams and aspirations may come true.

For city dwellers like most of us are, we can't make the mind terribly peaceful. The best approach is to watch our own mind and see the changes in our heart as we make contact with the world, as we go through our experiences throughout each day. We get to know our own reactions. Instead of being so interested in others, we are interested in our own body and mind. Thai people are famous for gossiping and knowing what their neighbors are doing, even what they are wearing! I think Westerners may be different than Thai people in that regard.

If we are able to watch our own mind, we can start to see some of the habits that happen in our mind that may be negative for ourselves and for others. For example, if we are someone who tends to get angry at others and criticize them often and we start to notice the disliking that happens in our mind. Then the disliking goes away and we will no longer get angry and be quick to criticize others. Complaining or criticising is a bad habit that gets worse with age when it goes unnoticed. Some older people become so used to complaining all the time that their mind complains to even the household cat or the plants if there is no one around to listen!

Since we are city dwellers, it is likely that our life

and thus our mind is too busy to make ourself genuinely calm and concentrated. Luckily there is another solution: we can just watch the changes that are occurring in our heart regularly. However, we may be of the type of person who is very obsessed with beautifying and pampering the body. If we emphasize nice smells, nice clothes, nice sensations, and we believe that the body is something beautiful and special; then in order to see the truth of the body, it may be helpful to watch the body. We watch the body sitting. We watch the body walking. We watch the body moving. We start to see that the body isn't anything beautiful at all. In fact, the body is something that has all kinds of bacteria and dirty things coming in and going out all the time. The body is something that is almost never in the state of comfort. There is always some stress and tension, pain, numbness, or itchiness. It's very hard to find a comfortable position for very long. We have to shift this way, shift that way, scratch this, and stretch that. The body is something that is suffering. The body isn't something that is beautiful, wonderful or special. It's an object of suffering. If we can watch the body, we can start to see this truth and start to withdraw the attachment. The burden of trying to make this suffering thing happy will diminish because it's just its nature to suffer. The body

was never intended to be something that is comfortable or happy in the first place. That is just a pipe dream and not the reality of the human realm. When we cling to the body and its senses less and less, a burden is lifted, and we start to feel freer and happier.

There are two main types of people: analytical people and pleasure seekers. Busy minded, analytical thinkers are best to start off by watching the changing feelings in their heart; they think in a good way and feel happy, and then think in a bad way and feel unhappy, and this happens all day long.

For those that are pleasure seekers, obsessed with beautifying of the body, and titillating the senses with pleasant sights and sounds, it may be better to watch their own body and see how the body isn't something that is wonderful, beautiful or special at all. They can see that it's a physical thing, a physical mass of suffering that's extremely hard to keep content for any period of time at all. Suffering is coming in and oppressing the body constantly.

If we are married or we have a partner, it's not that we shouldn't get angry or frustrated with them, but it's just our job to see the anger, see the frustration that arises in our heart. What we'll see is that the anger or the

happiness or the frustration or the suffering that arises in the heart, is something that is temporary, drops off and then something else comes in. Anger, sadness, frustration, irritation, are all things that come, stay for a little while, and then they go away. There isn't anything that stays. In order to gain Buddhist wisdom, what we do is we watch our own feelings and we'll see that each emotion that comes, will also disappear.

Just thinking about this and agreeing is not enough. We have to bring the mind to see the happenings in our own experience. We see the feelings arise, and we see the feelings go away. If we can do this often enough, again and again, what will start to happen is our consciousness will become smart. It will gain the wisdom that whatever arises also falls away. As such, it will start to withdraw its attachment from the things that arise in our heart. We'll become happy and peaceful because we are wise to not attach to whatever it is that arises. This is the way to enlightenment, to see that whatever arises also falls.

In fact, all dhamma practice, however it is that we practice, whether sitting meditation; walking meditation; watching the body; watching the mind; repeating a mantra; all in the end has to come back to seeing the mind. We see that whatever arises in the mind also falls. That's what

it is going to come down to as we approach enlightenment. That is what it all comes down to. Watching the body is just a primary stage, or a roundabout way of eventually getting to see the truth regarding the mind.

We see that the body is walking, moving and we'll see that the mind is the one that sees or observes the body. It all ends up coming down to seeing that everything that arises in the mind or in the heart is something that is temporary. When we accept this truth, we become a truly wise person.

Actually, an ordinary human mind is the most appropriate mind to practice the dhamma. If our mind is that of an angel that's trying to keep itself entranced in happy gooey and joyful states, we can't see the truth that things are suffering, that the mind is changing all the time, or that the body is something that decays, gets sick and dies. In order to be able to see the truth of things, it is actually harder to practice as an angel than it is as a human being.

When a friend or loved one is on his or her death bed, we often pray for them to be at peace or gain a heavenly rebirth. Yet ultimately when we die, whether or not we are going to be at peace or have a favourable rebirth, depends on our development of our own mind. It

doesn't depend on what people wish for us. We have to take responsibility for our own mind and heart and develop them so that they can be calmer and wiser.

Wisdom is seeing that everything is temporary, that whatever arises also falls and there is no better mind than just a regular human mind to see that. We don't have to force our mind to be any more peaceful, to be any more still than it is, or try to make ourself into an angelic or godly state with any special powers. Just the average ordinary human mind is the appropriate one for practicing the dhamma and getting true insights and wisdom which leads to spiritual enlightenment.

Take a look and see that this mind and this body are in state of suffering, that even happiness lasts for a very short time and it's replaced by suffering very quickly. The body is rarely in a state of relaxation and comfort even when we're sleeping. We shift this way and that way, trying to find a comfortable position. Other than suffering, there's nothing that arises. Other than suffering, there's nothing that here. Other than suffering, there's nothing that falls away. That's the wisdom with which an enlightened being sees the world.

Enlightenment happens when we can see that the body and mind are nothing but suffering itself, and as

such, there isn't any lasting happiness available for us here. There isn't any lasting happiness that can arise from this body and from this mind. All types of happiness are unworthy states and unworthy of pursuit, in the sense that they cannot persist. True peace and true happiness happen when we can see the truth that this body and this mind are nothing but suffering and are not able to make us happy in a lasting way, not able to give us what we're looking for – true peace of mind. It's only wisdom that sees that these things are suffering, and this wisdom results in less and less attachment to the body and mind. Wisdom is what will bring the lasting type of happiness. The Buddha taught that whenever there is an attachment, wherever there is desire, there is suffering. Once we withdraw our attachment to the body and mind, we have extinguished suffering, and we no longer suffer. Relying on the Buddha, relying on God or relying on anyone to try to make us happy is futile because we won't find happiness in any lasting way if we are still attached to this body and to this mind, if we still rely on the body and mind and how they feel in order to be happy, if we still look to find comforts as our refuge.

What we need to do is we need to practice the dhamma, and we need to get to understand what

practicing the dhamma is about, what it's for, and then we get our hands dirty. We practice it. We see the truth for ourself.

Yesterday, there was a lady here who practices regularly and she was able to see that the body and the mind are two separate distinct things. The body is one thing and the mind is another. She is starting to become wise.

How is it that we practice? We need to have the mindfulness that is able to see the movement of the body, and what arises and falls in the mind. We have to see what arises in an impartial way, not trying to change what arises but just seeing it and not interfering.

Another thing we have to do is when we're watching what arises in an impartial way, we also have to observe as if we are observing somebody else. When something arises in our heart, we see it as if it is arising in somebody else's heart, as if we are an outsider looking in. When we're watching the body breathing, walking, we try to see the body as if it's somebody else's body, as if it doesn't belong to us. We get a bird's eye view in that case. We are able to see things from an outside, unbiased perspective. The key is to become an impartial observer, an impartial knower so that we are able to see the truth. Looking from a biased perspective, the real truth is never revealed.

What I teach is not really that hard. However, as adults, sometimes we have filled our brains to the brim with our own ideas of what enlightenment or dhamma practice are about, and then we are not able to open our heart to pure and honest dhamma. Let's open our heart, listen to these talks, and practice diligently on the correct path.

Student: I just want to know if what I'm doing is correct.

Luangpor: (Laughter) Whenever we do something, we can be sure that it is wrong. Can you notice that you are nodding your head now? And now is your mind happy?

Student: I'm excited.

Luangpor: Excitement in this way is not a happy state. It is stressful. So come to know it is stressed. When the mind is relaxed then know that too. Practice knowing your own mind in a natural way.

Student: I understand what you mean when you say that everything arises and falls away. However, I still want to think about things in other ways.

Luangpor: We can't control that. The mind thinks when it wants to. Just know that it wants to think, or if you can't see that in time, then notice when the mind is lost in thoughts when it is.

Student: I still accept that everything arises and falls.

Luangpor: No, you don't. Not really. If your heart really accepted it, then you'd be an enlightened being by now! You are still wanting. At the highest level, the enlightened being understands that the body and mind are suffering. When we see that with crystal clarity, wanting (the cause of suffering) will be eliminated once and for all. Nirvana will be realized; it will be seen right in front of our eyes.

The type of acceptance that you have is just conceptual. It is just a thought. Bring your mind to see the truth regularly and one day there will be a genuine acceptance. See your mind that is stressed. When it is relaxed, see that it is relaxed. There is nothing to think about. That is all you need to do.





Waking Up New York City

Wat New York Dhammaram

New York City, New York

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Some people say that Buddhism is a philosophy; however, it's not a philosophy at all. Philosophy is something that is conceptual. In philosophy, we need to have different thoughts and analyses: I think this or I believe that, because of this, because of that. Philosophy is abstract; we have to use our reasoning, which often stems from our previous inclinations. Buddhism is quite different from philosophy in the sense that Buddhism is something that we have to see in the present moment and in our own experience. It isn't something to think about or to believe. Rather, it's something that we experience as a truth when we practice correctly. We'll see the truth for ourselves. Buddhism is not a philosophy. It is a field of study of its own, regarding what it is that suffers and how to release from what suffers – how to end our own suffering.

What we'll see when we practice is the truth that what suffers is our mind. We'll see that we cause our own personal suffering. What happens when we study Buddhism is we bring our attention to our own body and to our own mind and we see the truth of them. We see the true Three Characteristics of the body and mind: that they are temporary and changing all the time, that they are suffering and that they are out of control. When we see

the truth that they are changing, suffering, and out of control, what happens is we start to release our attachment to the body and to the mind.

As a result, we end suffering by ending our attachment to the body and to the mind. We suffer whenever we love something or attach to something. We suffer because our happiness depends on the things that we are attached to. For example, if we have somebody who we love very much and we are attached to him or her very much, we'll suffer because of that. If they are not happy, we are not happy. We are not happy if they go away or they die, which of course is inevitable. We suffer from being separated from what we love. We suffer when we crave or love that which we can't obtain or be with. We suffer as a result of everything that we love and are attached to. The things that we are most attached to are this body and this mind.

However, once we see the truth that this body and this mind are things that are just temporary, and we see in our own experience that things just come and go, then we start to release attachment to these things that are not of the nature to bring lasting happiness.

Say we accumulate a certain amount of wealth. Now, when we lose this wealth, we will suffer as a result. Our heart cannot accept the pain of this, and so we suffer.

In Buddhism, what we learn to do is to separate out suffering. We're released from the pain in our hearts when things don't go our way.

Aging, sickness, and death, there is nothing more natural than these things. Everybody in the whole world will experience aging, sickness and death. There is no avoiding it. There is no avoiding being separated from people whom we love, whether for a minute, an hour, a day or for entire lifetimes. To think that the people we love are going to be with us forever is just an unintelligent thought.

These days, as we get older, we become lonely. Our families leave the nest and they have their own families. If we practice Buddhism correctly, if we practice the principles correctly, we are not lonely even when there is no one around us. We are not saddened because we understand the truth of the way things are. We have to cultivate a mind that is of a high quality, that understands the truth of the way things are, and doesn't suffer any more.

Buddhism isn't so superficial as to just be a certain set of beliefs to adhere to, and is not as shallow as doing some meditation to bring the mind to a temporary calm here and there. Buddhism is far more profound than that. It's the study of how to live in this world with no more

personal suffering. Step by step, we have to cultivate a higher quality mind which is able to slowly let go and release itself from suffering.

What is suffering? The body and the mind are suffering.

I'm encouraging us to bring our attention to the body and to the mind so that we can start to gain this wisdom into the truth of the way things really are. Buddhist wisdom is about seeing the truth of the body and mind – that they are suffering, that they are temporary phenomena, that everything that comes also goes.

There are three aspects of Buddhist training: training in morality, training of mind or concentration, and training in wisdom.

Training in morality, we require a proper moral code not to harm anyone or any being.

For training of mind, we learn to become the observer of our body and mind. This is the vital step. It is not just about making the mind quiet or calm. That is only one temporary aspect. The important step is to learn how to be the observer or the knower of one's own body and one's own mind. We must become aware of the happenings of body and mind in the present.

Training in wisdom, once we are poised as the observer through our correct mental training, is where we start to see the true characteristics of the body and mind. The body is something that gets sick, that gets old and dies. It moves here and there, brushes its teeth, and engages in activities all day long. Here, we see the body move, and we'll see that the body is not us. We'll see that the body is just a physical thing. Regarding the mind, we'll see that it is always changing from one emotion to another, from one thought to another and never remains static.

The enlightened mind is a mind that has no more suffering; that doesn't hold on to any emotion or any thought, that doesn't attach to what the body is doing or how it is suffering. The mind may suffer and the body may suffer but the enlightened being doesn't suffer along with them.

As we enter the earlier stages of enlightenment, we start to become a true student of the Buddha's teachings. We slowly step by step start to gain more and more wisdom into the truth of the way things are and release our attachment to body and mind – to suffering.

If we become properly aware of our body and mind, it becomes very easy to be a moral person. Normally, people don't have awareness of their own body and

mind and consequently, they have to remember certain practices. They have to remember that they shouldn't harm other beings, that they should be nice to people. Yet if we have enough awareness of our own mind and we feel like we want to do something very greedy like stealing or cheating, we will see this greed. We will see this pain in our own heart, and when we do, it becomes much more difficult to actually act on such an unwholesome state of mind. In fact, when our mindfulness of our emotions is strong enough, then as soon as we see this greed or anger arise in our mind, it will drop off automatically and immediately. There will be no reason to do harm to anyone. This is the most natural type of morality. We automatically do good when we become aware of what is going on in our own heart.

Who is more peaceful and happier, moral or immoral people? Those who are greedy and are always needing more, those who are harming others, those who are on drugs, are they happy? Or are those who are always nice to others, those who are always looking to help and do things for others, who wouldn't intentionally harm themselves, harm animals or harm anyone they know, are they happy?

We can just see for ourselves, in our own experience if we become a moral person who doesn't harm ourselves with drugs or alcohol, who doesn't lie, cheat on our partner, kill or steal, how much lighter and happier we feel.

If we still have greed or anger in our hearts and we don't see that it is there, if we're just interested in the outside world and what we are going to get, it becomes very easy to break a proper moral code and do things that are harmful and ill-advised.

Some people think that drinking alcohol is not breaking any moral code, but we have to be very careful. First of all, it prevents the mind from developing. It's hard to cultivate a high quality mind with mindfulness and concentration when we drink. Furthermore, when we drink, it becomes very easy to lie and boast, to be mean, to kill insects, inflict violence and start fights, take things that don't belong to us, and cheat on and let down our loved ones. The best way to become a moral person is to see the anger, the greed, the irritation, the frustration, and other things that enter our heart all day long. Morality will become automatic.

Let's start to become aware of our own feelings and emotions. We call this 'mindfulness', to be aware of what is going on in our own heart. What we have to do,

though, is see it in real time. Say, we see a new mobile phone laying in the grass, with no one around at all. Greed may appear in the heart and we feel we want it. Instead of just looking out at what we want, the phone, what we do instead is we turn our attention in and we see that the heart is now greedy. That is practicing mindfulness.

Who here likes to do meditation? Raise your hand.

If we have mindfulness to see what is arising in our heart, we will gradually become better people as a result of seeing the feelings and impurities that arise in our heart. When our mindfulness is strong enough, the impurity will disappear and we'll have no reason at all to do anything wrong. That's excellent moral training.

For the lesson in training of mind, there are two skills to cultivate One is how people normally perceive meditation: a way to make the mind calm and relaxed. It's called samatha and it's not a very difficult thing. I practiced this type of meditation for 22 years before I ever began training in wisdom. I got very good at making my mind peaceful very quickly; however, I still suffered in life. I didn't gain any wisdom into the way things really are. I'd make myself peaceful for a little while and then I'd go into the world full of worries and restlessness, annoyances and frustrations, just like everyone else. I was

able to make myself happy for a short period of time but then sure enough when I went back to work and my daily life, suffering didn't diminish. There was a very important aspect of Buddhist practice missing. How do we permanently release suffering from our heart so that we don't come out of this happy meditation and just go back to suffering as usual?

Before I get to that, if we wish to practice calmness or samatha, there is a very important trick to know. Usually, when we practice meditation, we pick a meditation object like the breath, a mantra or we watch the body moving or walking slowly. Some people try to practice sensing emptiness. We do all these things in the interest of calming the mind. The trick is we can use any object at all, but we have pick an object that the mind enjoys. We can't pick an object the mind is not happy with. If we do, we have to force it to stay with it, and that is stressful, uncomfortable and never leads to peace.

Think of a kid who loves ice-cream. The kid is running all over the house playing with toys, making a mess, and running outside. and his mother can't control him. So, the mother says, "Come in and have some ice-cream." The kid loves ice-cream and runs in, grabs the ice-cream and sits there like a good little boy until the ice-cream is gone,

totally focused on the ice-cream. Why does the kid sit and behave? The kid sits and behaves because he is really happy with the ice-cream.

What we have to do is something very similar. We have to tempt the mind, but with a wholesome or neutral object. If we enjoy watching the breath, we watch the breath. If we enjoy repeating a certain word or phrase, then we do so. We have to pick an object of meditation that our mind feels content to be with and then the mind will become peaceful all on its own. We don't have to force the mind to be peaceful. We just choose what we like and start to enjoy it. The mind will adhere to it on its own. We don't try to force the mind to be peaceful, push thought away, or anything like that. That's the secret to practicing samatha.

There is another type of meditation or another type of mental training that is the type that is necessary for gaining wisdom into the truth. This type of mental training is to become the knower, the observer of the way things really are. In order to become the observer of the way things really are, we have to pick a meditation object, like in the first type of meditation, except in this case, we are not trying to make the mind calm. We let the mind do everything that it normally does, and we build the skill of seeing what it is that it does.

For example, we are watching the abdomen rising and falling. What happens almost immediately? The mind goes off to think. Our job is to notice that the mind just went off to think. Then, what we do is we continue breathing. The mind goes off to think quickly again, and we know so again. The mind goes off to think, and we know it again. If we practice in this way, we are not trying to stop the mind from thinking but we just know what the mind goes. We will become the observer that can then train in wisdom.

Let's do this now. As we are listening to this talk, the mind is shifting. It comes to listen to my voice, then it goes out into thinking to analyze and to understand what is being said. Then occasionally there is a feeling that comes up: the mind likes something, doesn't like something, is confused, is irritated. The mind is constantly changing from one emotion to another, and moving into thought, going back to listening, and moving into thought again. This is the natural way that the mind operates. It moves from one thing to the next, to hearing, to seeing, to thinking and then different emotions appear. This is just the natural flow of the mind. It's the natural behavior. When we become the observer or the knower we are able to see the natural movement of the mind.

We breathe or we repeat a mantra, or we notice the body is sitting or moving, and then we notice the mind go to think when it does. We notice the mind go to hear. We notice the mind go to the eyes to see. Let's keep noticing the mind that goes off to think, that goes off to see, off to hear, then we can become this observer. When we can achieve this, then we can start to see the truth of the way things really are.

We have to see that there are two distinct types of meditation. One is to just temporarily make the mind calm. The other type is a preparatory meditation so that we are able to become the observer, which is poised to gain wisdom into the truth of the way things really are. This wisdom will reduce our suffering.

In my experience before I became a monk, I was a good meditator and I was able to make my mind become this observer or knower. My mind was the observer just about all day long. So much so, that Master Sim, who didn't even know my name, would just call me 'Knower'. He would say, "Knower, come on over here, Knower." He called me this because he could sense that I was able to separate my mind out as the observer of the body and mental behavior.

When the mind wakes up, so to speak, and becomes the observer or knower of mental and physical phenomena, there will be a sense that the body is one thing, and the observing presence is another thing. They will appear in our experience as two completely distinct things. There will be the body sitting there like a physical mass, breathing and the observing presence is something that is distinct from that. It is that which observes or sees that the body is sitting there, breathing.

Also when emotions come up, we will see that the observing presence is one thing, and that the emotion that has arisen is another thing. It will appear that the emotion is in the foreground, and the observing presence is in the background. We will see that we are not this emotion. We will see that we are not this body. There will be a distinction between all these aspects or ‘aggregates’.

If we don’t have correct mental training or the correct type of concentration, we can’t become the observer and there is no way that we will be able to see the truth of the way things are. We won’t gain what is considered ‘wisdom’ in Buddhism. Therefore, correct mental training is crucial part of the practice.

A car provides a good analogy to seeing the truth of the aggregates that comprise body and mind. We all look

at a car and believe there is this thing called ‘a car’ in front of us. It’s obvious when there is a car right in front of our eyes. However, let’s say we disassemble the car and we put a tire over here, the axle over there, and the engine over there, the steering wheel here, and we proceed to dismantle the car until it is just a whole bunch of pieces. We take a look now and there is no car to be found. There are just a bunch of items each with a function. When we put them all together, we think there is a car. Maybe we can see now that there isn’t actually a car. That it is just a convention to call all those aspects that are working together in conjunction ‘a car’.

There is a mental abstraction, a step that we take in our minds when it becomes something solid and tangible as a car to us. In reality, it’s just a bunch of separate objects working together. This analogy demonstrates the truth of body and mind. Our body and mind, and the aggregates that comprise them are just multiple aspects that are working together. They are aspects that belong to nature, acting together. When they all appear as one unit, we are mistaken that there is an ‘I’, a person. It appears that there is a ‘self’ here that is separate from everything else. In reality, this is actually just an illusion in the same way as the car is an illusion. It is a mental abstraction, as a result

of a bunch of components, or aggregates, all working together. When we become the observer, we can see the truth of this. It isn't something that we have to think about or believe, but we'll see the truth of this in our experience.

Let's learn to become the observer, and notice when the mind goes off to think again and again. We can start to become the observer and see that the body, the feelings, the impurities of mind and the mind itself are all different aggregates. Then, we can walk the path of wisdom and see the truth that everything that arises also falls – that everything is temporary.

Starting from today, let's try to practice meditation in this new way, in this different way that you may have not heard of before. Let's pick a meditation object. If we already do meditation, let's choose whatever object we are already happy with but this time instead of trying to still the mind, or instead of trying to hold the mind at this meditation object, let the mind go. Let it go off to think and then just know it when it has. Let it go again, and know when it goes to think again. Let's get familiar with the wandering mind. If the mind pulls back to the meditation object, then know that. We learn to become the observer of all the mental behavior.

Let's now have a look at the Buddha statue that is beside me. When we take a look at the Buddha statue, or anything else, we forget about our own body and our own mind. Can we see that when we are busy looking at something, we forget that there is a body sitting here, breathing and we forget that there is a mind that is thinking? We are just busy looking, or perhaps busy in the content of our thought. We don't actually know that the mind is now thinking or know that the eyes are now seeing. When we go out to look at something, notice that we forgot about our body and we forgot about our mind.

From now on, when our eyes go to look at something or when we go to think, we don't stop the mind from trying to think. We don't stop ourself from trying to think and we don't stop ourself from trying to see. We make sure that we continue our lives as we normally do. We let the eyes see. We let the mind think. Now what we do is we know what it has done, after it has. We start to become the observer of our own body and mind.

Yesterday I was talking in Chicago, here on my trip to teach the dhamma in America. The talk yesterday was extremely easy. Today it's a lot harder. That's a sign that the people here are ready to hear this stuff!

Let's make sure that we keep a proper moral standard so that our mind is generally more content. Such a mind, that doesn't do bad or harmful things, relaxes more easily. Then we learn the second type of concentration or meditation where we are able to make the mind the observer. Once again we pick a meditation object, then let the mind wander off and think and then know that it has, over and over again. The mind will become the observer. Then we also come to know when the mind comes back in to focus on the object. So, the mind goes out to think, we know that it went off to think. The mind comes in to focus back on the meditation object, we know that it has gone back to focus on the meditation object. We become the observer of the mental behavior, and then our mind separates out as the observer of the experiences. Once it becomes the observer of the experiences, then we can watch and see that whatever arises in the heart and mind, also falls away.

So, with proper morality and doing calmness meditation or samatha, we achieve a state of mind that is relaxed enough to potentially become the observer. Once we have established a sense of morality and calmness, then we start to watch the mind as it goes off to wander again and again. We notice when it goes back in to focus

on the meditation object. It doesn't matter what the meditation object is. It can be a mantra, a word or a phrase that we like. It can be the breath. It can be the abdomen rising and falling. It can be walking meditation. We can walk and notice the body walking.

There was just a loud noise from the microphone. Our minds when out to the sound. Can we see that? If we can notice that, we start to become the observer of our own mind. Now, we are all going into thought. Can we notice that we've gone to think now? Let's try to wake up to that.

Actually, there are a lot of people here who are good practitioners. I'm very happy to see that. When I see so many people who are good practitioners here, able to observe their own minds, it makes me feel like I don't want to leave. I want to stay and continue to be your teacher here in New York. But I'm not staying. I will be leaving tomorrow. It's nice to see that I don't need to come back because people are understanding and becoming able to practice.

An important aspect is being able to separate out the different things that we believe to be ourself. If we are able to achieve the observer, our next step is to be able to separate out all the aggregates. For example, we can

see that the body is one thing and the observing presence which is able to notice the body is another thing. We can also notice that when we are sitting for a while, pain comes in. Our legs and our back get uncomfortable. Immediately, when most people start to feel pain, they move or change their postures. There is nothing wrong with that.

If we're sitting and are engaged in something fascinating, we may not move for quite a while. Then if we start to sit in meditation, even after a couple of minutes, we might notice pain. The same is true with walking meditation. Some people do walking meditation, and after five minutes, they stop doing it because of aches and pains. When they walk for two hours at the mall, however, they don't complain at all!

Let's try to notice that the body is just a physical thing and that the observing presence is that which observes that there is a body. When pain comes into the body when we're meditating, we notice that the pain isn't the body either. The pain is something that came in afterward. So, there is pain, and then there is a presence that can observe the pain. The pain and the observer are two different things, and the body and the pain are also two different things. We separate out these three aggregates. There is pain – or perhaps itchiness, numbness

or any given physical sensation. That sensation is one thing. The body is another thing, and the presence which can observe these things is yet another thing. We start to separate out the pieces. If we are sitting still for a long time, especially if there is discomfort, our heart will start to feel aversion. We can see that there is irritation or aversion of some kind in our heart. It's something that can be observed by the mind. There is the feeling or emotion in our heart, there is pain, there is the body and there is the observing presence. All are different aspects that we can see once we become the observer. We see the very distinct and separate things. They actually separate out for us to see. We'll start witnessing the truth of the way things really are. We have to do this over and over and over again until eventually the mind will accept the truth of it.

When we separate out these different aspects that we consider to be us; the feelings, the body, the pain, and the observer, we can see that all these things are working on their own. The eyes see something. The emotion changes. The ears hear something. The emotion changes. The body moves and walks. Pains and different sensations come and go. We can start seeing that all these things are doing their own work. We can see that none of these

things require a person to factor in. We can see that there actually isn't a person, but instead, distinct aggregates working together.

I'm going to give you all some homework. The homework is to listen to my audio files. What I said in just this one talk is too much to grasp. We have to see it in our own experience. We can't just think about it or understand conceptually. We have to experience it. So, let's listen to my talks. There are a few different websites where they all can be downloaded for free. In English, it is www.dhamma.com.

A lot of people here feel upset that I live in Thailand, far away from here and are worried that they can't seek advice when their dhamma practice falters. I guarantee that if you listen to the mp3s of my talks, you'll get all your questions answered. There are enough materials and to get all the answers. In fact, when you are really sure what you need to know, the answer seems to come quite quickly!

If we start to practice meditation in this way and we start releasing ourselves from suffering, we'll see our purpose in life. A lot of us make false purposes. We feel that we are walking aimlessly on this planet without any real meaning. When we start to practice dhamma, we can

see our true duty on this planet is to make our mind one of a higher and higher quality and see the truth of the way things really are. In so doing, we reduce suffering for ourselves. This will have great effects on others as well, and will bring others to practice.

When we practice enough, we start to see that we are very attached to this mind: what it is saying, feeling and doing. It's not something worthy of attaching to. It's something that continuously and repeatedly causes pain and suffering. Happiness is only a very short experience, and then the mind gets unhappy again. There isn't anything worthy of grabbing onto or holding that happens in this mind or in this body because they are just things that are unsatisfactory. They don't create any type of lasting happiness. They are always moving and changing and often create a lot of torment for ourselves. Body and mind are not things that are worthy of attaching to. So, let's become the observer, and see the true characteristics of body and mind. We will slowly release from body and mind, and thus, release from suffering.

Student: I've been meditating regularly for 20 years. Sometimes when I'm sitting in meditation, my body disappears. My right leg rests on the left, my right hand

rests on the left, but I can't sense them there at all.

Luangpor: If the mind enters deep concentration, the body disappears. The world disappears. All that is left is the mind.

Student: My master passed away a while back and I haven't done much...

Luangpor: Concentration is of the nature to deteriorate. We have to practice to keep it up. Having had the experience of the body disappearing, don't make the mistake of meditating each time with that expectation in mind. If you hope it will disappear, it never will again. Just practice naturally and it will disappear on its own.

Practicing to make the body disappear in concentration is a tactic used in order to see clearly that the body and the mind are two different things. The body disappears and only the mind remains. Can you see then that they are two different things? Once you come out of the deep concentration, the body will return and you will be able to see that the body is not you. The mind is the one that observes it. This is the purpose of practicing deep meditation in which the body disappears.

Student: Do I have to start over?

Luangpor: Yes. We have to start anew every day!

Student: Once I was watching the mind and saw it moving at the centre of my chest constantly.

Luangpor: That's right.

Student: I think that's because the heart is always beating.

Luangpor: No. It moves there even if there is no heartbeat.

Student: It vibrates all the time.

Luangpor: Right. Moving and spinning incessantly. Luangta Maha Bua taught the genuine dhamma occurs at the centre of the chest. When mindfulness, concentration and wisdom are working powerfully and subtly, all that is left is vibration or movement flashing at the centre of the chest.

When we see this, we need to see it at a distance. What you are doing is fine. Don't focus in on it or get involved in it. Keep seeing it from a distance. Soon, you will see that suffering is all there is.

Student: This is vipassana, right, not samatha?

Luangpor: Yes, this is vipassana.

Student: What should I do next.

Luangpor: Just keep doing what you are doing. Make sure you make time for your samatha practice each day. Once you come out of the peaceful state, let your body and mind work naturally. See the movement at the chest, which is what advanced practitioners can see. But don't sink down and get lost in it.

Keep practicing without desire for any attainment. When we desire it, we never get it.





Waking Up Los Angeles, Day I

Wat Bhuridattavanaram

Ontario, California

June 15, 2013



Welcome everyone. It is time now to prepare our mind for the transmission of dhamma. Let's sit in a relaxed and comfortable way.

It is very important for us when we have the opportunity to listen to the dhamma, the Buddha's teachings. When we listen, we should do so as if we are in the presence of the Buddha himself. It is his teachings that are being expounded, so let's have the proper manners and mind, that are open to learning the dhamma as if we are listening to the Buddha himself. It is his dhamma. Let's not move around. Let's not take pictures. We can take pictures at the end. None of these things are important. What is important is the truth that the Buddha teaches us. All the great masters emphasize that when the dhamma is being taught, we should try to prepare our mind for it, and not just sit inattentively, taking pictures and talking to our friends. We are to listen with a quality mind that is ripe for wisdom: a mind with proper attentiveness, right concentration.

When we are learning about the dhamma, we are learning about the truth of our own body and our own mind. It is not much more than that. When we come to practice the dhamma, we practice it within this body and this mind. The tools that we use to become aware of this

body and this mind are concentration and mindfulness. We need the correct concentration and correct mindfulness, to be able to see the truth of this body and this mind. When we see the truth of this body and this mind, liberation from suffering will occur, because this body and this mind are what are suffering. Consciousness can withdraw from body and from mind, then we are liberated from the suffering that they create, and the suffering that they are.

The highest teaching in dhamma is about non-attachment to the body and to the mind, or to mental and physical phenomena, to the things that happen within the body and the mind. This is the highest dhamma. Once we are no longer attached to the body and no longer attached to the mind, we reach the state called nirvana. This is the end of suffering. The attainment of nirvana is the highest goal and the highest bliss.

Most of the great masters in the Thai tradition spent their time in the jungles and forest monasteries. They ordained as monks for long time. They were able to sit under trees and practice deep levels of meditation and concentration.

As for me, I was a lay person and office worker until I was 48 years old. I did not have the opportunity to sit

under trees in the forest that often, and do that type of meditation. I wanted to be a monk, as I love the dhamma, but I had responsibilities in the world. I had a wife and parents I needed to support. I did not grow up in a temple. Therefore my master taught me in a way that is appropriate for a busy mind, for someone who works and has responsibilities. I was able to progress greatly from his teachings.

When I was seven years old, I learned to meditate. My father brought me to a temple and a master taught me breathing meditation. I practiced ever since I was a little kid, but without any guidance after that. I would just watch my breath for a little while, practice meditation each day.

When I was 29 years old, I went to see Venerable Grandfather Luangpu Dune of the Thai Forest tradition. He did not teach me to sit and do meditation. He taught me to watch my own mind. It may be appropriate for those who spend a lot of time in the temple and in the forest to do a lot of practicing deep levels of concentration on their path. That is not a necessary path in the beginning. It could actually be an obstacle to becoming proficient in watching our own mind. When we have a busy mind that is not able to concentrate easily, we can practice dhamma by learning mindfulness and watching our own mind, which I shall explain.

There are many different types of dhamma practices, for all types of personalities. In the end, in order to attain nirvana, we need to see the truth of our body and mind. There are many ways to go about seeing the truth. Some people start off with doing deep levels of concentration. After they have this concentration, they bring their attention to observing the truth of the body and mind. For those who do not have abilities in deep concentration, they are able to start off by watching the changes of the mind, and deeper concentration will follow automatically from there. Some people are able to achieve levels of concentration and watch the mind together. There are many ways to attack the problem, so to speak. There is not just one way to practice that is the right way for everyone. We are all individuals.

Luangpu Dune, my teacher, taught me to watch my mind. After about 7 months of practicing this, when I went back to him, he said, “You understand how to practice now. You do not need my help anymore.” In seven months, I was able to wake up to a certain level of the truth. He told me that I went into deep concentration. I said, “No, I did not. I was just busy watching my mind.” And he said to me that when we are watching our mind, the mind can enter deep levels concentration all by itself.

The Noble Path, which is the name for the process that happens for enlightenment, can only happen when there is a level of deep concentration. That deep level of concentration will occur on its own, when we learn to watch our mind correctly. We watch the mind until the mind reaches the appropriate level of concentration, and if the time is ripe, the Noble Path will occur by itself. Some monks spend a lot of time in the forest and in peace. They are able to bring their mind to deep levels of concentration. They do this first, and then apply this concentration to attain wisdom. This is the way of concentration prior to wisdom. Another way is to practice achieving wisdom first, seeing the truth, and then an appropriate level of concentration in order for enlightenment to occur will come afterward. There is also the third choice, where wisdom and concentration happen together. We reach deep levels of concentration and we are still able to watch the mind moving in this deep level of concentration. There are not many people who can do that, where we can actually be in deep absorption levels of concentration and watch the mind changing from one level to the other.

Even in the Buddha's time, it was a bit rare for his students to be of the type that are able to reach deep

levels of concentration. The Buddha once said that out of 500 arahants, the enlightened beings, there are only 60 that had three psychic powers that come from deep concentration. There were another 60 that had six psychic powers that are available in deep concentration, for example, being able to see future life times, past life times and see and hear at tremendous distances. There were another 60 that enlightened from very high levels of concentration, called the formless absorption levels. From this statistic, the rest were not able to do these things. Out of 500 of the enlightened beings, only 60 times three or 180 of them were experts in deep levels of concentration. It is not necessary for us to be able to reach these high level of concentrations to attain enlightenment.

The key factor in enlightenment is the ability to watch the body and mind and be able to gain wisdom into the truth. This is called walking the path of wisdom. It is not necessary to do these types of meditation where we hold the mind still or try to focus on a meditation object, and just stay with the meditation object, which, incidentally, is what most of us believe meditation is about. This is not a necessary step in our practice. In fact, the main reason people do this type

of concentration practice, is to achieve a point of concentration where the body is no longer present, and all left is the mind. The reason why some do this is, first of all, for the beautiful rest, and secondly, when the mind comes out of this stage of concentration and the body comes back, it becomes very easy to see that the body is not us. It is readily apparent that the body and mind are two very separate entities. Deep concentration is not done for the purpose of deep concentration. It is done, so that we have a mind that is right for gaining wisdom into the truth of body and mind.

It is a very important principle to understand, that there are two different types of concentration. One type of concentration is the one that most of us are more familiar with, which is called “Samatha”. Basically it is to pick one mediation object, for example, the in-and-out breath, the rising and falling of the abdomen, the body moving or walking, or a mantra or a phrase to repeat in our mind over and over again, or even chanting or doing a prayer. This meditation is the act of trying to keep our mind focused in one spot or in one area. Then, our mind will become quiet, concentrated and calm. This type of concentration is common and in fact it predates Buddhism, and it is available in all different religions and at all different

levels of teaching, this type of concentration where we keep our mind still or our attention on a specific object. This type of concentration has been around forever. But there is another type of concentration that is the vital type of concentration to practice the dhamma and to see the truth of the body and mind. This type of concentration, we can call “The Separate Observer”. Sometimes, it is called “the knower”.

I have learned from many great masters of the Thai Forest Traditions, and they all talked about the knower. This is correct concentration, and it is vital type of concentration if we are looking for enlightenment or to walk the path of wisdom. In a lot of Thai monasteries, they will ask people to do meditation by repeating the word, “Buddho, Buddho, Buddho” in their mind like a mantra. Buddho means the knower or the awakened one. A lot of people mis-understand and just practice by repeating the mantra Buddho, Buddho, Buddho, and try to hold their mind with this word. But actually, this word is the reminder to become the awakened one or the knower. When we are practicing the second type of concentration, to achieve the observer or knower, we are not looking to keep the mind still with Buddho. What we are doing is repeating this word, so that we are able to

gauge what the mind does from there. Instead of just holding the mind still with Buddho, we repeat Buddho in our mind and then our mind goes off to think; we can be the knower who knows that our mind went off to think. We repeat Buddho not to hold the mind still with Buddho, but so that we know what else the mind does.

I used the in-and-out breath. I did not use a mantra. I would breathe in and out until it was very bright. The breath became very bright at the tip of the nose. Instead of holding this light, or keeping the mind still, I would let the mind go, let it go off to think and go off to do this and that. I would be able to see the mind go off again and again. This achieves the state of the observer. The observer is able to see what is happening in the body and mind, as an unbiased knower of phenomena. What we need to do is to practice to achieve this separate observer, to have the quality of mind which can be an impartial observer of the workings of body and mind. When we do our meditation, we can pick any object that we like that doesn't encourage impurities. We can even pick the moving of our hands, and watch the hands moving. We can pick the in-and-out breath. We can pick Buddho, or a mantra in our mind. If we are going to move our hands, we do not hold our attention to our hands so that the mind

is stuck at the hands. We move our hands so that we can notice that now the mind is with the hand and now the mind is off thinking, and we do this over and over. Then, we can achieve this separate observer, the knower, the awakened state of concentration.

Luangpor Tian, who was famous for the hand moving technique, had mentioned that if we can know when the mind is thinking, we are just at the beginning of the path to Vipassana. Luangpu Dune taught that as long as we are still thinking, we will never truly know. We have to stop thinking in order to know. However, we still have to rely on thinking. It means we do not try to withdraw from thinking by holding the mind still and pushing thought away. That is not what we are doing. What we are doing is letting the mind think, and also see that the mind went to think. We become the observer of the mind, rather than holding it still or controlling in some way. If we are saying Buddhho, Buddhho or if we are doing some Buddhist chanting, that is thinking. When it sees that thinking is going on, the mind may be able to withdraw and become the observer of the mind thinking.

When we practice to the point of achieving this observer, we are able to see that the body and mind are two different things, two different entities. When the mind

is the observer, will be able to see that feelings are not us. The feelings are also not the body and feelings are not the mind, but are things that enter the mind and leave the mind. The impurities or defilements of the heart, such as anger, greed, delusion, these things are also seen by the observer. They are things that just come and go. They enter our heart and then they leave the heart. They are not us. With the observer or the knower, we will be able to separate these elements out and see in our own experience the truth that whatever arises in the body and mind, also falls. We will see the body is one thing, the mind is another. We will see the impurities in the heart are yet another thing. They are not the body and not the mind. We will be able to see that this is true for the feelings and for the sensations as well.

Once we are able to achieve this separate observer, correct samathi, some people just sit there with it, and do not do the work. We have to do the work, and walk the path of wisdom. This means once we achieve the separate observer or knower, we have to keep observing the body and mind and see the truth of them. We have to be able to separate out the things that we believe to be us, which are called the aggregates, and see that the body is one thing, that the mind observing is another,

that the feelings are another, that the memory is another, and that the mental states and impurities that come up in the heart are yet another thing.

Here is another way to achieve this separate observer. If we enjoy watching the in and out breath, for example, we can just notice that the breath is being observed and the mind is that which is observing the breath. Instead of holding our attention to the breath or bringing our mind toward the breath, we can see they are two separate things. There are breathing and the mind that is observing the breathing. In this way, we can separate out the breath and the mind, or any object of meditation we chose and the mind that observes it. They can appear as the two separate entities that they are.

If we sit and do this, we can see the body breathing is one thing and the mind is another. If we sit for a while and do not move, pain will be sure to arise. Then, we can see that this pain, as an example of a sensation that arises in the body, is not the body. The body is already there and the painful feeling is something that came later. The body and the sensation are also not the mind that is observing the body. We can see that, there is a mind which is a distinct thing from the body, and is also a distinct thing from the sensations that arise. Now surely when there is

pain that comes up, we are going to feel anguish or agitation. Then, we can see that this agitation in our heart is not the pain. We can also see that the pain is not the body. We can also see that there is the mind or consciousness that can observe all these. We then can see that the mind that is observing is not any of these things either. We can separate out these pieces, and see that each performs its own function.

This is what practicing the dhamma is about. The Buddha teaches us how to observe the body and mind and see that they are not us, they are suffering, and how to liberate from these things. If we are just practicing Buddhism by holding to a moral standard and being a good person, those are fine and important things to do, but they are not the essence of the Buddha's teaching. They are not what distinguishes Buddhism from other teachings and religions. All religions hope to teach people to be good and moral and nice to others. Buddhism teaches this too, but more than that, it teaches us to be able to liberate our mind from suffering once and for all.

We begin this practice by picking a meditation object and being able to watch the mind go off to think again and again. We can choose a mantra, *Buddho Buddho*, or the breath, abdomen, movement of the hands, walking

back and forth. Whatever we like to do is fine. We watch this meditation object and we see the mind go off to think again and again. Then, the mind can achieve the separate observer.

Many people, when doing this, are certain to pull their mind back to meditation objects. This is not what we are trying to do. The perfect state of mind for this separate observer is to just see the mind that went off to think, to be able to recognize that it went off to think. We undoubtedly will pull the mind back. When we pull the mind back to the meditation object, just know that we pulled the mind back. When the mind goes off to think again, know that it went to think again. The meditation object is used as a place from which to gauge what else the mind does.

Our mind tends to cling to objects in our consciousness. For example, if a thought comes up, our mind will move into the thought and be interested in the thought. When anger arises in our heart, our mind clings to the anger. When we practice mindfulness correctly, we learn to have a mind that withdraws from whatever it is clinging to. The mind gets absorbed in thought, we recognize the mind is thinking, and then the mind becomes the observer of the movement in or out of thought rather than clinging

to the thought. Let's notice that wherever we are interested in something, we are looking at it or listening to its content, like listening to this talk. When we are interested in something we forget that we have a body and mind. Our mind just sinks into what we are interested in, into the content or the story. We forget that there is a body sitting here and breathing and we forget there is a mind that is working, moving and thinking here and now.

Regarding the separate observer, we do not forget about our body and mind. When our mind goes off to think, we know it. When our body moves, we know it. When our body is sitting, standing, walking, we know that the body is sitting, standing or walking. Whenever we are busy in an emotion or in a thought, we forget about our body and mind. Everybody knows what the wandering mind is like, off thinking about this and that aimlessly. Normally when this happens, at best all we know is the content of the thoughts. All we know is the story. We do not know that our mind is busy thinking. We have not recognized that. We do not know that the body is sitting there. We have not recognized that. When we practice the dhamma, we have to become aware of what the body and mind are doing.

Take a look at the picture beside me. Can we see? When we are looking at something, we are sending our

mind out towards it. That's what Master Dune called it: sending the mind out. We are not knowing that we are seeing. We are just involved in what we are seeing. We are not knowing that we have a body and a mind here. We are busy with the content outside ourself. Whenever the separate observer arises, even if it is just for an instant, what is happening is that consciousness is withdrawing from whatever it was interested in, and it becomes the knower instead.

When I started watching the mind as a regular lay person like us, I noticed that the different states of mind and emotions would happen in the centre of my chest. The mind would sink down and mentally cling to the states. This would make the chest feel tight. If I would cling a little softer, the chest would be a bit less tight. I tried to figure out what to do to get the mind to release from the mental state in the chest area. Practicing for a week to do this, I was able to get my mind to withdraw as the separate observer just for a second, and then it quickly went back to grab another object, whether it went into a thought, feeling or a part of the body. Then I would try again for days to release from a state again and perhaps have success only a few minutes. It would be the separate observer briefly, and then quickly it would go

back and cling to the body or the mind. I tried so hard to figure out ways to release the mind from feelings and emotions in the heart, but it could never really let them go for long.

One day if we keep watching the mind, we will start to see that whenever the mind moves in and attaches itself to an object, it suffers, whether it be something of body like tastes, scents, sights, or something of mind like thoughts and emotions. When we recognize the mind attaching to something, and consciousness withdraws and becomes the knower, we will feel that this is a happy and light moment. The opposite of the separate observer or the knower is the thinker. When we are busy being the thinker, we are not the knower that we are thinking. When the mind moves towards and clings to an object, it is painful. It is suffering. If we try to not attach in meditation, it will just keep clinging again and again, but instead, when we achieve the wisdom, when the mind sees clearly and completely that attaching to things is suffering, it will never move in to cling to any state again. We will enlighten to one of the stages of enlightenment.

I used to practice so often to achieve the separate observer when I was a lay person. I hated when the mind would be stuck in something and I would pull it out with

some meditation skills. Then later, I learned to practice mindfulness correctly. All we have to do is be able to notice what the mind is attached to at any moment and the mind will withdraw from it by itself. I used to practice this very often. When I would notice the mind clinging to an object, I would try to release the mind from the object within three seconds. The mind would later move to cling to another object, and when I'd notice it, I'd try to release from it again.

When I would go to visit Luangpu Sim, a great monk in the North of Thailand, he didn't know my name, and he would just call me "Knower". He called me that because he could see that my mind was the separate observer. That was because I was practicing correctly, as a lay person, just like us here. It was rare for someone to have this quality mind at that time, a mind with correct concentration. However, we can all start working on this. If we notice the mind being sent out to see, hear and think, we will become the knower as well. If we learn to release from mental states often and easily, even if we do not enlighten, we will be certain to be a heavenly deity in our next lifetime. When we are dying and any mental pain occurs, our mind will release from it and be reborn favourably.

It is not so hard to release from mental objects in the heart. It is much harder to release from the body completely. There are four stages of enlightenment. If the mind becomes the separate observer, and never again moves in to cling to any bodily phenomena, the mind has reached the third level, which is called the Non-Returner. The Non-Returner sees that attaching to the body is suffering. He or she sees it clearly and completely. He or she is no longer attached to the body at all. Attaching to the body, includes attaching to what we see, hear, smell, taste and touch; all objects that are experienced by the body and its senses.

Once, when I was a lay person, I went to visit Master Suwat. I was in the car on the way to see him to get some answers, and at this period in time, I was trying to make the mind this separate observer or knower as much as possible. The mind would release from the body regularly, but then it would attach to it again. It seemed like I could create the separate observer or knower at will. I was very happy each time I could accomplish the knower, and then the mind would attach to body or mind again. I got very frustrated that the mind kept going back to clinging to the body. I tried to pull the mind out to be the observer all the time, and it would go back again. I realized

no matter how many times I tried to make the mind the separate observer, it would just go back and cling again. When I realized the futility of my attempts, in the car, a letting go happened. I saw that one moment the mind is separate observer, the next moment it is not. There was an acceptance of this truth. After that, it would attach to the body at times and release it at times, but I didn't create a problem out of it.

When I arrived to Luangpu Suwat, before I said a word, he looked at me, smiled and said that no matter how many times we try to release from the body, the mind will just attach to it again. Yet if we are just able to see the truth of the way things are, that the mind clings at times and releases at others, it will just release by itself. It was amazing. I received beautiful and timely advice, exactly what I needed to hear, even without saying a word to him. What a remarkable teacher he was!

When we practice, we start to see that the body is nothing but suffering. For example, keep breathing out, just breathe out and out, without breathing in. Is it suffering? Of course, it is suffering. Now just keep breathing in and in. Is it suffering? Even just breathing is suffering. We breathe in to release the suffering of breathing out. We breathe out to release the suffering of breathing in. Even sitting is

suffering. If we just sit still for a while, we'll see that pain will creep up soon enough, depending on our age. We will shift, move or scratch. We will continuously try to put the body in a more comfortable position. This is because the body is oppressed by suffering all the time. We spend most of our time, trying to make it more comfortable, but it never reaches the state of perfect comfort for very long. We have to shift, to scratch and to relieve pain. We have to eat, drink, sleep, always trying to relieve the suffering of the body. The truth is that the body is suffering.

Once the mind sees that the body is actually nothing but suffering, then there is a release or letting go that happens. The mind will never go in and cling to the body or the sense organs of the body again. This is the non-returner, the third stage of enlightenment. If we totally let go of the body, but not yet let go of the mind, we still think that the separate observer is a place of happiness. As long as we are the observer we are happy. Anytime that the mind is not the observer, it is not happy. It is suffering. Those who experience this are very wise, but not 100% wise yet. They have not yet fully enlightened. In order to fully enlighten, we have to see that the mind is suffering as well, not just the body. Then, consciousness can release itself from both body and mind, and be fully

liberated.

Once we are totally liberated, no longer attached to both body and mind, then there is nothing in this world that we will ever get attached to ever again. This is if we release or return our body and our mind to nature. Let nature own them. We no longer become the owners of these things. Nirvana will be our experience, the bliss of nirvana, the end of desire. A mind that is unbounded, that is unconditioned, releases itself from mental conditioning. When there is no more desire and there is no more creating fictions in the mind we see nirvana. We see that the truth of the body and the mind: that they are not us, that they are not satisfactory and are suffering.

We practice to see the truth of body and mind as much as we possibly can, to see the body and mind as the separate observer as described. We will see the truth of the body and mind over and over again; the truth that they are not us. They are unsatisfactory. They are changing all the time. Some of us try to be separate observers by making the mind still. It is not the real thing. It has to be more natural. We cannot hold our mind still to be the separate observer. We watch the mind or heart moving from one emotion to another, one feeling to another, watch the body moving from one position to the other,

nodding its head, moving its hands, going to scratch. We become the observer of our body and mind as if our body and mind belong to somebody else, as if it is somebody's else sitting, as if it's somebody's else's feeling coming and going. If we are able to see that the body and mind are not us, we reach the first level of enlightenment, the stream-enterer. If we are able to release attachment to the body, we become the non returner, the third level of enlightenment. If we are able to release attachment to the mind as well, then we become the arahant, fully enlightened.

About 12 years ago, I went to visit Luangpu Suwat again. He was very sick and in his wheelchair, and his illness put him a hazy and inattentive state. I told him that my mind let go of the mind. All of the sudden, he perked right up out of his daze, and became alert and interested in what I was saying. I told him that my mind dropped the mind, but then it picked it back up again. He sighed in disappointment and said, "Why did you pick it back up? It is disposable things!" Luangpu Suwat was very old and very sick, but his mind and heart were liberated and shining bright. He was a great influence on my practice to make it to the last step, seeing how happy and bright his mind was, even when his body was failing and

putting his brain in a daze.

In order to see the truth of the way things are, we have to be able to see suffering. What is that suffering? The body and the mind are suffering. We have to become the observer of the body and mind in order to see the true dhamma. Let's keep practicing. The first step of practice is to keep a proper moral standard. If we have a proper moral standard, we will be able to concentrate much easier. Our mind will not be shifty and we can relax in our own skin comfortably. After we have a proper moral standard, our next step is to have a quality mind that is able to be a separate observer of mental and physical phenomena - to become aware of our body and mind, not forget about them. Once we are a sufficiently moral person, and we are able to achieve a certain level of concentration, then, it is our time walk the path of wisdom and see the truth of body and mind. We see the truth of body and mind when the mind is separate and unbiased observer. The truth of body and mind are the Three Characteristics: 1) the impermanent nature, that phenomena are changing from one to the next, all of the time, 2) unsatisfactoriness or suffering, that no phenomenon is able to persist, and 3) that the body and mind are not us; they are not under anyone's control. When consciousness

sees at least one of these truths of the body and mind, it enters a state of deep concentration and the Noble Path and the enlightenment occur in an instant! The enlightenment process happens extremely fast. In just a few moments, one changes from an ordinary dhamma practitioner into an enlightened being. When the truth is seen clearly, impurities are completely wiped out from the heart in just a few moments, and never arise again. The Noble Path happens four times in one's practice, once at the occurrence of each of the four stages of enlightenment. Let's all listen to what I teach, understand how to practice, and do so diligently to achieve at least the first level of enlightenment in this lifetime.

Student: I've read some of your teachings and I have been trying to practice. I guess I notice my mind clinging to sensations and staying with them. And then when I get lost in thought, I just get lazy. I was wondering if you have some suggestions.

Luangpor: Just know when your mind moves in and clings to physical sensations. Don't try to stop the mind from doing that. Wherever the mind goes, know that it has gone there. Keep doing this and in the end you will see that the

mind is not under our command. It is not under our power to control.

Don't think too much. Be aware much!

What you are practicing is fine. Try to be aware of yourself. Once you are aware, see the body, the physical sensations, the workings of the mind and the emotions. Watch them work. See the mind now that is moving back and forth. Just see it as it is.

Don't fear being stupid. That's your biggest problem. You are worried that you don't understand, so you think about it more. And now you've moved to focusing. There are only two things you can do wrong. When you get lost in thinking, know that you have. Then when you realize you are thinking, you are worried to do it again, so you hold focus instead. Just watch the mind do these things. Watch it work.

You are a good student.





Waking Up Los Angeles, Day 2

Wat Bhuridattavanaram

Ontario, California

June 16, 2013



This temple here in California was founded by Luangpu Suwat. I am a student of Luangpu Suwat, as I went to visit him when he was quite old and disabled. I received some helpful advice from him, but unfortunately, I was never with him when he was teaching others, so I don't know what he taught them. I cannot give specifics about Luangpu Suwat's teachings.

The Buddha taught the Four Noble Truths. If we do not see these Four Noble Truths, we have no chance of seeing nirvana.

The first Noble Truth is suffering. We here as common people, do not see the truth of suffering, which means we do not see that this body, for example, is suffering. The truth is that it is suffering. Our problem is we do not see that it is suffering. We want it to be something that is happy and comfortable, but it is not of its nature to be something that is happy and comfortable for very long. We do not understand the Noble Truths. What we see is that our body is something that is comfortable and happy sometimes and uncomfortable and suffering at other times. Thus, we struggle, trying to make the body not uncomfortable, not suffering and trying to make it happy, comfortable, and healthy. We suffer because of the struggling, to try and make something that is of the nature to suffer, happy.

The cause of suffering is desire, which is the second Noble Truth. We want all kinds of things of course, but when it comes down to it, what do we want most? What is all this wanting about? It is about wanting this body and this mind to be happy, to be comfortable, to be satisfied. Once again, regarding the mind, it seems to us that the mind is happy sometimes and unhappy another times. We are always looking for happiness, because we think the mind is of something that can be happy in a lasting way. The mind is something that is of the nature to suffer, so the happiness is very fleeting. It is very hard to find happiness, because we have desire entering the mind and disturbing it all the time.

We want something and we go and get it. We feel better for a moment, and then we want something else. Wanting is coming in again and again, and disturbing the possibility of any peace or comfort. In the end, when the Noble Truths are understood, desire is washed from one's heart. Nirvana is experienced. There is nothing perturbing the mind.

My master, Luang Pu Dune, taught me how to watch the mind and how to release from it. Dhamma practice ultimately is about freeing oneself from one's own body and mind. The reason ultimately comes down to being able

to see the mind more clearly, to have the concentration and quality of mind so that we are able to see our mind.

It was a very common thing in the past, and still exists today, that different schools of meditation argue with each other about which techniques are superior. Some say it is better to do walking meditation. Some say it is better to watch the breath. Others prefer to watch abdomen. Some prefer to repeat a mantra. All these arguments are totally out of touch with the principles of dhamma practice.

If we truly understand the proper principles of dhamma practice, every technique can lead to what we are looking for. Many say we have to watch this, or we have to see that, but the truth is that when the genuine mindfulness is achieved, we do not choose what it is that mindfulness sees. For example, one moment mindfulness recognizes an emotion in the heart arising, and the next moment it sees the movement of the hand. We cannot choose what it is that mindfulness is going to see. We may use techniques, but we use them to move beyond technique. If we are arguing that this or that technique is better, then we do not understand the practice of dhamma. We do not understand the proper principles of dhamma.

When mindfulness is working correctly, one moment it notices the body, and the next moment it notices an emotion. The next moment it notices a bodily sensation. Mindfulness does not belong to a person. Buddha taught the truth of non-self, and this is what we are practicing to see. When mindfulness is working correctly, we will see there is no self. Mindfulness is doing its own work.

For this to be achieved, the mind must be a distinct observer. It must have the proper type of concentration, which is not clinging to any particular meditation object. It is just the observer of whatever arises in the body and mind. When the mind becomes this observer, and mindfulness is working correctly, we will not just see what it is that arises in our heart, but will see the true characteristics of what arises in the heart. The characteristics that all things that arise are impermanent, unsatisfactory, and not under anyone's control.

When we come to the point where our mind is going to enlighten, we are able to see at least one true characteristic of body and mind, or of mental and physical phenomena. We are able to see that all phenomena are impermanent. We are able to see that body and mind are nothing but suffering. Or, we are able to see that body and mind are not our self.

So, what technique should we use? The answer is to use whatever technique makes us most mindful. If we sit and observe the in and out breath alertly and comfortably, with mindfulness, then we observe it. If we find that watching the body standing and walking and we have more mindfulness, then we walk. I should point out that watching the body does not mean watching the body walking back and forth in any formal way. Watching the body, we could be aware of any little movement, such as the shifting of the eye, a hand moving, or an arm reaching for something.

Each person is completely different from another and has different abilities and a different quality of mind. We all have different ways to best help the mind to be mindful. There is no one specific technique that works best for everyone. Some people can start off right away by watching their own mind or their own emotions that come up in the heart. If we watch the heart often and see the emotions that arise, soon enough, mindfulness will work very quickly to see what arises in the heart on its own. The feelings change from neutral to happy, to unhappy, and mindfulness will see this readily. We are content, and then all of the sudden, we become skeptical or irritated. Mindfulness will see this very quickly. Others

will watch the body, and mindfulness will come in unexpectedly every once in a while and notice small movements. However, we'll only be able to experience this if we practice in a relaxed, comfortable and playful way.

Once, when I was a young family man practicing the dhamma, I spent a few days watching the moving of my hands as my sitting meditation. A couple of days later, I saw a friend across the street that I hadn't seen in a while. I went to step over the curb in the direction of my friend, and mindfulness noticed the movement of the foot. I was not intending to notice it at all. Nevertheless, I was practicing correctly and in a relaxed way during my formal meditation time, just noticing the body moving. Practicing in this way, the mind becomes mindful of the body from time to time, all by itself.

We are practicing so that this automatic mindfulness can arise. We practice watching the body and watching what goes on in our own heart. We see the different bodily postures and movements and mental states that happen and then mindfulness will work on its own to recollect them. It will become automatic and be able to notice our body and mind all by itself. It is only true mindfulness if it is happening by itself. The rest is practicing to get to that state. The same is true for concentration.

Correct concentration is an observing presence that happens by itself. When we are still controlling and holding our mind still, or trying to keep it in a certain state, then this is not the correct type concentration necessary for wisdom.

How is it that we can learn to practice this correct mindfulness? Mindfulness is what sees or recognizes what is going on in the body or mind. If there is emotion in the heart, it is mindfulness that is able to see that the emotion is present. If the body moves, it is the mindfulness that is able to notice that the body moves.

We start by choosing a meditation object. If we feel that we are able to clearly notice the body when it is moving and changing positions, then we choose the body. If we find that we are able to successfully notice the emotions that come and go in our heart, then watch the emotions in the heart in this way. We may be good at watching the breath. If so, let's just sit, comfortably relaxed and notice the body is breathing in and the body is breathing out. This is to become aware of the body. When the body moves, we know that the body moves. When the mind is moving, or emotions are moving, coming and going, then we see that.

If we want to practice to have the correct type of concentration in order to see the truth of body and mind,

what we should do is choose a meditation object, such as a mantra, the breath, watching the body moving, and then notice the mind going off the object to think again and again. We can get very good at noticing when the mind goes off to think. We notice the meditation object for example, the breath, and when the mind goes off to think again, we know that it did. We can get very good and very quick at noticing the mind moving from being aware to unaware. The correct concentration or the observer will be achieved. When we practice in these ways of noticing the emotion that comes up in our heart and noticing the body moving then the work will start automatically. The mind will be able to see on its own when it starts to go off to think and gets lost in stories rather than being aware. The mind will become more and more aware all by itself.

Many of us want to know if we are really mindful yet. Is it really mindfulness that we are experiencing? When we have no intention to be mindful, and suddenly and spontaneously the mind becomes mindful of something within the body and mind – that is true mindfulness. If we are someone who watches the breath, for example, and we are watching the in-and-out breath correctly, we will notice that when we are busy chatting with friends mindlessly and have totally forgotten about ourself, and we get

angry, our breathing rhythm changes. Someone who has been practicing watching the breath in the correct way will quickly notice this change in the breathing pattern. He or she will recognize there is an emotion happening in the heart. This will be a spontaneous event of mindfulness.

Most people get stuck in samatha practice, which is the practice of stilling or controlling the mind. It is to hold the mind to one meditation object. It is not becoming the observer of what goes on in the body and mind. It is a practice of trying to keep the mind in a content state.

The Four Foundations of Mindfulness that the Buddha taught are basically the four areas of which it is useful to be mindful. They are the body, the feelings, the mind and the dhamma, which basically means the processes of body and mind or the truth of the way they work. If we listen to the Buddha's teachings on the Four Foundations of Mindfulness, the Buddha says, "Monks, when you are standing, know that you are standing. When you are turning, know that you are turning. When you are walking, know that you are walking. When anger arises in the heart, know that anger arose in the heart. When craving arises in the heart, know that craving arose in the heart. When the mind is daze or wandering, know that it is in a daze or wandering. If the mind is busy or restless,

know that it is busy or restless. If the mind has access concentration or full concentration, then know that it has this level of concentration.” We can notice that the only verb here is “to know”. At the entrance point to into the practice, it does not matter if we start with watching the body, the feelings, the mind or the dhamma processes. We choose whatever foundation of which we are good at being mindful. In the end, mindfulness will choose by itself what it knows. We are just using these foundations as a tool. So we just choose whatever works for us.

There are two important tools that we need for proper practice to gain wisdom into the truth so that we can liberate the mind. We need correct mindfulness and we also need correct concentration or samadhi. If we have some skills at watching the body moving, turning, changing, walking, then we choose that as an entrance point to becoming more mindful. If we are good at watching the breath without losing awareness too much, then we practice that.

Regarding the correct type of samadhi, all the great masters in the Thai Forest Tradition taught the correct type of samadhi. They would each have their own style, however, and people often could misinterpret what they were teaching. There are essentially only two different

types of samadhi that all the great masters have been teaching. One is keeping or holding the mind in one state: choosing one object and then keeping the object in one's consciousness, for the purpose of relaxing and calming the mind. It is keeping the mind settled in one place to feel relaxed and calm. Unfortunately, this is what most practitioners end up doing exclusively, but this practice is not conducive to wisdom and does not liberate the mind. That is why many people have spent years and years practicing and have not really gotten anywhere.

There is another type of concentration that is necessary in order to walk the path of wisdom that the Buddha taught. However, mostly what people do is just the first type of concentration. With the first type of concentration, we merely able to become calm and relax the mind. Then we go out into the world, and the mind gets busy, restless, angry, and experiences all the same things it always did. What do we do as such meditators then? We bring the mind to a state of calm again. Then we go out in the world and the same old unwholesome states return. We just oscillate back and forth between making the mind cool and comfortable, and then returning to our worldly affairs and getting heated and uncomfortable. We do not gain the knowledge or wisdom that is necessary

for true liberation from suffering.

The type of concentration or samadhi we need is the one where the mind is knower or observer of the phenomena of body and mind. The mind is stable or upright in the sense that it remains the observer of what arises in the body and mind without slipping down into phenomena. It is not being held and controlled as an object. If we do not study and practice this type of samadhi, we'll over focus or hold the mind in a specific place. We only need to do that for a rest whereas we need the upright observer in order to walk the path of wisdom.

In the Buddha's teachings, it is said that samadhi is the proximate cause of wisdom. However, it must be the correct type of samadhi. If we do not have samadhi, our mind is too biased or entangled in what is going on to be the observer that can see things truly and correctly. We get to know this principle that the type of concentration where the mind is holding a certain mental state is not the type of concentration that leads to wisdom and liberation. We have to practice the other type of samadhi.

There are basically two ways to achieve this separate observer, the correct type of samadhi. The first way is for those who are very skilled in deep absorption levels of concentration or jhana. If one can achieve at least the

second level of jhana and then come out of it, one will be able to achieve this observer for a sustained period. Most people cannot do this. It is not necessary to do this. There is another way.

What we can do is to pick a meditation object instead, just like watching the breath, watching the body moving, or repeating mantra. Instead of holding to this meditation object, what we do is we watch the mind move. Where will the mind move? The mind moves towards thought, or the mind is going to move back to concentrate on the chosen object. These are the two directions that the mind is going to move. It is going to move away or back. When we are able to see the mind move to thought, we will be able to achieve the correct type of samadhi for a moment. Then the mind moves to thought again, and we know it moved again. Then, we achieve samadhi again for another moment. If we can know when the mind moves off to think, the knower or the upright observer will arise.

The upright observer will arise by itself when we are able to notice the mind goes off to think. We do not have to push, control or try to create this observer in any way. It comes by itself when we are able to notice the mind move to think. We are not practicing to force the mind to stop thinking. We are practicing to be able to let the mind go to

think and know that it has. Some of us who are trying to hold ourself still must know this is samatha, the first type of concentration. Instead, if we just let the mind free and notice that it is moving around from here to there, then we can become the observer and have the type of samadhi that is conducive to wisdom.

If we are just involved in our thoughts all the time, then we will never become the knower. Vipassana only begins when we step out of thought; however, we need to rely on thought in order for this observer to arise. The observer is necessary for vipassana. We need thought, so that we can see it and become the observer, but vipassana begins when we are able to see independent of thought.

Let's practice some meditation now. This is my last talk here today (silent for a few minutes). Most of us here have our mind moving from here to there. Let's become aware that the mind is moving from here to there. Let's not control or hold the mind still and stiff. Many of us are slipping down towards what we are looking at. Our mind is not the stable observer. It is moving in toward objects. Let's sit and breathe, and be aware that the body is sitting and breathing. If the body shifts this way or that way, let's just notice that it has. It is not important to make the mind peaceful. What is important is to become the observer of

what is going on.

After we come out of the practice, let's examine ourselves. Do we feel a little bit lethargic, dazed, dreamy, stiff or still? If we do, it means that we were over focusing or forcing too much. Let's come to recognize the state of being in a daze or state of being stiff or still, or any such states result from controlling. If we are too stiff, dull, dreamy or any of these things, then we weren't doing meditation correctly.

When our mind is the upright observer and is able to see the mind moving from here to there -- see it moving and not controlling it -- it will notice that everything it is seeing is all happening by itself. There is nobody who is doing the thinking. The thinking happens all by itself. When we become the upright observer, the mind that is quiet, peaceful, busy, thinking, restless, happy or sad, is always a mind that was not ordered into existence, but one that arose by itself. There is not anyone there doing any of these things.

Please do not consider me as the owner of any of these teachings. I learned from my teacher. My teacher learned from his teacher. Many of us believe that one should not watch the mind, contemplate the mind or do vipassana, unless one is at the third stage of enlightenment. Some of us believe that once there is no more sense

desire and one has completely let go of the body, then it is time to watch the mind. This is a mistake and a misunderstanding carried by a lot of people in the Thai Forest Tradition. My master did not practice in this way, and he attained liberation from suffering.

We may have had the experience when an image arises in our mind of somebody that we have not seen in a long time. The image appears and then we start to think of that person. We think about what we like or do not like about them, and emotion starts coming up in the chest. There is the process that goes on. The process happens all by itself. The picture comes up, the thinking happens, the emotion happens.

Venerable Grandfather Dune, my master, would teach each of his students case by case. He would be able to see what it is that would be most appropriate for that person and have each practice in that way. For some people, he would tell them to watch the breath. For some people, he would tell them to sense emptiness. For some people, he would recommend they watch the emotions changing in their heart. He taught case by case according to what would work best for each person as a starting point. The people he instructed to watch the body, ultimately still had to watch their mind. It always comes

down to watching the mind.

If we are a meditator who can watch the body with a deep level of concentration, we can notice different aspects of the body. The body will start to disappear. The different areas of body we explore will reveal themselves as simply light and vibration. The physicality will disappear; all that remains is the mind. The mind can be scrutinized from there more clearly, with the body out of the way.

If we are looking for true liberation, we need to remember this one sentence: “Have the mindfulness to see and know the body and mind as they really are, with the upright observer in an unbiased way.” We need this correct concentration in order to be able to see the way things really are. What really are the body and mind? They are the three characteristics that the Buddha taught. They are impermanent. They are unsatisfactory. They are not a self. If all we have is mindfulness, then we will be able to see the body, the mind and the emotions. If we also have the correct type of samadhi, we will be able to see not just the body, mind and emotions, but we will also see them exhibiting their true characteristics. We will see things as they really are. When we do, we have the opportunity for liberation. Whether or not we are to attain a state of enlightenment in this lifetime, comes down to this: are we

able to achieve the correct type of samadhi, the upright observer, or are we not?

We will not have an opportunity to see me that often, and maybe never again if we don't come visit my temple in Thailand. If any of us want to see me again, the best way to do so is by establishing a quality dhamma practice. When we practice, we see the truth. When we see truth, then we see the dhamma. When we see the dhamma, then we get to know all the masters and the Buddha in the most real and intimate ways.

Rely on not the teachers, but on yourself. We practice within our own heart. If we have any obstacles or any difficulties, my recordings are always available. I promise all the answers are there. If we understand the proper principles that I am teaching, then we will never have a problem again. With all arguments within Buddhism and enlightenment schools; that this is the right lineage, that is a bad lineage, or that this or that technique is good - none of these things will be a problem anymore.

Some people go so far as to walk at an inhumanly slow pace, the foot only at a specific height, to move only in specific steps, and think that is the only way to see the dhamma. None of this is true dhamma. It is just an outer shell. If we make people walk at the same pace and the

same distance, what are those with long legs supposed to do? Everybody has his or her own way to practice, his or her own gateway into the practice that will bring success. We do not need to learn any particular technique or lineage. We just need to practice to have correct mindfulness and correct samadhi. Then the practice will take off all by itself. It is really not that hard, especially if we practice! The practice is not hard. It is only hard for those who do not practice. That is what my master first told me.

My master taught me to watch the changing emotions in my heart, watch the impurities that move in the heart. Eventually, I kept seeing this until I could see clearly that everything that was moving and changing was not a self. They is not a person. After we are able to see that clearly, we will see that all the movements of the heart and the body are nothing but suffering. Consciousness will release from the body and mind, liberate from them, and experience nirvana.

My master calls this experience of liberation “One Mind”. Another great master calls it “The Genuine Mind”. It does not matter what we call it. It is just the natural consciousness element. It does not belong to anyone. It is just a natural and pure state. Some of us believe that we do not need to do any meditation or dhamma practice

because the mind is something that is already pure. This is ignorance. The mind is not pure. It is covered in defilements and wholesomeness. We have to keep seeing this suffering of body and mind in order for the mind to have the potential to wash away all these impurities and be free once and for all.

In conclusion we see that the aggregates, the things that we consider to be our body and our mind, are nothing but suffering. This is in the end. This is what we need to see for final enlightenment.

Student 1: I'm excited to speak with you. I see anger sometimes, and I see liking and disliking. However, I haven't seen the body and mind separate out as you have taught.

Luangpor: Take a look and see that when liking arises, the mind is the one that sees this. When liking disappears, the mind is the one that sees this. Liking and the mind are two distinct things. Greed, anger, and delusion arise and then fall away, and the mind is the observer. After some time, you will understand that greed, anger, and delusion are not the mind.

Student 1: So I should just keep practicing then?

Luangpor: The great Luangta Maha Bua taught that anyone who cannot separate the aggregates of body and mind has no right to boast about achieving wisdom. It can't get much clearer than that. Most practitioners these days get nowhere. They are engrossed in calmness practice and are clueless about distinguishing the aggregates of body and mind.

How is your mind now? Is it feeling pleasant, unpleasant or neutral?

Student 1: Um... It is neutral.

Luangpor: Is it neutral because you are exercising control, or is it naturally neutral?

Student 1: I'm controlling it.

Luangpor: You are right. You pass! (Audience laughs) Seeing that is correct practice.

Student 2: When I practice, I'm constantly struggling with my thinking going off somewhere. As a stable observer, are we supposed to keep the mind from going to thoughts, or just follow it and let it go? I struggle with what about the

thinking.

Luangpor: The mind thinks. Then when greed, aversion or delusion arises, know that it has. Let the mind think and then know what feeling or emotion has come in. Whatever arises, pleasant or unpleasant, good or bad, don't interfere with it. Just see it. Don't follow it, and don't resist it.





About Venerable
“Luangpor”
Pramote Pamojjo



Venerable Father “Luangpor” Pramote is a monk residing in Sriracha, Chonburi, Thailand. He is the abbot of Suan Santidham Temple, which translates to The Sanctuary for Peaceful Dhamma. He is rapidly gaining popularity, being one of the most effective teachers of Dhamma in Thailand. He manages to relate the Buddha’s teachings on meditation and Dhamma practice towards spiritual enlightenment (nirvana) in ways that are easy to understand and are appropriate for our modern, fast-paced society.

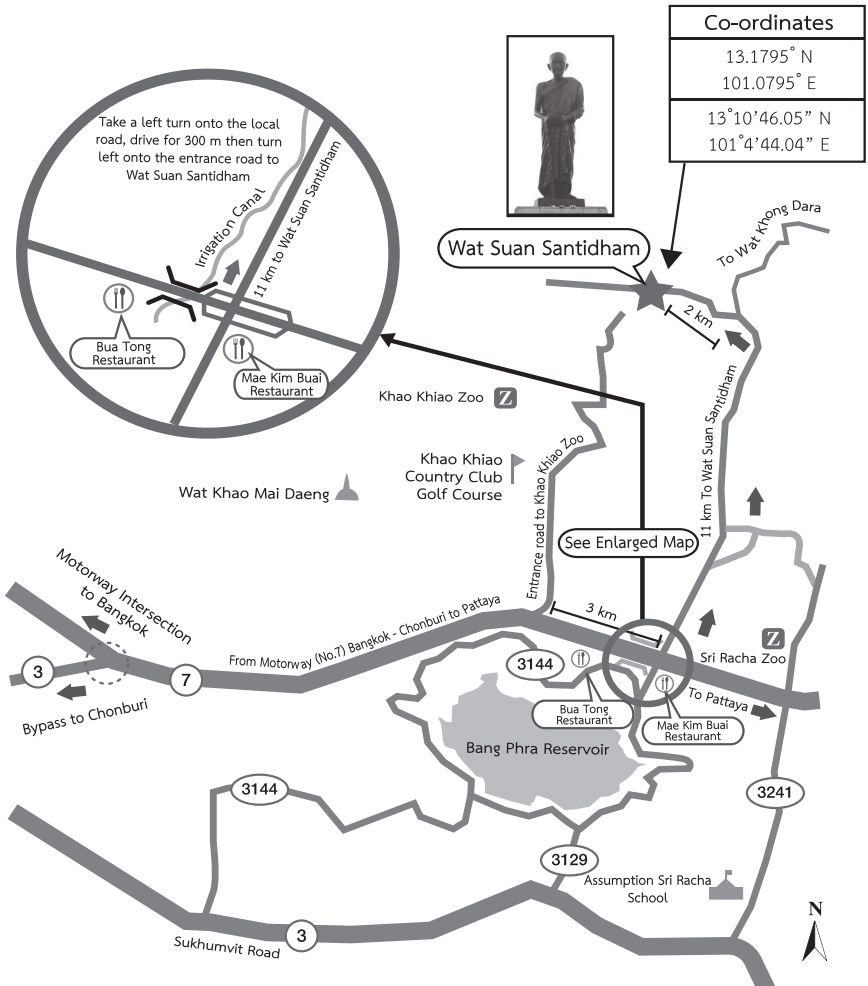
He teaches the Dhamma to avid practitioners looking to truly understand the middle way and to progress in their practice. Bangkok residents set out on an hour and a half drive in the darkness of the early morning to arrive before sunrise and line up outside his temple to get a good seat to listen to 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 people’s minds as he goes, in what is quickly becoming one of the biggest Buddhist enlightenment movements in recent times.

Luangpor Pramote became a monk in 2001 at the age of 48 after being an efficacious meditator and avid Dhamma practitioner as a layman since he was seven years old. He has had many teachers along the way, but considers himself primarily a disciple of Venerable Grandfather Dune, from North Eastern Thailand's forest monk lineage of Luangpu Mun Bhüridatto.



Map to Wat Suan Santidham



Direction from Bangkok: From the Motorway intersection to Pattaya, drive for approximately 13 km. Upon seeing Bua Tong Restaurant's sign on the right, take the left lane and cross an irrigation canal bridge, then take an immediate left turn onto the local road. Continue for approximately 300 m. Then turn left onto the entrance road to Wat Suan Santidham.

Wat Suan Santidham
 Located at Amphoe Sri Racha, Chonburi Province
 Dhamma Talk Time : 7.30 - 10.00 hr.
 Please check the schedule for Dhamma Talks by Luangpor Pramote Pamojjo at Wat Suan Santidham
 and at other locations on the Dhamma Calendar at www.dhamma.com/calendar
 or call 08-1557-9878.

