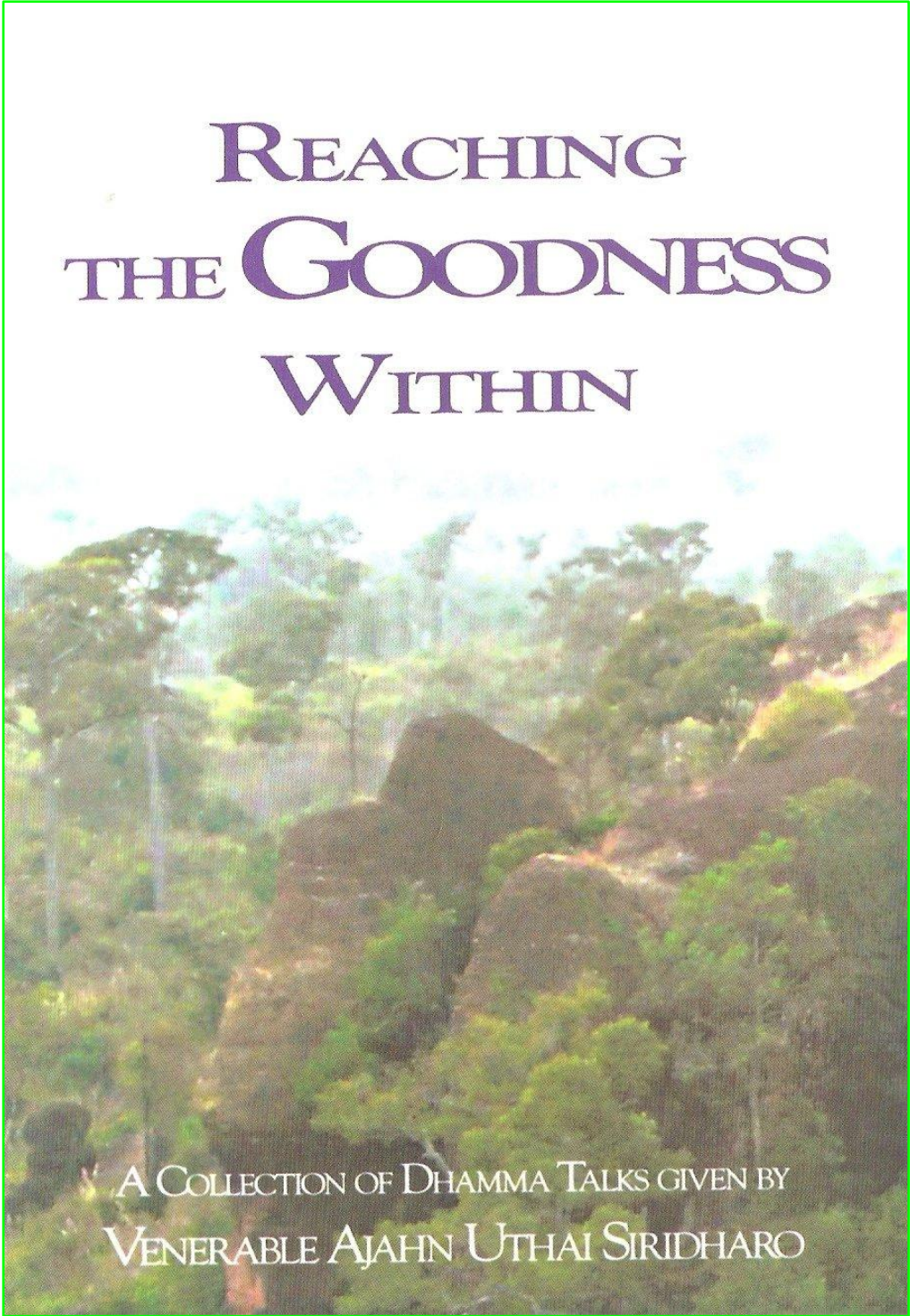


REACHING THE GOODNESS WITHIN



A COLLECTION OF DHAMMA TALKS GIVEN BY
VENERABLE AJAHN UTHAI SIRIDHARO

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BY VENERABLE AJAHN UTHAI SIRIDHARO

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- the promulgation of the Dhamma for the benefit of all living beings-

is achieved without hindrance.

May all merit accrued help speed all beings to Nibbana.

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PREFACE

At the request of *Venerable Ajahn Uthai Siridharo's* lay followers and with his consent, seven of his *Dhamma* talks delivered in Thai, have now been translated into English for the benefit of people interested in the way to true happiness.

Whenever possible, *Pali* language words have been translated into English. The chosen translations, however, are only those English substitutes for the *Pali* words that I feel are acceptable in their context within the talks; they don't necessarily reflect the *Pali* words' original meanings. For the convenience of readers who wish to make their own interpretations directly from *Pali*, I have italicized these translated terms throughout the talks and listed them together with their corresponding *Pali* in the Glossary*.

*[*In this book, the meanings of italicized words and un-italicized words are defined differently. For example, "suffering" means "Dukkha" (as the reader can find out from the Glossary), while "suffering" has its usual meaning in the English usage.]*

In some cases, though, *Pali* words are left as they are because no suitable English words can be found to substitute for them in their particular context. Such *Pali* words are capitalized and discussed in the Glossary if they haven't been explained by *Venerable Ajahn Uthai* in their immediate context. The words heart and mind are used interchangeably throughout these talks, as they are generally throughout Thailand; they both refer to the *Pali* word *Citta*. Please refer to *Citta* in the Glossary for a detailed explanation. In addition, I wish to draw the reader's attention to *Venerable Ajahn Uthai's* use of the word *virtue* (*Sila*), which has here a broader and deeper meaning than simply moral integrity or precepts. *Venerable Ajahn's* concept of *virtue* can be found explained in the third talk.

Venerable Ajahn Uthai's original discourses have been paraphrased where this has been necessary to improve readability and to highlight major points. Because of that, and despite efforts to preserve his original style of speaking, some of the flavor of his talks may have been lost.

Many people have helped in the realization of this book. In addition to the support and assistance from the community at *Wat Khaoyai-Charoendham*, *Jotika Dhammasara* put a great deal of work into improving the language, as well as making detailed, constructive comments and suggestions facilitating improvement of the accuracy and clarity of the translation. *Ajaan Nanadhammo*, together with *Dahako Bhikkhu*, spent time comparing the translation against the Thai, correcting errors, further polishing the language, and suggesting changes in the rendering of technical terms. Finally I would

like to express my thanks and gratitude to a person (who wishes to remain anonymous), who read different incarnations of the manuscript, offered his advice on how to improve them, and has been always ready to help when I needed guidance in the course of preparing this book. The finished book owes a great deal to all of them: the book would not have been completed without their kindness, generosity and energy. Any mistakes that remain, however, are my own responsibility. I ask forgiveness from our readers for any inadequacies in the translation.

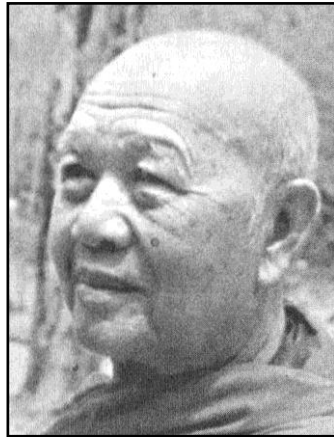
I hope that despite any remaining errors, our readers will nevertheless find the Dhamma presented here inspiring, and will thus be encouraged to put forth the effort required to liberate their hearts.

Dhammattho *Bhikkhu*

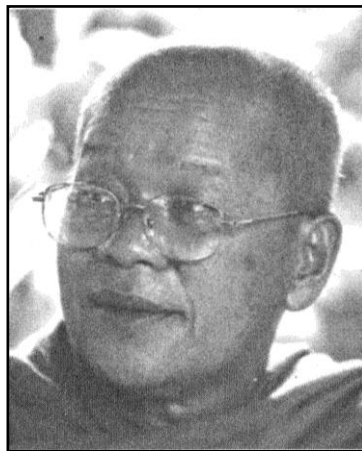
February, 2009

A Short Biography of Venerable Ajahn Uthai

Venerable Ajahn Uthai Siridharo was born in the province of Yasoton, Thailand, on March 12, 1936. After he finished the fourth grade, which was the highest education one could receive in rural areas at that time, he left school and helped his parents work in the rice fields and orchards.



VENERABLE AJAHN FAN ACHARO (1899-1977)



VENERABLE AJAHN UTHAI SIRIDHARO (1936 -)

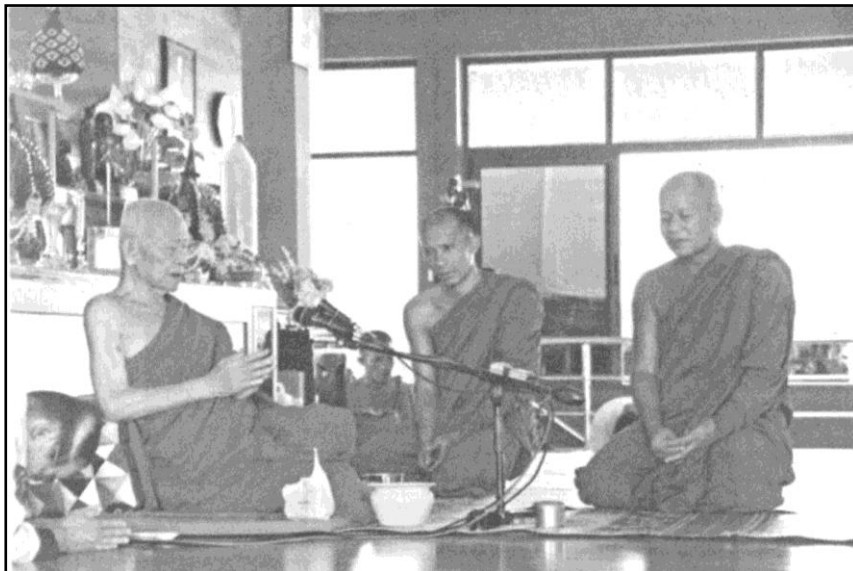
At the age of 21, he ordained as a *Bhikkhu* (Buddhist monk) in Amnat Charoen Province on May 9, 1956. After spending 3 *rains retreat* in Yasoton, he started to travel in search of a meditation teacher. At first he stayed with *Venerable Ajahn Sim* and *Venerable Ajahn Wein* in the province of Sakon Nakhon for 2 *rains retreats* (1959-1960). Then he went to train with *Venerable Ajahn Fan Acharo*, who stayed in Sakon Nakhon Province at that time, practicing under the guidance of *Venerable Ajahn Fan*

until *Venerable Ajahn Fan* passed away in 1977. *Venerable Ajahn Uthai* then sought solitude at *Wat Tumphra-phuwua* in the Nong Khai Province, spending his *rains retreats* there regularly.

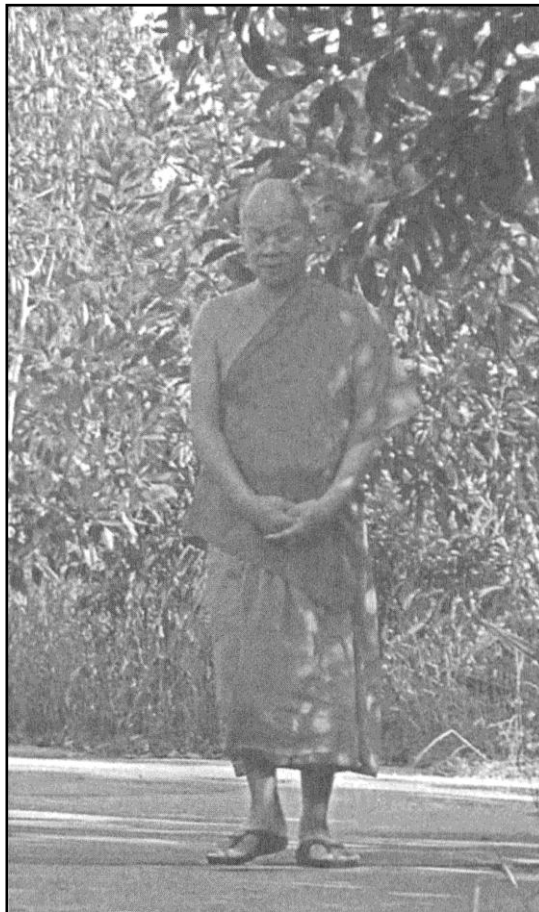
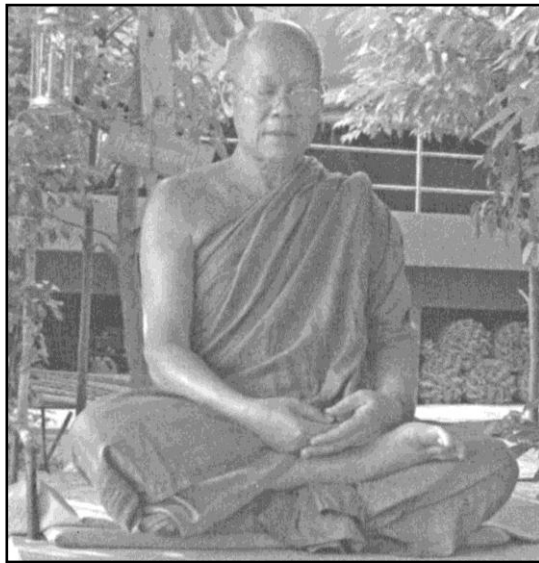
At the invitation of *Venerable Ajahn Maha Boowa*, *Venerable Ajahn Uthai* came to the province of Nakhon Ratchasima in early 2006 to help establish and develop *Wat Khaoyai-Charoendham* as a *Dhamma* center for the region of central Thailand. He has resided there since then.



A view from Wat Tumphra-phuwua in the Province of Nong Khai.



This picture was taken when Venerable Ajahn Maha Boowa (left) came to attend the robe-presenting ceremony at Wat Khaoyai-Charoendham in the province of Nakhon Ratchasima on October 22, 2006. Venerable Ajahn Uthai is on the right.



At the request of the translator, Venerable Ajahn Uthai agreed to have pictures taken when he was sitting in meditation (the above) and doing walking meditation (next page), to be used as guiding examples for people who are interested in meditation. These photos were taken near the meeting hall at Wat Khaoyai Charoendham one afternoon in late November, 2008.

REACHING THE GOODNESS WITHIN

... Just as trees cannot sustain themselves without soil, nor buildings stand without being supported by a foundation, all the goodness in the world cannot manifest without a sense of goodness and well-being within the heart ...

VENERABLE AJAHN UTHAI, SEPTEMBER 6, 2008

Now let us train ourselves to sit in meditation to calm our minds. If you don't train yourselves to calm the mind through meditation, it will be constantly occupied with thinking except when you're asleep. This continual thinking all day long consumes a great deal of energy. If the mind is not made strong, it easily becomes exhausted. Then you will feel tired - not only will your body feel tired but also your mind. That's why sitting in meditation is a good thing to do. Resting in peaceful meditative states not only nurtures and energizes our minds but also brings goodness into our hearts.

Everyone admires goodness and, by nature, everyone likes things that are beautiful and orderly. The path of practice leading to freedom as taught by the Buddha, is itself, nothing but a strategy of refining, tailoring and polishing things up to make them graceful and elegant. We all know how to make things beautiful, don't we? We have done whatever is needed to make our bodies pleasant to look at. But this is only good on the external level. The work would be incomplete if we simply stopped right there. To complete the work, we need to refine our minds as well. All of the Buddha's teachings point to the importance of the mind; he advised bringing *wholesomeness (Punna)* and *skillfulness (Kusala)* of the mind to perfection.

Wholesomeness refers to the ideal state of mind. What then are the characteristics of this ideal mental state? When the mind is in its ideal state, it is pleasing to view. It is bright, beaming, joyous and light - all of these qualities are natural treasures of the mind. Actually, we can tell instinctively whether the characteristics of *wholesomeness* are present or not when we look in the mirror: if at that very moment, we recall a person who had been kind and generous to us, or a dear friend who cares about us - as soon as we remember such a person, we are in touch with inner goodness. At such a moment, we will see in the reflections those characteristics in ourselves.

When our mind is directed to that which is wholesome, we naturally incline to a dwelling place in goodness; the goodness then manifests itself externally, making us appear bright and cheerful: as described in a Thai saying, "The heart radiates a smile", which is noticeable to others when they look into our eyes. It is impossible, of course,

to be looking into a mirror all the time, so the Buddha taught that we should develop self-awareness, supported by *mindfulness* and *discernment*, as an internal mirror to examine ourselves: we watch our actions, behavior and manners through this mirror, rather than an external one, to ensure that they are appropriate and pleasing to the eye. If you don't use *mindfulness* and *discernment*, the inner mirror, to keep track of your mind, it will wander about instead of staying with goodness. Consequently, you will forget to control your behavior, to the point where it is no longer respectable.

The Buddha taught us to practice meditation as a skillful means for tuning the mind. Through meditation, we tune the mind to make it align with goodness: adjusting it by recalling what goodness and well-being feel like and nurturing it to align with that feeling. If your mind is not currently in good condition, tuning it in this manner will get you out of trouble. If your heart is not at ease, if you are unhappy, then fine tuning like this - continually centering your attention on the feeling of goodness and a sense of well-being, will calm the anxiety and stress. The natural intelligence that knows how to tune the mind by being selective in our *focus of attention (Arammana)*, is called *skillfulness (Kusala)*.

In this way you train yourself to remain constantly mindful in every posture and activity, continually alert to the thoughts and emotions arising in your mind; with *discernment*, you choose to stay with the feelings of goodness, the mind objects that make you feel bright, buoyant or happy - this is what *skillfulness* is about. We can be skillful like this when our minds are sustained by the strength of *mindfulness*, *concentration* and *discernment*.

Skillfulness also includes the intelligence that knows how to abandon unskillful thoughts and emotions, which are alien to the true nature of the heart. Seeing that unskillful thoughts and emotions are simply passing events concocted by your greed, hatred and delusion, you turn away from them and incline your mind towards *pure knowing* instead; you stay vigilant and heedful, letting these unskillful thoughts and emotions pass through and disappear from the mind whenever your awareness encounters them. You don't hold on to them or pile them up to burden your mind. Rather, you filter them all out through *mindfulness* and *discernment* - regardless of your nationality, gender, status or age, this will be a wholesome and skillful thing to do.

What standards can you rely upon as the basis for making all your judgments? Where is *Vihara-dhamma* - the abiding or basis you can trust as a guideline for conducting your life? You have houses filled with furniture for resting the body, but if you don't have a place for resting the mind - if a sense of well-being is missing and you don't feel joyous and optimistic - then what is the point in acquiring a large house or grand mansion for resting the body? The large house or mansion would simply be a pointless luxury - it wouldn't alter the fact that the mind is weighed down by trouble and suffering.

In attempting to find a resting place for the mind, you have to rely upon *Dhamma*,

which starts with *virtue (Sila)*, as your guide. *Virtue* and all other levels of *Dhamma (Sila-Dhamma)* will always point you back in the direction of *wholesomeness* and *skillfulness*; and as you have learned by now, resting your mind in goodness, or a sense of well-being within, is a wholesome and skillful thing to do. When we keep bringing up the feeling of goodness in our hearts, nourishing a sense of well-being within, brightness, cheerfulness and coolness will all arise and become our treasures as a result. These treasures can be compared to the light that emanates from a flame: brightness, cheerfulness or coolness is emitted from the goodness and sense of well-being within just in the same way as light radiates from a flame.

When Thai teachers, parents, or grandparents instruct young people, they often conclude their exhortations with words such as, "Look, my son; be intent on what you are doing. Be firm in putting forth your effort." Even so, most people hearing this advice don't see any point. Now you are listening to the *Dhamma*; you are listening to the truths. But in order to penetrate the meaning, you have to put forth effort in your practice as well.

After recognizing the importance of establishing the mind in goodness and a sense of well-being, you should start training yourselves to develop it. When the mind finally has a place in which to rest, the goodness will then be able to grow and develop.

Just as trees cannot sustain themselves without soil, nor buildings stand without being supported by a foundation, all the goodness in the world cannot manifest without a sense of goodness and well-being within the heart. Seeing the value of a foundation, we should try our best to nourish and nurture it - this we can do by centering the mind on a meditation object as our *focus of attention (Arammana)*.

One approach commonly used is repeating the meditation mantra *Buddho* in our mind. When our focus is solely on *Buddho*, the mind will no longer be able to wander around; it will gradually gather and incline towards goodness and a sense of well-being. As we keep repeating *Buddho*, our mind will become firm and stable; if we maintain the effort without interruption, the goodness and well-being will become firm and stable as well. This firmness and stability of the mind are its strengths - our inner goodness and sense of well-being are developed and elevated due to the power of these mental factors.

To understand the *Dhamma with* clarity, you need to practice appropriately. As you train yourselves to rest in goodness and a sense of well-being within, remaining mindful like this continuously, you will be able to see your heart become luminous, bright and shining. Just as light radiates from a flame - when we rest in goodness and a sense of well-being within, brightness, cheerfulness and coolness will radiate from our heart. If we can rest our hearts like this all the time, we won't have any worries or problems. Problems arise only when we focus on things outside.

When pain, fatigue or discomfort of any kind arises in your bodies, you should restrain yourselves, not sending your minds out to grasp at the discomfort; instead you should continue practicing directing your attention to goodness and the sense of well-being within. If you give free rein to your minds, they will immediately focus on and grasp at the discomfort in your bodies - that's when problems start.

The truth is that we have experienced bodily discomfort every now and then since the day we were born. There is no way the body can escape from the invasion of discomfort. The stiffness, fatigue or aching we are feeling in meditation right now is still tolerable. When we think about the excruciating pain suffered by aged or seriously-ill people, now, that's really pitiful, too much to bear! If you contemplate this in an intelligent manner, you will train yourselves beforehand, preparing yourselves for any situation where you have no choice but to cope with excruciating pain.

So if you have discomfort in your body at this moment, you should train yourself to see it as a separate phenomenon from the mind - bodily discomfort is simply the environment of mind. Instead of paying attention to the environment, bodily discomfort, you should bring your focus inwards to look after the mind. We allow the mind to stay with the feeling of goodness: a sense of ease, a sense of well-being within. Or we can center our minds on *Buddho* to help bring up that feeling. This is the strategy for dealing with issues such as bodily pain - issues which come from our minds' immediate environment.

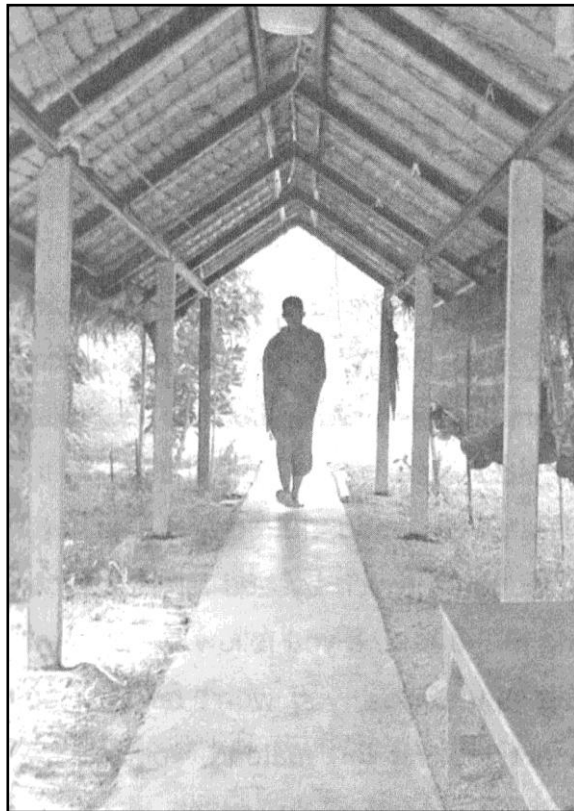
In general, the same approach can also be applied to external issues. Really, no external issue is as important as you might think. They are simply peripheral conditions that our minds happen to be situated in; they are not so different from bodily discomfort, which is part of the natural environment for the heart. When coping with external issues - such as those involving society and the people around you - you should be intelligent, skillful and selective about your *focus of attention*: Instead of sending the mind out to grasp at external issues, you center it in normality, a sense of ease and well-being within - this is the inner goodness that you can reach if you train yourselves following the Buddha's teachings.

If you practice like this continuously, you will come to the realization that happiness can be found within - the worldly pleasure derived from external objects is not your only option. If you don't recognize this fact, you will always seek goodness and happiness externally because they are all that you know. Goodness and happiness, however, can be found not only in the world but also within our hearts. When we direct our attention inwards, we will see that goodness, happiness and a sense of well-being - all these can be found in our hearts. Seeing this, we make every effort to develop these good qualities to perfection. We choose to think, speak and behave in a way that nourishes and strengthens these good qualities, and avoid those activities that lead in the opposite direction. This is how you should train yourselves.

UNDERTAKING THE TASK OF LIBERATING THE HEART

... you abide taking good qualities of the heart as your principles, upholding the Buddha's teachings as the vehicle for conveying you to the end of suffering - the problem of suffering can be solved, and its remedy starts working right from the moment when you first resist the urge to think, instead of obeying the commands of greed, hatred and delusion ...

VENERABLE AJAHN UTHAI, OCTOBER 22, 1983



A monk was doing walking meditation on the roofed path by his hut at Wat Khaoyai-Charoendham in the province of Nakhon Ratchasima.

People who train themselves in the *Dhamma* and *Vinaya* should regard the training of the mind as their sole duty. Not having shape as material objects do, the mind is characterized by its ability to think, imagine, create scenarios and concoct things. By itself, it cannot discern good from evil and has to rely upon such good qualities as *mindfulness* and *wisdom* as its tools. When *mindfulness* and *wisdom* are weak, the mind tends to think, without control. Infiltrated by greed, hatred and delusion, it churns up all kinds of thoughts which by and large lead to *suffering* and wrong-doing in the end. If you follow the desires dictated by these defiling tendencies, you won't be greeted with the happiness you are looking for. Instead, you will be struggling for some temporary gratification, which is barely enough to sustain you on the journey of *suffering*, such a journey is doomed to be torturous and will not at all fulfill your desire for true happiness and well-being.

If you want to pursue a desire, please do it properly by pursuing desire that stands up to the inspection of *mindfulness and discernment*. Look at all of you who come here for instruction: you each need to rely upon desire in order to continue practicing, don't you? The aspiration to liberate the heart from *suffering* is a noble desire. Desire of this type is necessary for putting forth effort along the path to freedom. In the texts, it is called *Chanda Dhamma* - noble aspiration. You should reflect thus: are your desires in harmony with the goal and effort required for the practice? Or are they simply a matter of obeying the commands of your passion, aversion and delusion? In this world there is good and evil; there are truths and deceptions - which will you choose? Surely you will opt for the good and the truths wherever possible? When not putting *mindfulness* and *discernment* into use, however, we tend to be deceived by our delusion and conceit, perceiving whatever we crave for as something valuable.

It is sad to see that so many people are slaves to their *defilements*, the defiling influences of greed, hatred and delusion. *Defilements* never have sympathy for their victims; they simply continue piling up torments on top of the pains that have been oppressing their victims, keeping them trapped in the cycle of birth-and-death. So you should quickly act on any opportunity to free yourselves from the orders of the *defilements*. You should not wait any longer to put the Buddha's teachings into practice, thereby destroying *defilements* and releasing your heart from the bondage of rebirth.

The Buddha warned that, as long as our hearts are not free from *defilements*, we should not trust our thoughts. An old saying, "Be watchful of your thoughts when alone, and be cautious about your speech while in a group", is quite true. Thoughts under the sway of *defilements* mostly incline towards evil, fabricating things to tarnish the heart. That's why the wise say, "Be watchful of your thoughts when alone". To be watchful means putting *mindfulness* and *discernment* constantly on guard. Whenever you find your thoughts sidetracked away from the practice, you should stop thinking immediately; and you do so with *Khanti*, patient endurance. Endure patiently and perseveringly, not giving in to the urge to think! Be determined not to entertain or chase after the thoughts instigated by *defilements*. Instead, you abide taking good qualities of

the heart as your principles, upholding the Buddha's teachings as the vehicle for conveying you to the end of suffering - the problem of suffering can be solved, and its remedy starts working right from the moment when you first resist the urge to think, instead of obeying the commands of greed, hatred and delusion.

Among the tools that the Buddha recommends for subduing unskillful thought is *Viriya*, persevering effort or energy. If you don't want to go somewhere you are required to go, you nevertheless force yourselves to go; if you don't feel like doing something you have to do, even so you press yourselves to do it. You hold on to good qualities of the heart as your treatment, looking up to *virtue* and all other levels of *Dhamma* as your guide. In this way the *Dhamma principles* you have been developing will have adequate ground on which to grow. Anyone who practices in this way will be able to appreciate the significance of these principles which arise from the training. If you don't recognize the value of good qualities such as persevering effort or energy, when will they start to grow and flourish in your hearts?

Both the Buddha and our contemporary teachers who have witnessed the marvels of the *Dhamma* within their hearts always teach that, "A heart infiltrated by greed, anger and delusion is burning and painful day and night. Provoked by these defiling influences (*defilements*), one continues seeking the sights, sounds, smells, tastes, bodily sensations and mental objects without a break. What one obtains in the end, having pursued the rewards promised by the *defilements*, are just difficulty, pain and affliction."

If you don't train your heart - if you allow it to follow the lead of *defilements*, it will be bound to the round of rebirth because the heart never dies or disintegrates. As the Buddha had realized himself declared to us, "Deceived by *defilements*, a living being continues trapped in the cycle of birth-and-death in various realms and worlds. If the corpses and bones left behind by that being from various past lives were collected together into a pile, its size would be bigger than that of a whole mountain." This statement implies that the heart never dies or disintegrates. If the heart were to die or disintegrate at some point - such as at the moment the body ceases to function altogether - how could the corpses and bones accumulate and be collected into a pile bigger than a whole mountain? We each have a body. One day, when our breathing stops and the heart leaves the body, our bodies will again become corpses - are you resigned to letting these corpses keep piling up endlessly?

Precisely because taking refuge in *defilements* will keep one trapped in the round of rebirth, causing endless suffering, we conclude that *defilements* never have sympathy for their victims. Reflecting on this fact, we surely want to find an escape from the round of rebirth; taking up the training wholeheartedly, we hope that one day we will be released from the control of *defilements*, realizing full enlightenment (*Nibbana*) through the power of our practice.

It's time to wake up! It's time to wake up from the delusion and stupidity of obeying *defilements'* commands. If you don't wake up now, you probably won't have another chance to wake up in the future. Your situation in this life is already an ideal one. Your being reborn in this world indicates that you have performed meritorious actions and developed *perfections (Parami)* in the past so you take on a life form complete with favorable faculties in the human realm (*Manussa-Sampatti*). That is, you possess a human body and mind in healthy condition. Favorable faculties in the human realm is the foundation for developing higher-level faculties such as favorable faculties in the heavenly realms (*Deva-Sampatti*) or favorable faculties for attaining *Nibbana (Nibbana-Sampatti)*, the goal that you all are aiming for. As human beings, you already possess ideal conditions for fully developing yourselves in the practice. You should be pleased and proud of having this privilege, and take advantage of the opportunity readily available here and now. There is no point in hoping for something better in a future life.

In mentioning this readily-available opportunity, I recall that the Buddha used to encourage his disciples to take *Chanda* to heart as one *Dhamma* principle for training the mind. Here *Chanda* refers to the attitude of taking an interest in the practice, including the places suitable for training the heart. Let's recall the places where the Buddha strove and attained enlightenment; let's look back on the places where the *enlightened disciples* put the Buddha's teachings into practice and achieved the goal; and let's call to mind the places where our contemporary teachers used to stay and developed successfully in *Dhamma* and *Vinaya*! All of them are the places in which you should put your trust. That is, you trust that they will be ideal places for developing yourselves in just the same way that they supported the Buddha, his *enlightened disciples* and contemporary teachers to develop themselves to the fullest. It is called *Akaliko Dhamma* - the *Dhamma* is timeless. When you reflect on this, a sense of ardent aspiration will arise in your hearts because those places exist not only in the past but also today.

Among the places the Buddha praised as suitable for training the heart are caves, cliffs, forests and mountains. Look at the place that you are living in now, this monastery! It is quiet and secluded just like those praised by the Buddha; and your hearts are full of greed, hatred and delusion, not so different from that of the Buddha before he attained enlightenment or those of his *enlightened disciples* before they witnessed the *Dhamma*. Your hearts and those of the Buddha and his *enlightened disciples* all have the same characteristics. They differ only in their levels of purity and nobility, which can be refined through the practice and training. Aside from purity and nobility, you cannot say that there are fundamental differences between your hearts and those of the *enlightened ones*. As for the physical form, you each have a reasonably healthy body. There is no real difference between your bodies and those of the *enlightened ones*.

Whatever conditions there might be that are suitable for the practice, you have them all here and now - you shouldn't have any doubt about that! So where is the place to foster faith, and where is the place to sow the seeds of aspiration for the practice. Of

course, it's in the heart! The heart is the field for developing our faith and aspiration for the practice. Our hearts suffer - and faith and aspiration for the practice are tools for dealing with the suffering of our hearts. We should make use of these tools wherever suffering appears.

To treat the illness of *suffering*, you have to put the *Dhamma* principles into use; in addition, you need to monitor your practice, making sure the *Dhamma* principles are being applied appropriately. Both should be done with *mindfulness* and *discernment*. For example, the Buddha taught letting go as a *Dhamma* principle - but from what angle should we view this to understand the essence of letting go? What should we let go of, and how do we verify whether we have truly let go? To overcome such doubts, we have to rely on the practice grounded in *mindfulness* and *discernment*, bringing all our awareness inward to observe the movements of our mind. Aside from *mindfulness* and *discernment*, nothing else can adequately take care of our mind - no other tools can be used to keep up with our mental states and discriminate between wholesome and unwholesome qualities of mind.

If we were not using *mindfulness* and *discernment*, we would appear little different from an insane person. People who are said to be insane may have perfectly healthy bodies; however, when you look at their speech and behavior, you will find their conduct bizzare and unacceptable. Reflecting from this angle helps us to realize how unseemly our behavior appears to others when we are not using *mindfulness* and *discernment*: we would probably resemble those crazy people: couldn't determine what is or isn't appropriate, lacking faith in what is truly valuable and remaining uninterested in developing goodness as human beings should.

Therefore we should stay aware of our mental states and activities so that we may track the movements of our mind; we keep letting go of unskillful thoughts, staying instead with those that are seemly and noble. The *Pali* word, *Sanditthiko*, means to know or to see for oneself. No one knows better than you do about the affairs of your mind. Do not think that it doesn't matter whether you commit wrong-doing if no one else knows what you have done. Don't entertain such a thought. Whatever evil you have done, be it significant or trivial, it won't be able to slip away from your awareness.

If you sincerely wish to develop in the practice in order to transcend *suffering*, you should fully commit yourselves to following the path taught by the Buddha. To start down the path which the Buddha has pointed out, you just get on with it without any hesitation - who are you going to trust? Are you going to trust your delusion and conceit? For how many lives have you obeyed the commands of your delusion and conceit? Countless! But what benefit have you gained from that? So let's establish ourselves in the Buddha's teachings instead!

The Buddha was fully enlightened through his own efforts, independent of a teacher who knew the way. After his enlightenment, he taught the truths to both human and heavenly beings; no other teacher in this world can compare with the Buddha, whose

wisdom was so comprehensive that nothing could deceive him in any way. For this reason you should have faith in him, being ready to undertake the task of liberating the heart following his instruction - this is your duty as human beings. If you have no respect for your human obligations but simply follow the orders of passion and aversion, you will be human beings merely in name - having a human form but no sense of shame at all. When your vision is distorted by greed and hatred, you have no qualms about committing evil - you may even go so far as to openly boast about your unwholesome acts, thinking that what you have done is wonderful !

It's a pity that the news today is filled with defiling influences of greed, anger, and delusion (*defilements*). Who are the producers of the news? Human beings! Nevertheless, they can be recognized as human only on the physical level. Even though they might know what they have produced is not pleasing to either themselves or others, they would go ahead and do it anyway! How can they do it without any concern? Simply because they do not abide by *Dhamma principles* - they are driven instead by their *defilements*.

So please respect your status as human beings. It's completely inappropriate to use human faculties for unwholesome actions. You should take responsibility for your conduct and make sure your behavior is socially acceptable and graceful. Unfortunately, as I have observed, most people in our society do not have a proper respect for their status. Traditionally, as people grew older, they developed more in *virtue*, so that *virtue* gradually became a deep-rooted refuge in their hearts. But this is not the case in our modern society. Nowadays people no longer take refuge in *virtue*, they merely go after worldly fashions and get lost in their pursuit. Thanks to modern technology, we hardly see old people walking in the streets these days. Even though the aging process clearly manifests itself in the physical characteristics of their bodies, people already well passed their forties, fifties or sixties simply do not accept this fact. If their hair is turning gray, they dye it to make it return to its original color. If teeth are broken or decayed, backs are crooked and bent? They fix them all. That's why I say, old people are disappearing from our modern society through the use of technology.

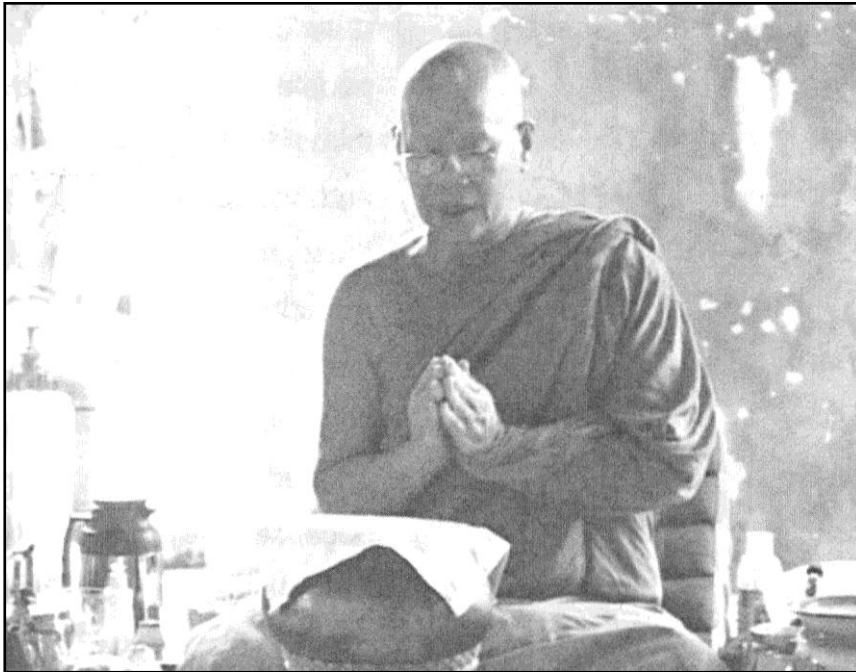
As long as people do not accept aging as a truth, they will not be able to cultivate a place of refuge in their hearts even in their old age. Eventually their bodies will start to deteriorate and finally cease to function altogether. At that point, their heart will be the only one to reap the consequences of their actions throughout the entire lifetime that is now passed. No matter how unpleasant the outcome turns out to be, and no matter how much good or evil has gathered together and piled up, the heart has to take it all in when that critical moment arrives - we can only feel compassion for these people because their hearts have nothing to rely on, yet they must bear such a heavy burden. If true happiness is what they were looking for, they should have developed in *virtue* beforehand. The result of so developing oneself will then be happiness in the heart.

The Buddha was truly kind to living beings. Though he knew that they didn't want to

hear these truths, he nevertheless disclosed them to the world out of compassion: aging is a truth, sickness is a truth, death is a truth, and being unable to stay with the desirable forever is a truth. No one can escape from these truths. Be they human beings or animals, male or female, all of them experience the same reality. These truths are displaying themselves vividly in front of you all the time; so how can it be possible that you don't see them or hear them? As soon as you open your eyes or lend your ears, the truths come to you both from yourselves and from others - where and when will the work ever be finished if you don't comprehend these truths here and now?

While you are still young, you have the most suitable conditions for the practice. As you grow older, the practice will become difficult. You should take note of this fact and put the Buddha's teachings into practice before it's too late. After listening to the *Dhamma* and learning of the path taught by the Buddha - *virtue (Sila)*, *concentration (Samadhi)* and *discernment (Panna)*, simply go straight to the practice and train yourselves accordingly regardless of where you are. *The Dhamma is timeless, so make your practice "timeless" as well: don't wait to undertake the task of liberating the heart and, until you reach the goal, never allow a break in your effort.*

LAYING A FOUNDATION FOR THE HEART



... People who are well-trained in concentration, with their hearts resting on a solid foundation, will maintain that foundation wherever they are. They constantly rest in peaceful meditative states whether they are standing, walking, sitting or lying down. Issues such as tiredness, pain or hunger will never bother or concern them ...

VENERABLE AJAHN UTHAI, SEPTEMBER 17, 1999

It is common for ordinary people to follow their own thoughts without control and without realizing it - these concocted thoughts run continuously throughout the day! At times people become extremely restless, irritated or agitated, simply because they have been carried away by their own thoughts. Worried by a great many issues, they cannot remain quiet and still. This is what people experience throughout their lives. Why is this? As the Buddha explained, their turmoil is the result of oppression by *defilements* - greed, hatred and delusion. Driven around by *defilements*, they keep worrying and agonizing over worldly affairs, which results in their having little or no peace.

If you admit that your mind is like that of an average person, you should then look to the Buddha's teachings, and rely upon them as the strategy for training your mind, to make it wholesome and skillful. So, what did the Buddha teach? He taught persistence

in one's effort, and the development of *mindfulness* and *concentration* (*Samadhi*). If you put these teachings into practice, your mind will become uplifted and eventually rest in *virtue* and all other levels of *Dhamma* (*Sila-Dhamma*) as your refuge.

The Buddha advised four types of effort: nurturing good qualities in the heart, maintaining good qualities already developed, not allowing unwholesome qualities to arise in the heart, and trying one's best to abandon the unwholesome qualities if they do arise. The Buddha only outlined the basics, but I will explain it to clarify the meaning.

To develop good qualities in your hearts, you need to make the mind firmly grounded on a foundation of *virtue* (*Sila*). If your mind is scattered, annoyed, worried or in unwholesome states of any kind, it means that you have strayed away from *virtue*. What is *virtue* then? As the Buddha explained, *virtue* refers to a state in which things are at normality - not only does the external behavior appear normal to the eye but also the mind returns to and rests in its natural, normal state of stillness¹.

Note:

1. *Normality here refers to a state that is free from disturbances. Such a state can be compared to that of the water in a jar: when not shaken or stirred, the water will return to a state of stillness naturally. In the same way, when the mind is free from troubles, worries and regrets, it will return to its natural, normal state, solid and unperturbed.*

When referring to the preconditions bringing about that natural, normal state, *virtue* can also be defined as collectedness, heedfulness or orderliness². If you exercise self-restraint, constantly remaining collected and heedful, your mind will incline to and eventually rest in its natural, normal state. As you keep placing your mind, speech and actions into good order in this way, your heart will be able to establish itself in *virtue*, and all other good mental qualities will then have a solid foundation on which to grow.

Note:

2. *Orderliness here refers to a state in which things are placed into good order so that they look nice and neat. It may be used to describe both internal and external characteristics of a person: internally there are no issues cluttering the mind, while externally the displayed behavior is appropriate and pleasing to the eye.*

Meditation starts with *directed attention* (*Vitakka*): whenever you realize that your mind has become scattered following the influence of passion and aversion, you simply lift it up from the unwholesome state and bring it back to normality by focusing on a suitable object. The Buddha taught that the training of one's mind should be anchored in *concentration* or *Jhana*, which is nothing but a matter of focusing the mind. If you don't discipline yourself, creating the causes and conditions for your mind to become settled and still, there is no way you can cut through the flow of wandering thoughts.

For developing *Jhana*, the Buddha has outlined five associated factors: *directed attention* (*Vitakka*), *examination* (*Vicara*), *rapture* (*Piti*), *pleasure* (*Sukha*), and *one-*

pointedness of mind (Ekaggata). Again, these are simply basics. In practice, how should one develop *Jhana* in accordance with these factors? As already explained, *directed attention* means lifting the mind up from its unwholesome state and re-establishing it in normality through focusing one's attention on a suitable object. That being so, what should you direct your attention to? The Buddha mentioned four major fields in *Right Mindfulness (Sammāsati)*: body, feeling, mind and *Dhamma*. These four themes are to be used as the meditation objects for anchoring your mind. You should place importance in them as your *focus of attention (Arammana)* in order to steer the mind back to its natural, normal state. This state of normality - the essential quality of *virtue* - is the foundation, the base or footing of the heart. Wherever this state comes into being is where orderliness, gracefulness and elegance manifest themselves - and then nobility and goodness of the heart will follow as a result.

People talk about *virtue* a lot but few of them have cultivated it within their hearts. If you want to develop *virtue* step by step, not only should you study the theory but you also need to put it into practice. So you train yourself to center the mind on a meditation object, bringing it back to its natural state of stillness; you place the mind into good order so that it have a place in which to rest. The moment your mind comes to rest in this way, you will feel a sense of happiness and well-being, and you will know that normality has been established - orderliness, gracefulness, elegance as well as a sense of well-being are all there within your heart. Developing such good qualities in your heart is one aspect of the effort advised by the Buddha.

Once these qualities arise, you should look after them in order to sustain them; they are to be used as the basis for further developing your mind. This you do by continuing to center the mind on a meditation object, such as the mantra *Buddho*, as your *focus of attention (Arammana)*. As you keep fixing your attention on *Buddho*, mentally repeating it with *mindfulness*, *concentration* will eventually arise. With sustained *mindfulness* and focused attention, *concentration* is bound to develop.

Practicing continuously in this way is what the Buddha meant by persistence in one's effort. Practicing like this your mind will become firm, stable and unwavering in the face of passing moods, memories, worries and agitation. These unwholesome mental states will then be cut off by the strength gained from firmness and stability of the mind; and the current of thoughts will also be subdued due to the effort of maintaining continuous, focused attention. With *mindfulness* finally in a position of power, the mind that used to be in disorder starts undergoing a radical transformation: being now placed into a new system governed by *virtue (Sila)*, it is ready to enter states of *concentration (Samadhi)* and other higher levels of *Dhamma*.

People who are well-trained in *concentration*, with their hearts resting on a solid foundation, will maintain that foundation wherever they are. They constantly rest in peaceful meditative states whether they are standing, walking, sitting or lying down. Issues such as tiredness, pain or hunger will never bother or concern them. So try to

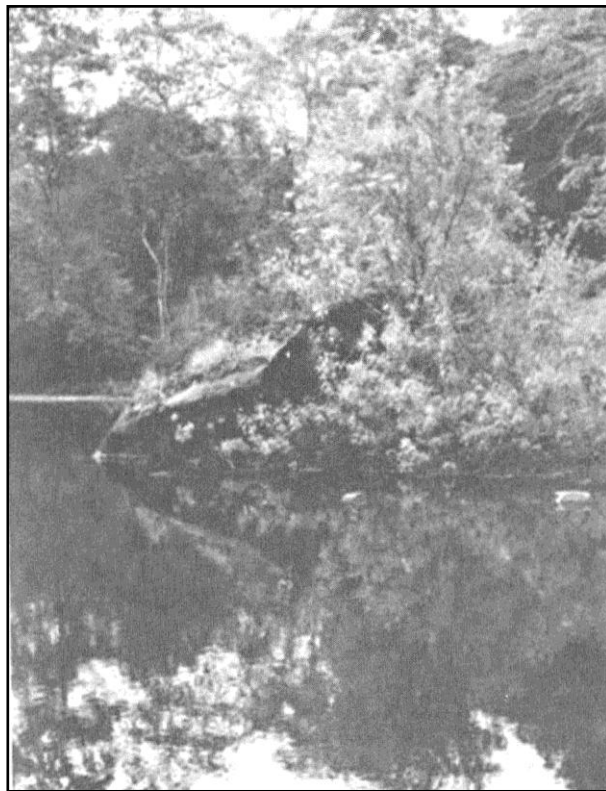
keep sitting straight with legs crossed no matter how tired, painful or hungry you become while you are meditating. Centering your mind through focused attention and supervising the whole process with continuous *mindfulness*, is the effort required to bring about *concentration*, firmness and stability of mind. If you persist in your efforts until the heart finally passes through the threshold to *concentration*, all your previous concerns will disappear. You will no longer worry about them because your heart is detached from your body when you are resting in *concentration*.

Once you have understood the steps to the practice of *concentration*, let's come back to the *Dhamma* that arouses our energy for the practice in the first place - what is that *Dhamma*? It's the aspiration for the practice - taking a deep interest in *the duties required to be fulfilled in order to attain the goal and the performing of those duties with sincere and earnest effort*. With this aspiration, and the strength gained from *mindfulness* and *concentration*, you face, acknowledge and endure difficulties again and again, meeting and relinquishing all the memories and emotions that *defilements* (greed, hatred and delusion) created to clutter your mind. What you are undertaking here is a totally different procedure from that of giving in to the turmoil of *defilements*. Now, starting with the aspiration for practice, with *virtue* and all other levels of *Dhamma* (*Sila-Dhamma*) as your refuge, you are asked to gather all your strength to practice *concentration* so as to develop good qualities in your hearts.

FOCUS, ATTENTION AND AWARENESS

.... when dwelling in that state, the mind was steady and unshakable. It derived its strength from the power of mindfulness and concentration. The mind in such a state can cut off not only the sounds of normal conversation but also those from a loudspeaker! There were cases in which my teacher used a loudspeaker and I heard nothing even though the sounds were deafening. This actually happened - what more can be said? If not because of the power of firmly established mindfulness and concentration, how would it be possible to let go of such things - like the sounds from a loud-speaker, as I had witnessed myself...

VENERABLE AJAHN UTHAI, SEPTEMBER 18, 1999



A view from Wat Tumphra-Phuwua in the province of Nong Khai.

Generally speaking, people do not really care enough about what their minds are doing; they simply give them free rein, allowing them to take their own course. As a result, their minds tend to chase after thoughts, emotions and memories, getting lost in the process in the affairs of mental phenomena.

Mental phenomena can be subdivided into four groups: the *feeling group (Vedana)*, the *memory group (Sanna)*, the *thought group (Sankhara)* and the *consciousness group (Vinnana)*. The *feeling group* comprises pleasant, unpleasant and neutral feelings; the

memory group comprises memories of all kinds, including what we generally understand by the term perception; the *thought group* comprises thought formations and mental concoctions; and the *consciousness group* refers to the simple cognizance arising from the contact between the eyes and visible forms, the ears and sounds, the nose and odors, the tongue and flavors, the body and tactile or temperature sensations, and the mind and mental objects. All mental phenomena can be placed in one of these groups.

All physical phenomena, on the other hand, are included in the *body group*, consisting of the four basic elements: the element of earth (solids), the element of water (liquids), the element of fire (thermal energy) and the element of air (gases).

Unlike physical phenomena, mental phenomena are undetectable by the eyes, ears, nose, tongue and body; they can only be perceived through the mind when they manifest themselves as *feeling, memory, thought or consciousness*. Mental and physical phenomena as described here are conditions pertaining to human beings, and generally to other beings as well. Such conditions themselves are simple enough, but people make things complicated through their association with craving - they hunger for pleasant *sense objects*, and they fantasize about lust. Not only do they allow their minds to follow the stream of craving, they also hand over control to their memories - memories of all phenomena that they have contact with under the defiling influences of greed, hatred and delusion. Obsessed with their own body and mind, they become pleased when experiencing pleasure and depressed when experiencing pain. Their minds are stirred up like this all the time.

The Buddha taught that our entire body-mind complex consists of five groups of impermanent phenomena, as according to a chant we recite frequently:

“Rupam Aniccam (the body group is impermanent), Vedana Anicca (the feeling group is impermanent), Sanna Anicca (the memory group is impermanent), Sankhara Anicca (the thought group is impermanent), Vinnana Anicca (the consciousness group is impermanent).”

The word *Aniccam* or *Anicca* here is an expression of changeability in the phenomenal world: With this event passing away that event arises; with that event passing away as well another event arises. Nothing persists. This is the nature of these *five groups of personality* - and anything that is *impermanent* is a cause for *suffering*; anything that causes *suffering* is *not-self* (not fit to be identified as self)¹. Therefore, the Buddha encouraged his disciples to investigate these *five groups* thoroughly with *discernment*, and penetrate these *conditioned phenomena (Sankhara)* to expose their characteristics of *impermanence, suffering and not-self*. He taught that whoever clings to *body, feeling, memory, thought and consciousness* will meet with nothing gratifying, but instead meet only suffering.

Note:

1 Refer to the Glossary for a detailed discussion of not-self (*Anatta*).

From these teachings, one can conclude that there is nothing substantial in human beings, men and women alike. In fact, if you grasp at your *body, feeling, memory, thought* and *consciousness* following your likes and dislikes, you will be caught up in a whirlpool set in motion by passion, aversion and delusion, trapped in the cycle of birth and death, and so suffer endlessly in different realms and worlds of existence. If you understand the truths expounded by the Buddha, you will know that his teachings always aim in the direction of withdrawal - withdrawing oneself from entanglement in the affairs of the *five groups of personality*. This is what the Buddha himself did, and what he taught both human and heavenly beings after he finally reached the supreme happiness.

After listening to the Buddha's teachings, we should contemplate them to see if they stand up to reason. If you have investigated them thoroughly and confirmed your faith in what he taught, you should then take up his teachings and train yourselves accordingly so that you may attain the same supreme happiness that he did. In the beginning, you are advised to establish yourselves in *virtue* as a foundation for your practice. In short, *virtue* means a state in which things are placed into good order or at normality. To practice *virtue*, you first look after your speech and actions to ensure that they remain in good order or in a normal state. Then you extend this effort to your minds, putting them back into good order as well.

Do not think that practicing *virtue* is an easy task. To practice *virtue* you really need to go against the grain! The moment you decide to re-establish your minds in good order, all sorts of memories and thoughts suddenly rush in to take over the mind and heart: you end up being thrown into turmoil in the process of going inward to reach normality and singleness of mind.

No matter how difficult the practice appears to be, you have to persevere, putting your trust in the Buddha. You should continue to maintain your *virtue*, and remain alert and heedful, not allowing regret, agitation, sorrow or lamentation to intrude into your heart; you should make your mind firm and stable, upholding the purity and normality of the heart as your guiding principles; and you should not allow your speech or actions to go beyond the limits of what is morally acceptable - you must keep them in check so as to assist your mind to stay within the bounds of orderliness and normality. No matter how difficult the practice seems to be, you have to persist in your effort just like this!

It is normal for our minds to jump about from one thought to another when we are just starting out in our practice. It is also common for our minds to get stuck with this memory or that story. Reaching peaceful meditative states may seem hopeless - making it so difficult to find any peace. Nevertheless, we put our trust in the Buddha, who taught that keeping our thoughts, imagination and all other mental concoctions

under control, is the way to freedom, the true happiness. As a strategy for stopping the aimless activities of the mind, he advised centering the mind in a meditation object and using *mindfulness* to hold the mind in check, not allowing it to stray away from the intended *focus of attention (Arammana)*. If the mantra *Buddho* is the meditation object that you have confidence in, you then make every effort to discipline your mind to stay with *Buddho*. While doing this, you need to remain alert to the activity of your perceptions and memories - are memories or perceptions surfacing in your mind? If they are, they should be understood as enemies that come to destroy your meditation. So you must cut them off quickly - as though wiping them out in the same moment they arise. These are precisely the work and duties that should be undertaken in your practice, so train yourselves accordingly and enter the battle.

If you don't want to use the mantra *Buddho* as your *focus of attention*, you can focus on another meditation object such as the in-and-out breath or *pure knowing - the one who knows*¹ - with your *mindfulness* constantly in charge. Even if you don't follow everything stated so far, you should at least understand that the purpose of your work here is to calm your body and mind so that you may enter *concentration*, or one-pointedness of mind; that is, you should try making the mind firmly united with one single object. During the course of this process, your *mindfulness* gains strength; and as you continue to train yourselves, eventually the power of your *mindfulness* will be able to overcome the mental activities stirred up by your memories, thoughts and feelings.

Note:

1. *The one who knows, pure knowing and Buddho are synonymous with the Pali word Citta. Contemporary Dhamma teachers in Thailand often use these terms to imply the fundamental quality of knowing that underlies all sentient existence. Please refer to Citta in the Glossary for a detailed explanation.*

When your *mindfulness* gains strength from continuous and focused attention on a meditation object, you won't feel sleepy or tired at all. You will remain with *pure knowing*, which is then imbued with energy born out of *mindfulness*. You will be able to keep sleepiness, laziness and other hindrances in check through the strength of constant awareness and wakefulness - a firmness and steadiness of the mind quite different from what one may expect from merely forcing oneself to sit.

As I recall, when I was still in training with my teacher, whether or not he would give a talk after the daily chanting routine, I would sit. As soon as I sat down, I would resolve to focus on a meditation object, and my *focus of attention (Arammana)* would disappear from awareness while I was intent on doing this, leaving me surrounded by complete silence. Such silence was not of the type experienced when one's awareness fades away. Rather, it was the kind of quietness that comes into being when the activities of mental formations, labeling, perceptions and memories have calmed down. In such a state I would not feel any sensation of pain. If I wished to listen to the talk at that time, I would then re-direct my awareness to listening. If however I did not wish to

listen, I would consider my teacher's intention for giving the talk as a desire to explain *concentration* to us: how to practice *concentration* to calm our minds. When I interpreted his intention in this way, I would conclude there was no need to withdraw from the state of *concentration* (*Samadhi*) to listen to the talk.

Once I decided not to pay attention to the talk, the mind did not flow out to receive and interpret sounds - it simply stayed with *pure knowing* as its sole focus; with the *memory group* (memorizing, perceiving, interpreting and labeling) remaining inactive, there would be no hearing. I wouldn't know what my teacher had said - I had no idea at all! How could it be possible for me to know what he said if I had yet to withdraw from that state to listen? When dwelling in that state, the mind was steady and unshakable. It derived its strength from the power of *mindfulness* and *concentration*. The mind in such a state can cut off not only the sounds of normal conversation but also those from loud-speaker! There were cases in which my teacher used a loudspeaker and I heard nothing even though the sounds were deafening. This actually happened - what more can be said? If not because of the power of firmly-established *mindfulness* and *concentration*, how would it be possible to let go of such things - like the sounds from a loud-speaker, as I had witnessed myself?

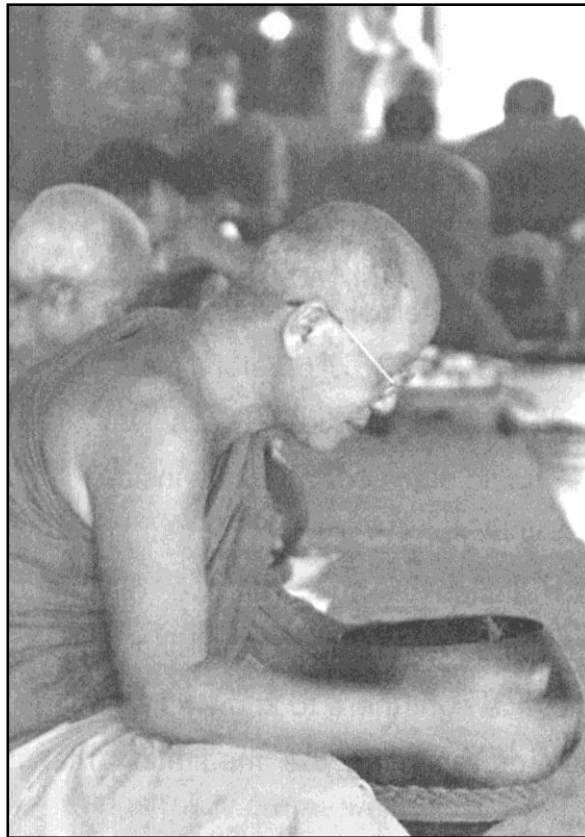
Listening to *Dhamma* talks is not an imperative for the practice. People who take up the practice come from a broad range of backgrounds: those who are new to the practice as well as those who have practiced for a long time; those who have understood the way of practice as well as those who are still in doubt. For the people who still have doubts in their practice, they do need to listen to the talks in order to learn how to proceed along the path.

But, as I have already explained, listening to *Dhamma* talks is not an imperative for everyone

PLACE OUR ATTENTION INSIDE

.... placing our attention inside means that we direct our attention to the heart and keep it there; whatever the mind is concocting, our awareness is right there to know it immediately at all times

VENERABLE AJAHN UTHAI, SEPTEMBER 29, 2007



Towards the end, *Ajaan* Yuan summarized his talk¹ concluding with the remark that meditation should be done with one's attention placed inside. This is an important point. If we haven't practiced yet, we will not know how to do it correctly. For most people only external matters are meaningful. Their attention goes naturally to external objects, which they focus on and attach great importance to. Therefore meditation is something very difficult for them to practice. That's why *Ajaan* Yuan emphasized that we should place our attention inside.

Note:

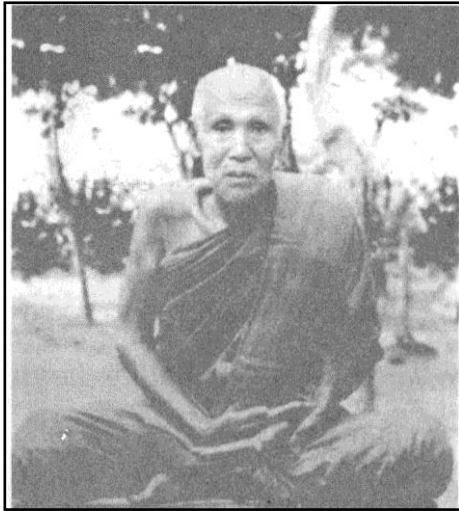
1. "Placing Our Attention Inside" is a comment by Venerable Ajahn Uthai following Ajaan Yuan's Dhamma Talk at Suan Tumphra near Bangkok on September 29, 2007.

Placing our attention inside means that we direct our attention to the heart (*Citta*) and keep it there; whatever the mind is concocting, our awareness is right there to know it immediately at all times. The purpose of repeating the meditation mantra *Buddho* is also for training ourselves to bring attention inside to stay with the heart.

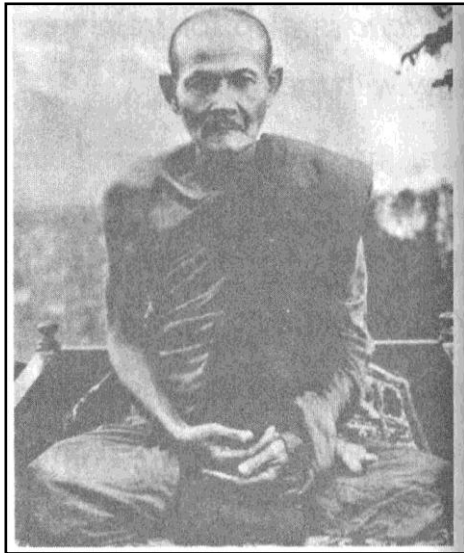
The word inside here can also be interpreted to mean inside the body when referring to the physical location where the heart (*Citta*) naturally dwells. If the heart completely leaves our body, we won't be able to do anything; we will die the moment the heart leaves our body - what remains then is merely a corpse. As long as our breathing hasn't stopped yet, the heart must still be there inside. This was what *Ajaan* Yuan emphasized the most, and he does make a good point!

Our contemporary meditation teachers always taught us to maintain our *mindfulness* and focus our attention on the heart on *pure knowing*. They recommended the method of repeating a meditation word continuously to help bring our attention inside. Practicing this method we won't go astray because it is the path that the Buddha taught after he attained enlightenment. Our contemporary teachers, after listening to the Buddha's teachings, trained themselves in this way and penetrated the truths of the way things really are as well.

As *Ajaan* Yuan put it, the custom in the Forest Tradition¹ is for teachers to point the way to the truths and the students to put what they have heard into practice. In recent times, we have had great teachers such as *Venerable Ajahn* Sao and *Venerable Ajahn* Mun in this tradition. People who listen to the truths from well practiced teachers and train themselves accordingly, will not doubt that the practice brings results; this is certain.



Venerable Ajahn Sao (1861-1941)



Venerable Ajahn Mun (1870-1949)

Note:

1. The Thai Forest Tradition is the lineage of forest-dwelling monks that was reestablished by Venerable Ajahn Sao and Venerable Ajahn Mun in Thailand in the late nineteenth century. Monks in this lineage learn the Dhamma directly from meditation rather than from studying books. They observe Vinaya strictly and follow austere ascetic practices (Dhutanga). They also adopt a life style of wandering in search of seclusion, considering this as an indispensable part of their personal practice.

FROM SILENCE TO PURE KNOWING

.... through continuously directing your attention to pure knowing, you will know what is there to be known and see what needs to be attended to. You will be careful not to allow your mind to take its own course, going back to its habitual ways if thinking if your effort is not maintained and mindfulness lapses, simply re-establish mindfulness and start again.

When you are heedful like this without interruption, pure knowing will come to the front and become bright and luminous; thoughts arising in consciousness will vanish immediately - they arise and vanish at the same time

VENERABLE AJAHN UTHAI, SEPTEMBER 23, 2007



A monk's hut at Wat Tumphra-Phuwua in the province of Nong Khai.

Stillness is a characteristic shared by all states of *concentration*. Right now you are sitting in a quiet place with your body still, and are not engaged in conversation. The only thing that might not be still right now, is your mind. So take a look at what your mind is doing while your eyes are closed. If you find that your mind is occupied by thoughts of stress and worry, or becomes entangled in the affairs of greed, anger and delusion it means, of course, your mind has not reached stillness yet.

Look at the environment around us here - it's really peaceful, isn't it? It's as natural and serene as the forests, caves, cliffs and open space that the Buddha praised - places he recommended to stay and practice in. We don't hear people's voices, or singing, or the noises from cars or planes. We are sitting in a place that is perfectly still outside, aren't we? In the midst of such stillness, what is the state of your mind at this moment? Is your mind weighed down by thoughts, concerns or worries - thoughts connected to your responsibilities outside, to external affairs, or to your emotional struggles inside? If you haven't trained yourselves well, having become skilled in the practice, the silence outside will probably not help you very much; instead you may even experience loneliness, worry, anxiety and a host of other undesirable mental states.

How about bringing this silence inwards and developing stillness within your heart? It's entirely within your ability to calm your mind and let it rest at peace. To make this happen, however, you need to practice *concentration*. Among the strategies that the *enlightened ones* recommended for developing concentration are the silent repetition of the meditation mantras *Buddho*, *Dhammo* and *Sangho*. These approaches are called *Buddhanusati*, *Dhammanusati* and *Sanghanusati* respectively, which means that one repeatedly recollects the special qualities of the *Buddha*, *Dhamma* and *Sangha* as the refuges or the supports of the heart. Another technique praised by the *enlightened ones* is called *Anapanasati*, which means being constantly mindful of in-and-out breath as one's *focus of attention (Arammana)*. These four methods are widely used in the practice of *concentration*.

People have different temperaments and tendencies, so a method of practice that is suitable for one person may not be suitable for another. Some find that, for them, directly focusing attention on the heart (*Citta*) is a powerful strategy for entering *concentration*. With this approach, we direct our attention to *pure knowing* straight away; we don't recite or think about *Buddho* - in fact, the word *Buddho* actually means *pure knowing* or *the one who knows*. The way the Buddha taught this method was to start by **setting the body straight** (*Uju Kayam Panidhaya*). Whether sitting cross-legged or with both legs bent to one side¹, you keep your back straight - a posture that symbolizes *concentration*. Following that comes, **sustaining mindfulness in the front**² (*Parimukham Sati Upatthapetva*). You keep centering the mind on your focus of attention (*Arammana*), which is pure knowing in this case.

Note:

¹ *Sitting with both legs bent to one side is considered a posture of respect in Thai culture.*

² *"In the front" here means neither in front of one's body nor in the part of one's body that faces forwards. It simply means at the point or place which one's attention is focused upon.*

If you understand the method correctly and train yourself accordingly, lethargy, sluggishness, sleepiness and torpor will completely disappear because your mind is with *pure knowing* at all times. Even though you sit with eyes closed, a sense of knowing will still be radiant at the front. Try it - it's ever so natural and you will understand your mind better by doing it. This is because, through continuously directing your attention to *pure knowing*, you will know what is there to be known and see what needs to be attended to. You will be careful not to allow your mind to take its own course, going back to its habitual ways of thinking. If your effort is not maintained and *mindfulness* lapses, simply reestablish *mindfulness* and start again.

When you are heedful like this without interruption, *pure knowing* will come to the front and become bright and luminous; thoughts arising in consciousness will vanish immediately - they arise and vanish at the same time. What I have said up to this point should be easy to understand for people whose temperament is compatible with this method - actually, the point that I have made here is just an observation about *pure knowing* and *mindfulness*. That's all!

No matter what is chosen as your *focus of attention (Arammana)*, you should keep your mind under constant surveillance. If *mindfulness* is weak, *concentration* will not develop; in order to develop solid states of *concentration*, you need to make your *mindfulness* firm and steady so that you can focus on a single object for a long time. Developing such advanced states of *concentration* (meditative absorptions) or *Jhana* as the Buddha called them, had not only been practiced by other wandering ascetics, but was encouraged by the Buddha himself as well. The word *Jhana* literally means absorption in one *focus of attention (Arammana)*. To develop *Jhana* is to fix attention continuously onto one single object to the exclusion of everything else. One's attention can be directed to either *pure knowing* itself or to an object appearing in one's awareness, including a *meditation device (Kasina)*, such as a red, yellow, blue or white colored disk. No matter what *focus of attention* you choose, the important point is to make sure that your mind stays in constant touch with *pure knowing*. In this way your mind will be under control, not falling back into the vortex of mental formations as it was before.

If you can grasp this point, you will be able to connect *pure knowing* or *Buddho* to the practice of meditative absorptions (*Jhana*). As you make progress in meditative absorptions, the significance of *pure knowing* - the essential nature of the heart - will become clear to you as well. You will come to know that the heart (*Citta*) never vanishes or disintegrates - it never dies! But how do we come to this conclusion while we are practicing meditative absorptions?

In meditative absorptions, since we are absorbed in a meditation object, mental activities that are normally stirred up by memories and emotions will have stopped; stories that previously filled our heads will have all gathered together - everything will be reduced to one single point, our *focus of attention* in meditative absorptions. If we

are skilled in this practice, we won't be bothered by pain, tiredness, hunger or any other undesirable conditions associated with our bodies and minds - such conditions won't register in our memory or perception if we don't grasp at them. Rather, we choose to rest in *pure knowing*, the essential nature of the heart (*Citta*). We continue to stay with *pure knowing* like this until it becomes evident to us that the *heart* will never die or grow old.

What's more, as *mindfulness* keeps up with the heart (*Citta*) closely, *mindfulness* and the heart will eventually merge together and become one and the same thing. Such a state can be called either *concentration* or *mindfulness*, depending on the angle from which we look at it. The truth is that no line can be drawn between *concentration* and *mindfulness* when we recognize the essential nature of the heart -- that it simply knows!

As the Buddha taught, the heart never dies or disintegrates. Its existence does not depend on a life form. In conventional language "people die" or "living beings die" simply means that their breathing ceases, and whether there is breathing or not is just a matter of physical phenomena. The heart is something separate from the breath. It can continue to exist even after breathing stops - at that moment, the heart will depart from our bodies, leaving all the worries and concerns behind, and return to its essential nature of knowing.

This can be compared to a natural phenomenon that may occur while we are meditating on the mantra *Buddho*. If we keep at it until we eventually let go of our grip on *Buddho* - the sole *focus of our attention* at that time, *Buddho* will disappear from awareness, leaving us surrounded by *pure knowing* alone.

In the process of practicing meditative absorptions (*Jhana*), the power of *mindfulness* will be transformed into the power of *concentration*. With strong *mindfulness*, you will be able to develop solid states of *concentration* and appreciate the value of inner peace. It will become clear to you that, if you let go of the external affairs and entanglements cluttering your minds and come to focus on *pure knowing* instead, you will be able to lift your hearts up from the turmoil of *conditioned phenomena* (*Sankhara*) and the strength gained from *concentration* then can be directed to developing wisdom.

So we then proceed to investigate our bodies and minds, in order to penetrate the truth of the way our physical and mental phenomena come into being. The Buddha advised investigating the body and mind from the standpoint of *impermanence*: to see that all *conditioned phenomena* arise, fade, and then pass away; none of them have real substance - they are simply products created by the outflow of passion, aversion and delusion. Out of ignorance, however, living beings are tied to such *conditioned phenomena*, experiencing *suffering* as a result. This is precisely the cause of *suffering* - there is no doubt about that! Though this is the case, there is a way to separate our heart from *conditioned phenomena* and free ourselves from suffering - it can be done if our mind stays with *pure knowing* at all times while our attention is fixed on *pure*

knowingness itself. If *pure knowing* appears prominently to the front while one is practicing in this way, it is an indication that one must have had experienced in meditative absorptions (*Jhana*) in a past life.

As already explained, *Jhana* means being mentally absorbed in a meditation object; there is another *Pali* word *Nana* which means knowledge.

When practicing *Jhana*, you disengage yourselves from the thinking process so that a sense of peace, happiness, and well being will naturally arise in your hearts. You will then be able to appreciate why the Buddha encouraged his disciples to let go of their concerns and preoccupations, and to stay with *pure knowing* instead. You will see clearly the happiness, well-being and freedom arising from practicing meditative absorptions - among all the knowledge (*Nana*) to be developed, you should develop this first!

Once you are skilled in *concentration*, you can make use of its power for investigation: you contemplate your mind as a *conditioned phenomenon* in order to penetrate its *impermanent* nature; you come to see for yourselves that anything that is *impermanent* is a source of *suffering*. Reflecting on this, you will see the harm in indulging yourselves in mental formations, a habit of the conditioned mind. Doing so will inevitably lead you to stress, worry and various other forms of *suffering*. Seeing this danger, you withdraw from your involvement with thoughts, abandoning them as soon as they arise - this insight will arise if you bring your mind back to stay with *pure knowing* while your attention is focused on *pure knowing* itself.

Those who find *pure knowing* to be a suitable meditation object may proceed with the practice in the way just described. Or if one prefers, one can use the method of repeating the meditation mantra *Buddho* as a skillful means for reaching the same point. If we keep repeating *Buddho* to the point where we let go of all other thoughts completely, our heart will return to its essential nature, *pure knowing*. In other words, all the turbulence previously in our heart will have been stilled, leaving it to rest at peace with this *pure knowing* as its only identity. The heart that was once the focus of our *mindfulness* becomes one and the same thing as *pure knowing*. At this point, we can no longer draw a line between *mindfulness* and the heart.

THE DHAMMA GIVEN TO THE OLD BRAHMIN

. . . The Buddha concluded his instruction by saying:

Compose your mind, Brahmin, and remain unperturbed as though nothing exists in this world - as if you never saw or knew anything or came into contact with anything. No matter what sense objects are perceived through your sense doors whether they are from the past, present, or future, train yourself to compose the mind and remain unperturbed as though nothing exists in this world ...

VENERABLE AJAHN UTHAI, APRIL 3, 2008



Today in this monastery we recited the Fire Sermon (*Aditta-pariyaya Sutta*) as part of our daily chanting. This *Sutta* is a teaching given by the Buddha to a group of monks who were formally ascetics that worshiped fire as their practice, following a popular belief at that time.

These monks, who had previously worshipped fire when they were still ascetics, understood the word fire only in the conventional sense. Employing a skillful didactic technique to teach them, the Buddha elaborated on the concept of fire, thus enabling them to take up the right course of practice. The monks all knew, as everyone else does, that fire is hot. So the Buddha took this point a step further in order to teach them that there were other things that burn, that cause more Suffering and harm, and would have a greater detrimental effect than the heat of ordinary fire. What then are the things that can produce more harm and suffering than real fire?

The Buddha started his sermon with the words: "Monks, ... the eyes are burning (*Cakkhum bhikkhave adittam*), forms¹ are burning (*Rupa adittam*), eye-consciousness [arising from the eyes when seeing forms] is burning (*Cakkhum-vinnana adittam*), eye-contact [contact between the eyes and forms] is burning (*Cakkhu-samphasso aditto*) ... "But the characteristics of such burning are not the same as those commonly experienced from the flames of an ordinary fire. The Buddha went on to explain, "Burning with what? Burning with the fire of lust (*Rag'aggina*), the fire of hatred (*dos'aggina*), and the fire of delusion (*moh'aggina*)." The fire of lust, or greed, flares up when the eyes see forms. For instance, when men see women, finding them attractive, their hearts become burning hot due to the fire fueled by lust; then, if they cannot fulfill their lustful wishes, hatred will arise as a result, and it is burning hot as well. All of this burning heat has its origin in delusion, which ultimately gives rise to aging, sickness, death and other kinds of *suffering*.

Note:

1. *The word forms here, and as it appears throughout the rest of this talk, means visible objects.*

The Buddha continued, talking about the ears, nose, tongue, body and mind in the same way that he had expounded on the eyes. He said that the ears, nose, tongue, body and mind are also burning when they are in contact with their corresponding *sense objects* under the power of greed, hatred and delusion. This is the essence of the Fire Sermon, the teaching given by the Buddha to those who had previously worshipped fire as their practice.

The eyes, ears; nose, tongue, body and mind are called *sense doors* while their corresponding objects - forms, sounds, smells, tastes, bodily sensation and mental objects - are called *sense objects*. It is not the case that only those who worshipped fire in the Buddha's time had *sense doors*. All fit and healthy people, including ourselves,

have these *sense doors* without exception. The Buddha not only taught the Fire Sermon to those former ascetics but also delivered similar discourses to other monastics, as well as male and female lay followers. After listening to such teachings, those who understood the meaning and attained the *fruits of enlightenment* were innumerable. If we study and understand these teachings from the Buddha, we will benefit from them as well because the *Dhamma* is timeless. Particularly, seeing that we are still under the power of passion, aversion and delusion, we should learn to guard our *sense doors* so that sensuality won't have a chance to flare up.

The things that we need to be watchful of are many. Forms, sounds, smells, tastes, bodily sensation and mental objects - all of them are potential causes of lust once they contact our *sense doors*; any of them can be the origin of craving, *defilement* and *suffering*. But to what extent have you realized the harm latent in your *sense doors*? How clearly do you see it as your duty to watch over them? Your eyes, ears, nose, tongue, body and mind are busy receiving forms, sounds, smells, tastes, bodily sensations and mental objects all day every day, but have you realized that the important issue here, the really meaningful approach to be taken, is to stay heedful and remain self-controlled so that you can put out the fire of lust (*Ragaggi*), the fire of hatred (*Dosaggi*), and the fire of delusion (*Mohaggi*) that are waiting to flare up at any moment?

The Buddha's teachings are grounded in the principle of cause and effect, which can be expressed in a simple formula: with this cause, that result follows; with that cause, this result follows. So if lust arises, what will follow as a result? What follows is birth, aging, sickness, death and all the *suffering* and misery that come from acting at the insistence of one's passion, aversion and delusion. In addition, if things that are unpleasant to see, to hear, or to feel, make their way to one's *sense doors*, they may turn the lust into anger or hatred, which eventually leads to malicious or unwholesome behavior. That's how the fire of lust burns the heart. This fire makes the heart burning hot not only in the present moment but also in the future.

In the language of *Dhamma*, the word fire is often used to describe a state that is unsettled, burning, and consuming; and our natural instinct is that we don't like to be burnt. So what is on fire, where does the burning take place? The burning takes place in the heart; the heart is burning so it is hot! If it is just slightly hot, it is still bearable, but when it's blazing hot, we will feel as if there is no place for us to escape to. No matter how big a place it is, even as large as a country or the whole world, we simply don't feel that there is even a corner in which to stay cool. The heart is burning because of the fire fueled by greed, hatred and delusion (*defilements*), this is an experience common to people the world over. Therefore the Buddha taught his disciples to consider the detrimental effects of *defilements*. He urged them to stay heedful, remain self-controlled, and exercise restraint over their *sense doors*, the media through which all the harm and *suffering* are created.

Since everyone has *sense doors*, you all should be watchful and avoid exposing yourselves to things that cause harm and *suffering*. In particular, the Buddha asked monastics not to get involved with things, both internal and external, that are sources of attractions and desires. The Buddha warned that one should be prudent and cautious of the dangerous potential found in *sense objects* (forms, sounds, smells, tastes, bodily sensations and mental objects) and in the *sense doors* (eyes, ears, nose, tongue, body and mind). Each and every one of you should stay within the bounds [of what is wholesome] - it's what you need to safeguard and take as your responsibility. The origin of *suffering*, this burning hotness, is not in places far away, but inside yourselves. To put the Buddha's teachings into practice is to look after your *sense doors* like this! You should constantly ask yourselves, to what extent have you exercised self-restraint, remaining alert to all the warning signs of danger?

On one occasion, an old Brahmin¹ who had reached the end of his life had a thought occur to him. As he was already old, he would like to make the best use of his remaining time by doing something truly beneficial. So he went to see the Buddha and asked him for a *Dhamma* teaching. The Buddha surveyed the Brahmin's mind with his own and found the Brahmin did have the potential to penetrate the *Dhamma*. The Buddha then gave him a short instruction.

Note:

1. A Hindu who belongs to the caste that is considered the highest, originally that of priests.

In essence, he said: In this world, Brahmin, we depend upon the eyes to see forms, the ears to hear sounds, the nose to smell odors, the tongue to taste flavors, the body to feel tactile sensations, and the mind to perceive mental objects. Normally, men like to watch beautiful women, to hear sweet voices, to smell pleasant scents, to eat good-tasting food, to feel pleasurable bodily sensations and to entertain intriguing thoughts. Beautiful women, sweet voices and other pleasurable *sense objects* do exist in this world; and when men see a beautiful woman, hear a sweet voice, and so forth, their sexual desire and fantasies can easily arise. But when pleasurable *sense objects* are not present - such as when you are not watching a beautiful woman or when you are not hearing a sweet voice, and so forth - can you construct those objects in your mind?

No, venerable sir, I cannot, replied the Brahmin.

Then, Brahmin, sexual desire and fantasies will not arise because lust cannot find an object on which to attach itself, said the Buddha. He further instructed the Brahmin, saying:

Whatever you see with your eyes, whether it is pleasant or unpleasant, compose your mind and remain unperturbed as if you hadn't seen it; whatever you hear with your ears,

whether it is pleasant or unpleasant, compose your mind and remain unperturbed as if you hadn't heard it; whatever you smell with your nose, whether it is pleasant or unpleasant, compose your mind and remain unperturbed as if you hadn't smelled it; whatever you taste with your tongue, whether it is pleasant or unpleasant, compose your mind and remain unperturbed as if you hadn't tasted it; whatever you feel with your body, whether it is pleasant or unpleasant, compose your mind and remain unperturbed as if you hadn't felt it; whatever you perceive with your mind, whether it is pleasant or unpleasant, compose your mind and remain unperturbed as if you hadn't perceived it.

If you understand the point the Buddha made here and apply it in your practice, the fire of lust, hatred, and delusion won't have the opportunity to flare up.

The Buddha concluded his instruction by saying:

Compose your mind, Brahmin, and remain unperturbed as though nothing exists in this world - as if you never saw or knew anything, or came into contact with anything. No matter what *sense objects* are perceived through your *sense doors* - whether they are from the past, present, or future, train yourself to compose the mind and remain unperturbed as though nothing exists in this world.

After listening to the teaching, the old Brahmin departed and started to practice diligently. He was determined and intent on his practice: with *mindfulness* constantly present, he trained himself to compose the mind and remain unperturbed as if nothing existed in this world. Practicing in this way, he became skilled at entering *concentration*. Using *discernment* supported by his *concentration*, he proceeded to investigate and reflect on the *Dhamma* that the Buddha had taught him in brief. Eventually he was able to penetrate the truths and attain the *fruits of enlightenment*.

An important practice principle is to train oneself to keep one's attention centered in the present moment. Skillful and unskillful actions you have performed in the past are already gone, while the future has not yet arrived. So you should reflect on the teaching the Buddha gave to the old Brahmin, asking yourselves: how can you stay calm in the present moment as if nothing exists in this world? If you can compose your mind in this way, remaining unperturbed, your *mindfulness* will be strong, *concentration* will be solid and *discernment* will be proficient. You will then be in a position to understand the points the Buddha made in the Fire Sermon. Actually the essence of the Fire Sermon can be witnessed right within your own body - the truths of aging, illness, death, and other kinds of suffering can all be observed within this body; whether one takes an interest in comprehending the truths, however, is up to the individual.

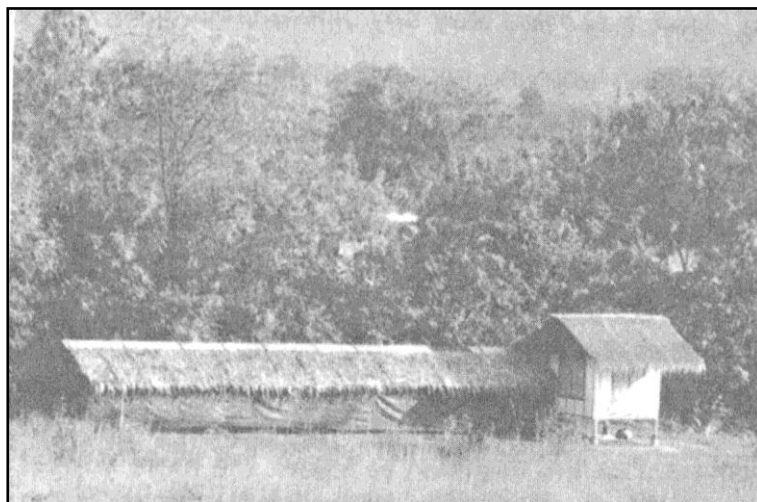
If you listen to the *Dhamma* and investigate the truths wholeheartedly, you will become disenchanted with your worldly attachments, seeing that there is nothing substantial in

this world; instead, there is only *suffering*. Really, no worldly phenomena are in your interest; they are simply shadows of *impermanence*, *suffering*, and *not-self* no matter how you look at them.

So you should train yourselves to compose your mind and remain unperturbed as if nothing exists in this world. You should exercise restraint over your *sense doors* and be constantly aware of the danger inherent in *sense objects*. If you keep reflecting on the potential harm of those objects, one day you will become disillusioned with them, seeing that they are nothing but fire burning your heart when you are not heedful - this is the Buddha's teachings in the Fire Sermon that we chanted today.

You should understand that in your practice, your duties are nothing but staying attentive to and mindful of the activities of your mind. If you find that you are worrying, it indicates that you are grasping things outside and giving importance to them. That's how the problems start; that's how suffering arises.

Why did the Buddha teach us to remain unperturbed as if nothing existed in this world? Let's recall some of what we have seen, heard, known or been in touch with before. As time passes - the days, months, and years - those memories are just what they are, don't they? Are they any different because you know of them? Does your worrying improve anything or make life better in any way? When you investigate this with *mindfulness* and see it as it really is, you will see that worrying doesn't serve any purpose. So you let go of your concerns, loosen your grip and relinquish things that you used to hold onto, because you see no value or substance in them any more - your perspective changes beyond all recognition! Now you see non-grasping or relinquishment as the direction to follow: the more you let go, the more peace and happiness you will experience. When you learn to see this clearly for yourselves, you loosen your grip and let things go.



A monk's hut with a roofed walking path at *Wat Khaoyai-Charoendham* in the province of Nakhon Ratchasima.

Glossary

Ajahn [Thai word]: Teacher; mentor; also used as a term of respect when referring to a senior monk. It is also spelt Ajaan or occasionally Acharn.

Anatta: The truth that all phenomena, including the *five groups of personality*, are devoid of anything that can be identified as a self, ego or soul. *Anatta* can be interpreted in terms of the *five groups* as follows: a) Since none of the *five groups* can be controlled by us, that is, we cannot command them to behave as we wish them to, they are not really ours, b) Since all of the *five groups* are inherently *impermanent* they are a cause for *suffering*; and things that cause *suffering* are not desirable, not fit to be attached to and identified as ours.

Arammana / Dhammarammana: a) The focus of one's attention. It can be an object of the *sense doors*, an object of meditation (such as in-and-out breath), a theme from the teachings of the Buddha (such as the Four Noble Truths), or a preoccupation or obsession (such as greed or hatred in one's mind). b) *Sense objects*. That is, forms, sounds, smells, tastes, bodily sensations and mental objects.

ascetic practices [Dhutanga]: See *Dhutanga*.

Ayatana: Sense media or bases. The media or bases through which one's sense impressions are formed. In total there are twelve sense media (sense bases), which consists of six *sense doors* (the eyes, ears, nose, tongue, body and mind) and six kinds of *sense objects* (forms, sounds, smells, tastes, tactile sensation and mental objects).

Bhikkhu: A fully ordained Buddhist monk.

body (group) [Rupa]: One of the *five groups of personality*, consisting of all physical phenomena associated with the body. Also see *Khandha*.

Buddho: The mind's innate quality of pure knowing. It is often used as a meditation word by contemporary *Dhamma* teachers.

Chanda: The attitude of taking an interest in or a liking for something, such as taking an interest for undertaking the work which needs to be done in order to achieve one's goal.

Citta: Mind or heart. In its purest form, *Citta* is the essential knowing nature upon which all other mental phenomena are based; it is the fundamental quality of knowing that underlies all sentient existence. This fundamental quality is often referred to as *the one who knows*, *pure knowing* or *Buddho* by contemporary *Dhamma* teachers. When associated with a body, *Citta* can be recognized through various functions such as *feeling*, *memory*, *thought* and *consciousness*; in addition, it may manifest as different mental conditions, either wholesome or unwholesome, such as greed, anger, arrogance, *mindfulness*, *discernment*, and so on. In this book, *Citta* is translated as mind or heart, whose precise meaning depends on its context.

concentration [Samadhi]: a) One-pointedness of mind. b) The act of keeping the mind centered or intent on a single object.

conditioned phenomena [Sankhara] See *Sankhara*.

consciousness (group) [Vinnana]: As one of the *five groups of personality*, *consciousness group* forms simple cognizance arising from the contact between the *sense doors* and *sense objects*. Also see *Khandha*.

defilement [Kilesa]: See *Kilesa*.

Dhamma/Dhammo: This word encompasses a broad range of meaning: a) The Buddha's teachings. b) Laws; the truths; the way things are. d) Correctness; justice; righteousness. e) Good qualities; virtues. f) Mental or physical phenomenon. g) Mind-objects.

Dhutanga: The practices that monks may choose to undertake if and when they see fitting. There are thirteen: wearing cast-off cloth, using only one set of three robes, going for alms, not by-passing any donors on one's alms path, eating from the bowl, refusing food brought afterwards, eating no more than one meal a day, living in the wilderness, living at the foot of a tree, living in the open air, living in a cemetery, accepting whatever lodging assigned, and not lying down.

Discernment [Panna]: The human faculty that enables one to search, probe, compare, and investigate. (Also see *wisdom*)

Dukkha: a) The unsatisfactory nature and the general insecurity of all conditioned phenomena, which on account of their impermanence, are all liable to suffering, and this includes pleasurable experience. b) The feeling that arises in one who resists what he or she is directly experiencing in the present moment. This can range from agony when struggling against excruciating physical pain, to the disappointment arising from grasping the pleasure of resting in states of *concentration*.

enlightened disciple [Ariyasavaka]: Those who have attained any of the four *fruits of enlightenment* after directly or indirectly receiving teachings from the Buddha, and, as such, are called the Buddha's disciples.

enlightened one [Ariyapuggala]: An individual who has attained any of the four *fruits of enlightenment*.

feeling (group) [Vedana]: One of the *five groups of personality*, consisting of pleasant, unpleasant and neutral feelings. Also see *Khandha*.

focus of attention [Arammana / Dhammarammana]

(four) fruits of enlightenment [Ariyaphala]: The successive levels of spiritual liberation attained along the path leading to the absolute freedom of *Nibbana*. That is, *stream-entry [Sotapanna]*, *once-returning [Sakadagami]*, *non-returning [Anagami]* and *arahantship [Arahanta]*.

(five) groups (of personality) [Khandha (Panca-khandha)]: See Khandha.

impermanent (impermanence) [Aniccam or Anicca]

Jhana: Advanced levels of *concentration* or meditative absorptions. The first level of *Jhana* has five factors: *directed attention (Vitakka)*, *examination (Vicara)*, *rapture (Piti)*, *pleasure (Sukha)* and *one-pointedness of mind (Ekaggata)*.

Kasina: An external meditation object used by meditators to anchor their attention in order to enter *concentration*. As a rule, one first focuses on the *meditation device* with eyes open until that *meditation device* becomes internalized, such that they can visualize it vividly even with their eyes closed. There are ten such devices listed in the *Pali* texts. They are: the earth, water, fire, air, blue, yellow, red, white, space and light *Kasina*.

Khandha (Panca-khandha): Five physical and mental groups of personality, that is, *Rupa (body group: all physical phenomena associated with the body)*, *Vedana (feeling group: pleasant, unpleasant and neutral feelings)*, *Sanna (memory group: memorizing, perceiving, interpreting and labeling)*, *Sankhara (thought group: imagination, thought formations and mental concoctions, as well as the products coming from these actions)* and *Vinnana (consciousness group: simple cognizance arising from the contact between the sense doors and sense objects)*.

Kilesa: The defiling influence that soils or stains the heart, making the heart impure and dirty. It includes various forms of greed, hatred, and delusion, such as passion, envy, arrogance, conceit, stubbornness, laziness, restlessness, and all sorts of more subtle variations which are responsible for producing unwholesome states of mind.

meditation device [Kasina]: See Kasina.

memory (group) [Sanna]: As one of the *five groups of personality*, the *memory group* performs the function of memorizing, perceiving, interpreting and labeling. This term has been rendered as perception as well by other translators.

mindfulness [Sati]: The faculty that enables one to keep remembering one's task and be attentive to whatever one is doing.

Nibbana: *Nibbana* literally means 'extinguished'. In Buddhist literature, it specifically refers to a permanent state in which the threefold fire of greed, anger and delusion is extinguished from the heart. That is, the heart is free from everything that binds it to the cycle of rebirth and absolute freedom is attained - the ultimate goal of the Buddhist training.

not-self [Anatta]: See Anatta.

(the) one who knows: A synonym of *Citta*, the fundamental quality of knowing that underlies all sentient existence.

Pali: The language in which the most ancient edition of the Buddhist Canon, The *Pali Canon*, is preserved.

Parami: The good qualities that one acquires in the process of his or her efforts towards attaining a noble goal such as Buddhahood. In particular it refers to ten: generosity [*Dana*], virtue [*Sila*], renunciation [*Nekkhamma*], wisdom or discernment [*Panna*], persevering effort [*Viriya*], patient endurance [*Khantij*], truthfulness [*Sacca*], determination [*Adhitthana*], loving-kindness [*Metta*], and equanimity [*Upekkha*].

perfections [Parami]: See *parami*.

pure knowing: A synonym of *Citta*, the fundamental quality of knowing that underlies all sentient existence.

rains retreat [Vassa]: It refers to the three-month period, approximately from July to October, when monastics are required to live settled in a single place and not wander freely about. This time period agrees approximately with the rainy season in South-East Asia.

Sangha/Sangho: The community of the Buddha's disciples. On the conventional level, it means the Buddhist Monastic Order. On the ideal level, it refers to those of the Buddha's followers, whether lay or ordained, who have attained at least the first of the four *fruits* of enlightenment.

Sankhara: As a general term, *Sankhara* refers to all forces that form or condition things, the process of forming or conditioning and to those formed or conditioned phenomena that result. As the fourth *group of personality (thought group)*, it refers to imagination, thoughts and mental concoctions as well as the products coming from these actions.

sense doors [Ajhattikayatana]: The eyes, ears, nose, tongue, body and mind. (Also see *Ayatana*.)

sense objects [Bahirayatana]: The objects of the *sense doors*, that is, forms, sounds, smells, tastes, bodily sensations and mental objects. (Also see *Ayatana* and *Arammana*.)

skillfulness [Kusala]

suffering [Dukkha]: See *Dukkha*.

Sutta: A discourse that is given by the Buddha or one of his enlightened disciples and is recorded in The *Pali Canon*.

thought (group) [Sankhara]: See *Sankhara*.

Vinaya: The code of monastic discipline recorded in The *Pali Canon* and the practice of this.

virtue [Sila]: a) Moral integrity; moral conduct, discipline. b) Moral precepts; training rules for the monastics. c) Normality; being in a state that is unperturbed, free from all kinds of disturbance. Such a state can be compared to that of the water in a jar: when not shaken or stirred, the water will return to a state of stillness naturally. In the same way, when the mind is free from troubles, worries and regrets, it will return to its natural, normal state, solid and unperturbed.

Wat [Thai word]: Monastery or temple.

wholesomeness [Punna]

wisdom [Panna]: knowledge or insights gained from mental cultivation and development. (Also see *discernment*).

Idam me punnam Nibbanassa paccayo hotu

May this merit be a contributing cause for the realization of Nibbana

--- what-Buddha-taught.net ---