

To See the Truth

The Teachings of
Venerable Pramote Pamojjo



By Jess Peter Koffman
Edited by Bhikkhu Korakot Kittisobhaṇo

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Venerable Pramote Pamojjo and Suan Santidham give the gift of Dhamma for free. This book is available at Suan Santidham in Sriracha, Thailand, and the eBook/pdf file is available for free download at www.wimutti.net.

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To See the Truth



Forward

It is an honour only surpassed by my opportunities to learn with him in person that I bring you this compilation of Venerable Father Pramote Pamojjo's teachings on meditation and Dhamma practice. The principles that Venerable Father ("Luang Por") Pramote teaches somehow feel new and unprecedented, and yet when one reads the Buddha's teachings on mindfulness and the Abhidhamma (higher teachings), it seems Luang Por is completely consistent with scripture. The Buddha, in his enlightenment, brought the teachings of how to end suffering to this world. Luang Por Pramote is propelling his students to see that this path to spiritual enlightenment (nibbāna) is available for everyone who wishes to walk it. He has sparked a movement of Dhamma practice among the younger and more intellectual Thai Buddhists, and there is a sense of renewed faith and diligence in meditation practice among them. Thousands of practitioners, including myself, are experiencing great benefits along the way, as mental suffering lessens in severity and duration as a result of

practicing according to the teachings Luang Por Pramote shares in his talks.

Luang Por's Dhamma talks are given in the Thai language and have been translated into English in this compilation from their audio recordings. Luang Por travels across Thailand to teach the most profound Dhamma in easily comprehensible ways, suitable for all ages and all levels of practice. He speaks jovially, uses modern colloquial Thai, and the topics he relates are helpful for everyone from complete beginners to the most advanced of Dhamma practitioners. He resides at his centre for the study of Dhamma called Suan Santidham, "The Garden of The Peaceful Dhamma," in a secluded and forested area of Sriracha, Chonburi, Thailand. At least two mornings per week, he gives Dhamma talks at this location to audiences of one or two hundred practitioners of all levels of understanding and from all around the country.

My intent in this translation and compilation is to expose the teachings of Luang Por to a wider range of people who may be interested in practicing the Dhamma, and who are denied the privilege of directly receiving his teachings offered in the Thai language. This is an aid for meditators who are willing to open their minds to the essential principles of meditation and who are willing to

practice diligently according to these principles to attain insight and liberating wisdom.

Luang Por was an extremely avid meditation and mindfulness practitioner for over 40 years before he became a monk. He studied in the Thai forest monk tradition where most of the details of meditative development were kept in small circles of monks. Luang Por Pramote, however, practiced as a non-monk for a long time before ordaining and believes that the newer generations are able to understand and practice meditation in the correct way to attain insight wisdom and stages of enlightenment without the need for monkhood. He has a deep understanding of the trials, errors and tribulations that keen meditators encounter in pursuit of the Dhamma. His insights and guidance have been invaluable to a great many in Thailand; indeed, Luang Por has an unprecedented amount of followers who have awakened to different levels of wisdom into the Truth.

This compilation is not intended as a scholarly endeavor; therefore, many Buddhist terms have been removed or altered with permission of Suan Santidham for ease of understanding by Buddhists and non-Buddhists alike. The talks in this book are not translated in their entirety. Teachings that are aimed at specifically a Thai audience and

comprising of Thai cultural references have been removed. Some portions that do not pertain to the main topic of the talk have also been removed. A few portions have been expanded upon (an extra sentence at most) where knowledge of Buddhist principles was presupposed. The language has also been kept casual and informal as to keep to the feel of the Dhamma talks as best as possible. Luang Por speaks very much like a warm and helpful friend, looking to improve or correct our understanding of the principles of the practice. He lectures day in and day out on the principles of meditation and aids countless practitioners with personal attention so they can develop further.

I selected talks covering subject matter that Luang Por Pramote tends to emphasize most. Each Dhamma talk presented in this compilation is followed with a series of short conversations with Luang Por. The short conversations were chosen according to their relevance to each topic. Some of which occurred on the dates of the translated talks and some were chosen from entirely other dates as referenced. After each of his Dhamma Talks, Luang Por Pramote allows practitioners to update him on their progress (which has become known as “submitting their homework”) and ask for advice pertaining to their meditative development. Attendees often listen in as a support to their

own practice. His format is here emulated, though priority was loosely given to subject matter rather than the date and location of the conversation.

His ability to relay the Buddha's ancient teachings in such a fresh and modern way is clearly seen as a result of the completeness and profundity of his own understanding of the practice he teaches. However, he reminds appreciative students that it is the Buddha who brought these teachings to humankind, and certainly not himself. When Luang Por Pramote speaks, he has a way of saying exactly what a given Dhamma practitioner needs to hear at the time it needs to be heard. Somehow the teaching appropriate for each student eases its way into his talks at the appropriate moment to help reveal more Truth and bring a deeper understanding.

It is my hope that the power and timeliness of the teachings are not completely lost in translation and the reader is able to develop his or her understanding of the Dhamma and hence, come to see the Truth.

Jess Peter Koffman

September 16, 2011.

To See the Truth



Glossary

Defilements – Usually spoken of under the sub-headings of greed (desire), aversion (fear, anger, sadness, etc.) and delusion (ignorance of Truth; lack of wisdom), these are what taint or cloud the mind incessantly, making it impure and unable to see things as they are.

Dhamma Practice – Both formal meditation and practice in daily life in conjunction with Buddhist teachings in order to gain wisdom, see things as they are and thus liberate from suffering.

Fabrication – Sankhāra or mental formations. In this translation, fabrication is usually referring to unnoticed defilements coming in and creating our deluded sense of who we are and our make-believe situation. In some cases, the meaning of fabrication is merely illusions created by thought.

Khandhas or Aggregates – These are the five groupings that comprise body and mind: form, feelings, memory, mental formations and consciousness. Regular, non-enlightened human beings are

deluded in believing that they are these khandhas and have not realized the truth that there is no self.

Mind – Mind is used in two main ways, to be deciphered by context. 1) The most common usage is in the term “body and mind” or in phrases such as “we must be mindful of this body and this mind”, where body represents the first khandha (“rūpa”) and mind is an inclusive term for the last four of the five khandhas (“nāma”) in which all mental phenomena can be grouped: feelings, memory, mental formations and (bare) consciousness. 2) The second most common usage is the mind as that which watches, is aware or knows. It is an easy way to denote the fifth khandha, consciousness, as to not make it seem too abstract of a concept (and to avoid confusion between it and the pure consciousness that is spoken of in new-age spiritual books). The mind that Luang Por Pramote speaks of here is the bare consciousness that is a rudimentary awareness allowing the experience of a phenomenon to occur. It arises and falls along with each phenomenon. As an example of this usage, Luang Por often says, “The body stands, walks, sits and lies down, and the mind is the watcher.”

Mindfulness – Awareness of physical or mental phenomena. More specifically, awareness of what the body is doing in real time, or recognizing

what mental phenomena or behaviours have just arisen. Genuine mindfulness arises automatically as a result of the practitioner's ability to be aware of the body and to recognize mental phenomena when they arise.

Nibbāna – Nirvana, Enlightenment, the end of suffering, the eradication of the defilements.

Phenomena – Mental and physical phenomena. Physical phenomena include bodily movements, breathing, bodily positions (standing, sitting, lying down) and the like. Mental phenomena are primarily mental states, such as that of thinking, restlessness, or curiosity, emotions, and feelings, but are primarily called phenomena in this book as in their true nature, such states last only momentarily.

Wisdom – True wisdom in Buddhism is not intellectual knowledge, but comes from seeing the truth of how things really are through direct experience. Here it implies seeing at least one of the Three Characteristics of body and mind: things are impermanent (always changing), unsatisfactory (they don't persist), and they are non-self (not under control). This will be explained in detail in the text.

To See the Truth



Watching the Mind 101

Suan Santidham, April 03, 2009

Welcome everyone. It is nice to see a new generation of people interested in the Dhamma, the Buddha's teachings on the true nature of things. I find that young and inexperienced people are much better students of the Dhamma. They are much easier to teach because they are open to learning new things. They haven't filled their teacups to the brim, so to speak. Adults who have meditation experience are often the most difficult to teach. They are usually stuck in Samatha, which is the practice of intently focusing on an object of meditation to reach a temporary state of calmness or peace. This practice predates the Buddha and does not lead to an understanding of the true nature of things. It does not lead to the end of suffering, to enlightenment. Vipassana is the meditation we need to practice in order to set the stage for enlightenment.

It is important that we don't create an idea in our heads that meditation practice is something

difficult. Many people think that we must sit for hours or do walking meditation for days on end in order to truly practice the Dhamma. This is a misunderstanding. Dhamma is a subject of study. But it is to be learned by studying ourselves. The scope of our study is regarding how we can live with little or no suffering. The ultimate objective of studying the Dhamma is to be completely liberated from suffering. We keep studying, keep practicing, until we are free from suffering.

Now there are two main kinds of suffering, that of body and that of mind. Since we are alive, suffering of the body is certain. Even the Buddha himself had a body that suffered. The scriptures describe many circumstances in which the Buddha was ill, and as he neared the end of his life he was dreadfully so, passing blood. Though the body of an enlightened one can be hot, cold, hungry, thirsty or ill, the mind is completely free of suffering. No matter what life presents, the mind no longer suffers. None of my students here have reached this point yet, but many have significantly reduced suffering. We need to keep practicing, keep studying the body and mind until there is no more attachment to them. One day there will be a complete release from attachment to body and mind, and suffering will end.

The vast majority of people are completely immersed in suffering. When one's body is ill or even just uncomfortable, his mind suffers. Or someone can have a strong and healthy body, but his mind suffers when he is merely not getting what he wants. Or perhaps he loses some assets or is wanting new ones; the mind is once again filled with suffering. The mind is finding ways to suffer all the time.

The Buddha taught how to reduce suffering, and if we keep practicing, we can live as a person in this world with no mental suffering at all. It is not so difficult. For those of us who are intellectuals, who have many responsibilities in this world, who use our minds all day long, it is most appropriate for us to practice by way of watching the mind. This is about knowing what is going on in our mind right now. Can we see that our mind is incessantly moving and changing states? One moment it is happy; the next it is unhappy. One moment it is nice; the next it is mean. One moment it is lost in thought, the next moment it is lost in focusing on something. It wanders off, daydreams, gets angry, and the list goes on.

Have we ever been angry with our superiors at work or school? Can we notice that we feel differently about each of them? We may look at

one and feel we really like her. While when we look at another, we feel a lot of distaste. Even disliking the subject she teaches can make us look at her in disgust. Many things may come up in the mind just from seeing. We may start complaining that our teacher or boss is too picky or mean. The people we don't like, we think are no good at all. We criticize them, which implies that we think we are better than they are or know more than they do (laughing).

We see this person and like him. We see that person and dislike her. The way to practice Dhamma here, in simple terms, is to gauge the mind. We see the liking or disliking. We see the kindness or unkindness. We see the happiness or unhappiness. We see in one moment anger, the next greed and perhaps we see the mind is deluded after that. The mind may be thinking busily. Do we all know what this is like? Most of us are off thinking this way right now! Do we know what feeling down, disappointed, annoyed or worried is like? Sure we do. How about feeling happy, sad or jealous? From now on when we are jealous, we should notice that the mind is jealous. Have we ever been scared? Many guys like to act as if they are brave and confident, but actually they are full of fear. They need to have a woman by their side. If we practice the Dhamma,

when fear appears in the mind, we know it is afraid as quickly as possible so that fear doesn't discreetly come in and take us over.

Whatever state comes up in the mind, whether it is pleasant or unpleasant, we notice that it has arisen, right then and there. As examples, the mind may be happy, upset, angry, scared, worried, depressed or disappointed. We are to just know honestly that this is so. The word "Buddha" means to know. The Buddhist approach is to know. We know what has arisen and start to realize that whatever arises is temporary. Has anyone here been angry for a whole year? How about a whole month? How about a whole day? Can we see that no matter how angry we are, it goes away? We only feel angry again if we think about the situation again.

When we were young, a kid may have punched us and caused pain and anger. When we think of it now, anger can still arise. But it won't stay long – nothing does. Things arise, stay temporarily and then fall away soon after. When things we don't like go away, like the end of a boring class or a dreadful day at work, we feel relieved temporarily. When it just won't end, however, we feel heavy. Do we know what a heavy mind feels like? It really does feel heavy!

Can we see that there are many different mental states, all of varying degrees? Fear and hate feel different. Disgust and hate also feel different. Can we see this? Sometimes the differences are obvious, sometimes subtle.

The three aspects to watching the mind effectively

There are three aspects to watching the mind, three tendencies to remember to avoid if we are to practice effectively.

The first is to avoid intending to know in advance. We just need to know the feelings that temporarily arise in the mind after they do. Let the feeling occur naturally first and then know that it has. If anger arises, know that it has. If greed arises, then know that it has. If the mind has wandered off, know that this has happened. Why must we know after the fact? This is because many of the feelings that arise are defilements of mind (i.e. anger, desire; see glossary for more). Only one mind arises at a time, so a defiled mind cannot arise at the same time as a non-defiled mind. For example, anger cannot exist in the mind at the same moment that the mindfulness (see glossary) notices the anger. The defiled angry mind drops off and is replaced by a non-defiled mind – the one that is mindful of what just happened.

It is important to not watch intently and wait for what will arise next. Let a feeling arise first and then know that it has. A good way to demonstrate this is to imagine a rabid dog suddenly darting at us. We feel terrified. We then should know that fear has arisen. We didn't intend for this occurrence beforehand.

Of course we should still get out of the way of the dog! We do not proceed to let the dog bite us and see what happens after that. Anyone who says they will just leave it up to their karma, is making new karma – stupidity! We do what is appropriate so that we are not harmed. If we are with a friend, we just need to run a little faster than our friend and we'll be fine (laughter). Or we can practice the art of sacrifice and run slower than our friend. But that is another topic altogether. As I am speaking here, many people here have their minds wandering out. Some are wandering to me, some are wandering in thought, and some have wandered home already!

Back to the lesson, we should not intend to watch the mind. Many people have too much intention; they wait for the gong to be struck to begin the meditation session and say, "Ok, when the session begins I'm really going to watch my mind well." To their surprise, little happens. This is

because they focused in beforehand, and made their minds still. When we hold our attention somewhere, there won't be much movement to notice. The mind will be immobilized. Instead, we should practice in the most natural way. Each time the mind thinks or the eyes, ears, nose, tongue, or body make contact with the outside world, a feeling is likely to appear. Be aware of what does. If we hear a song and like it, we should know that liking has arisen. If someone is shouting, wanting may arise. We may want to know what this person is ranting and raving about. Know that wanting to know has arisen. Then we listen for a while and realize it is us that he is going on about! Wanting to know will have disappeared, and anger crops up. Our job is to know that anger has arisen. Know after the fact, again and again, as much as possible. Watching the mind is not about focusing in advance. It is about knowing what has arisen.

Ok, now I want all of you to start watching the mind right now. Watch it! Can you see that you are starting to freeze up, to get still? This is because you intended to watch. It is the wrong approach. Ok, now I would like you to stop watching the mind and I'll tell you an old story. Can you feel that you are starting to relax again? When something easy and amusing is about to happen our

mind loosens up and relaxes. Know that it has relaxed. This is the right approach. Intending to watch will stiffen us up, and thus things will not arise naturally.

So the right approach is to not intend, and instead, to know what arises after the fact. This is the first of three aspects to teach regarding watching the mind. I should mention, however, that when we know, we need to know quickly. We can't be angry today and realize it tomorrow. When anger arises, we need to recognize that there is anger while the anger is still there. If it has already dropped away, and we wake up to it an hour later, it is too late. We should recognize the anger while it is there. We will notice, "Just a moment ago I was angry, and now I am knowing." We will see that when we are mindful of the anger, the anger is not there in that moment of knowing. Know subsequent to their arising of phenomena, but as close to their arising as possible without prior intention. Once we are able to recognize many different states in this way, mindfulness will come automatically and the path to the wisdom that will liberate us from suffering will begin.

Now I'll tell you about the second aspect of watching the mind correctly: The mind should not slip down into any of the mental phenom-

ena or feelings of which you have become mindful. Normally, when we want to know something, our minds will move out to the place of interest. Try it now. Let's have a look at our arm see how many birthmarks there are. Can you see that your mind went out to look at the arm? I'm not interested in how many marks there are; I want us to notice that the mind goes out. The mind is not stable, not rooted in awareness. It is slipping down into what it is knowing. We can easily see this happen when we read something a bit far away, like a poster on our wall, or a street sign. The mind runs out to see it, and then it goes into thinking, internally repeating the words it is reading.

When we watch the mind, we should know what has arisen from a distance, as if we are not involved in what is going on. Don't move towards the feeling or mental state once it has been acknowledged. If anger, for example, arises in the mind, see it as if it is someone else who has just become angry. The mind is just the watcher; there is a distance between the mind and the anger. Don't focus in on the anger. The tendency of meditators is to go in and focus on what has come up, just like when zeroing in on the television when our favorite show is on. The mind goes out to the TV and gets lost in it. From now on, whenever

the mind goes out to watch something, know that this is happening. When we see this happen, the mind will become stable on its own. We should not try to force it to be stable in awareness.

Vipassana practice has no force in it whatsoever. It is about knowing things as they really are. If there is force, there is stress, which is always a sign that there is something wrong. So we don't force it, we just know it when the mind slips down into something. If we think of a friend, our mind will slip into the world of thought and completely lose awareness of our body and mind. We need to know that this has happened, and the mind will become rooted on its own.

When we watch football, we don't watch it from the field. We are in the stands, watching from a distance. The players are running around, but we are stable; there is a space between us and the game. Similarly, at a concert, we watch the band from our seats. We do not take the stage. There is a distance between us and the performance. We are merely the watcher. This is how we should watch our feelings – from a distance. We should not slip down and cling to the feelings. When we do, we should know this, as soon as we can, and the mind will loosen its grip on what has arisen and become the watcher for that moment.

The third aspect of watching the mind applies after we know what has arisen. We don't interfere in any way with the feeling or mental phenomenon that we have recognized. It absolutely doesn't matter what it is that arises, we let it be. If anger arises, we do not try to make it go away. Our job with regards to the anger is just to know that the mind is angry. We do our best to be just the watcher and not get in the way. We are not trying to get rid of suffering if it arises; we are to just recognize that it is there. If happiness arises, we don't try to make it last long. If a virtuous state arises, we don't try to keep it. We are just to know with equanimity: without maintaining, denying or resisting what comes up. Formally put, the third aspect of watching the mind is to know what arises with a mind that is equanimous. This means the mind is impartial or neutral to whatever phenomena appear. Equanimity is accomplished by seeing the mind either liking or disliking what it has just recognized. Equanimity is not accomplished by forcing the mind to be neutral. Force causes stress. In Vipassana, there is no controlling, denying, resisting – we mustn't really do anything at all! At any given moment whatever state the mind is in, know that it is in that state.

If we see a beautiful woman walk by and craving appears in the mind, we don't look for a way

to get rid of the craving. We don't try to get rid of the woman either. Just quickly acknowledge that the mind has craving. If the mind doesn't like the craving, then it is no longer impartial. It has aversion to the craving and wants it to go away. We are to know that this aversion or hatred has arisen. We are to know the mind is not equanimous. If happiness arises, and we like the happiness, the mind is not neutral. Know the mind is liking. Whenever a mental state arises and the mind likes it or doesn't like it, we should recognize it. If we keep doing this, equanimity will gradually result. We will know all mental phenomena with an equanimous mind. This is the third aspect of how to correctly and effectively watch the mind.

If we add in a fourth aspect it would be to watch the mind in this way with great frequency. If we follow one through four, then nibbāna (Nirvana; enlightenment) is certain to be realized one day. This is because we will have cultivated all the appropriate causes for this realization. The mind will incur a major shift, and suffering will drop off in great quantities at each stage of enlightenment.

In summary, we practice the Dhamma so that one day no more suffering will arise in the mind. The way that we accomplish this is by the

practice of knowing our minds. Each time that suffering sneaks up in the mind, see it, and eventually it will drop off on its own. There is no need to chase it away. Remember the three aspects, or the three rules for watching the mind. Firstly, don't go looking for phenomena to know. Don't be presumptuous or wait in anticipation. Let one show itself first, and then recognize it. Secondly, watch from a distance. Let's not move our attention towards a phenomenon when it appears. Be an outsider. If we focus in, then we are practicing Samatha, calmness meditation, not Vipassana, the path of wisdom. And thirdly, subsequent to the arising of a mental phenomenon, notice when liking or disliking appears. Do this often and the mind will of its own accord become equanimous to whatever arises.

When we watch the mind in this way, we will see whatever arises as it really is. We will see the true nature of body and mind. We will see that body and mind are not us. We will keep seeing the truth of body and mind until we become dispassionate to their constant flux, their insubstantiality, their suffering nature. We will release attachment to them, be liberated and know that liberation has taken place. What will we be liberated from? We will be liberated from attachment to this body and this mind. We will be

liberated from suffering, because suffering resides in this body and this mind. Can you see that these are the only two places where suffering can be found? Upon liberation, suffering will be gone and we become fully aware, awakened and blissful without any effort or maintenance necessary.

I'm sure you have heard an age old saying, something to the tune of "Learning is a life-long process," "Life is a school," or "We learn until the day we die." This is because there is no end to worldly knowledge. The world fabricates new things incessantly and there is always more to learn. Regarding Dhamma, once there is enlightenment and mind is liberated from suffering, it is no longer fabricating, no longer creating fictions. Once we are free from suffering, there is nothing more to learn in this regard. Our Dhamma studies are completed.

Some helpful conversations with Luang Por Pramote from April 24, 2009

Student 1: I'm not sure how to watch the mind as you teach it.

LP: **Do you know what being angry is like? Do you know fear? Have you ever been worried, jealous or upset?**

Student 1: Yes, I have.

LP: **How about happy or sad feelings, do you know what those are like. Do you know what it is to want, wanting this, not wanting that?**

Student 1: Sure.

LP: **Then you can watch the mind. Know what arises when it does. We are not to just sit and fixate our attention on the mind. We are to know what arises right after it has. If the mind is scared, know it. If the mind is excited, mean, happy, upset, just know it. Don't force anything. That's what watching the mind is about. There is nothing to it!**

Student 2: I practice watching and knowing what happens.

LP: **Do you see defilements often?**

Student 2: Yes I do. I am able to just see them in a neutral way.

LP: **That's good. Whenever the mind is not neutral to what arises, just know that too. Just know things as they are. Your practice is fine, but keep at it diligently and be careful to not move in and interfere with the phenomena that arise. Also when you are watching you have a tendency to slip down towards phenomena to watch them. Just know when this happens.**

Student 3: Should I practice sitting and walking meditation formally, or can I just watch my mind in daily life?

LP: **If you are able to meditate, it is a good idea. But when you do, make sure you don't force the mind to be still. That is what most people do. Remember these words: Sit and watch the body and mind. Walk and watch the body and mind. Don't sit or walk and force the body and mind in any way. If you do apply force or start thinking, just know it after it happens.**

Some helpful conversations with Luang Por Pramote from February 28, 2009

Student 4: I have read your teachings and the practice of mindfulness in daily life. I think that I try too hard and must be holding my attention on mental phenomena too tightly, because my practice seems tense and tiresome. But if I let up, I get lost in thought for very long periods. I know I'm supposed to just let the mind go and then when it gets lost in thought just know it. I'm not sure if I'm truly knowing or just thinking.

LP: **Don't worry about it. You worry too much, so the best practice for you is know the mental states that arise after they have. Know when the mind is restless and then quickly spot when the mind goes off to think. If the mind is happy, unhappy, nice or mean, just know it as each arises. Only be the one that knows right after the fact. Don't intently wait for phenomena or presume you will know what will arise. This will cause stress. Just know in a comfortable and relaxed way. You already know that your feelings change all day long right? Everyone's do. The only small difference**

in your case will be that you know each time they do. When the mind is happy, unhappy, nice or mean, you will know it. See the mental states change throughout the day. Take it easy and enjoy the practice. You can do it. It's not too hard.

Often we catch ourselves lost in thinking for a moment, and then wonder: "Did I just know this correctly? Aren't I still just thinking?" Here we need to know that we are doubting, or that we are curious. Knowing is always regarding the present moment. Just know there is doubt. If we know whatever arises in the present, we can't go wrong.

Student 5: I have been doing a bit of formal meditation, but not really keeping tabs on how long or how often. Mostly I practice watching the body and mind when I'm walking somewhere or doing housework. (LP: Good) I'm noticing that mindfulness is arising more and more often. Sometimes the mind is stable and unattached to phenomena: when a thought arises, mindfulness sees it and it drops off. But often it gets really stuck to the defilements; then I criticize and judge myself.

LP: When the mind gets stuck in what arises, know it. If it then detaches from the phenomenon, know that too. Don't get angry at the mind for its antics. Have compassion for it instead. When anger or disliking arises, do your best to quickly see that it has. When we know in this way the anger will drop off and the mind will become more and more impartial to what arises.

To See the Truth



Two Kinds of Samādhī (Concentration)

Suan Santidham, November 12, 2010

It is really a shame if we don't develop the wisdom to see the nature of reality. Most people in this world are lost, entranced by and perpetually under the influence of the defilements such as greed, anger and ignorance. We spend our lives trying to get more of what we want and pushing away what we don't want. We are completely deluded about the natural way of things. In every moment that we are not aware of what the body or mind is doing, we are under the spell of the defilements; that is, we are not mindful. Many people have good concentration, but concentration isn't always a virtuous thing. Mindfulness and wisdom are always virtuous. We need mindfulness to bring about wisdom, and we need wisdom to liberate us from suffering.

We need to have the mindfulness that sees the arising and falling of physical and mental phenomena. Mindfulness knows what arises, and wisdom

sees the characteristics of what arises. Specifically, wisdom sees at least one the Three Characteristics: *anicca*, *dukkha* and *anattā*. So mindfulness knows what arises, and wisdom understands the truth that what has arisen is impermanent, does not persist and is beyond control. One who is able to see clearly and fully that whatever arises also falls away has reached the first stage of enlightenment, stream-entry (*sotapanna*). He or she sees that there is no self in all of this.

It is possible, however, to have mindfulness but not develop Vipassana wisdom. Many people believe they are watching their minds but are merely holding their minds still. There is mindfulness watching the mind, but the mind is left motionless and is not able to show its true characteristics. The mind actually arises and falls each moment just as other phenomena do. This characteristic of arising and falling is called *anicca*. If the mind is good, bad, happy or sad, each only lasts a short time. This is *dukkha*. Things arise and fall out of their own cause and are not under our power. This is *anattā*. *Anattā* does not mean that nothing exists at all. This is a wrong understanding (*micchā-ditthi*). *Anattā* means that something arises out of its cause and not because we want it to. There is no control. Attempts at controlling the mind will not result in wisdom.



Wisdom arises when there is concentration or samādhi. Formally put, samādhi is the proximate cause for wisdom. However, samādhi is of two kinds and only the second one is conducive to wisdom.

The first kind of samādhi is called object-examination (āramma-n'ūpanijjhāna). This is when there is just one object of attention and the mind sticks to this object and is rendered still. The mind is very focused and peaceful in this state. An example is meditation on breathing. The mind moves down into the breath and clings to it. Another choice for this type of meditation is the rising and falling of the abdomen. The meditator will let his mind sink down into the movement of the abdomen and rest there peacefully. In walking meditation, those who hold their focus on the feet are also exhibiting this first type of samādhi. It is also accomplished if we use our hands as our object of meditation, moving them in prescribed ways and focusing on them intently. This first type of samādhi, object-examination, is accomplished during calmness meditation, otherwise known as Samatha meditation. Even using the mind itself as the object of meditation can bring us into this type of samādhi. Watching the mind isn't always

Vipassana. If we watch the mind incorrectly, and hold it still, we are just doing Samatha. It is the same as intently keeping our mindfulness on the breath.

The mind is of the nature to know an object. The object is that which is of the nature to be known. So if we watch the breath, the breath is the object; the breath is what is known. If we watch the body standing, walking, sitting and lying down, the body is the object; the body is what is known. Greed, anger and delusion are things that are known. The mind is what knows these things. The mind itself can be both known and that which knows, but it is not both at the same time. Everything happens in succession. The process can only be described as a succession of minds or mental moments. At one mental moment the mind is angry. In the next moment, the mind knows this. The mind that is angry is gone and replaced by the mind that knows. The mind is the one that knows all five of the khandhas or aggregates (see glossary). When the mind itself is known, it is functioning as the object. No matter what the object of meditation may be, if we are focusing in on it, we are practicing Samatha and will achieve āramma-n'ūpanijjhāna, the first kind of samādhi.

If we are looking to practice Vipassana meditation, then we need to learn about the second kind of samādhi. It is called characteristic-examination (lakkha-n'ūpanijjhāna). This samādhi is one that is stable in the sense that it remains separate from phenomena. It allows us to see the true characteristics of body and mind, of mental and physical phenomena (rūpa-nāma). We may see the body is not us but is just matter, or the working of elements, or just processes of sensory input and interpretation. In the second type of samādhi, the mind is the stable and unattached watcher or knower. The term “the knower” (thai; *pu-roo*) was a very common one in the Thai forest monk tradition for many years and this is the samādhi I am speaking about here. Twenty or thirty years ago, there was an abundance of great masters in the Northeast using this term “the knower”. We could travel from temple to temple and pay our respects to these wise elderly teachers. But as the number of genuine masters decreased, the comprehension of the knower also followed suit. The kind of samādhi where the knower arises is essential for seeing the truth, seeing the Three Characteristics. The knower is the colloquial term for concentration of the characteristic-examination variety. It is the place from where we can practice Vipassana. In a few moments, I will describe how we can practice so that the knower can arise.

When we practice meditation, it is important to know which kind of samādhi is appropriate for us at any given time. If the mind is very restless and needs to be in a more peaceful and restful state, we can practice Samatha to achieve object-examination. The mind in this state is attaching to an object of meditation and not wandering elsewhere. It is peaceful and staying with the object without force. If we are still forcing, then it is not genuine concentration of this kind. The mind is not happy when we are forcing it. We need the mind to be relaxed and happy with its object of meditation. We can choose any object of meditation within the body and mind, breathing, the abdomen, a mantra like “Buddho”, hand movements, or foot movements when walking, but we must pick something that we are happy to be with. If the mind is happy while being with the object, then it won’t run off looking to do something else. It doesn’t need to be forced because it is happy where it is. If the mind is restlessly thinking, and we try to force it still, it will become even more restless. Notice that when we try to be peaceful and the mind won’t oblige, we get even more agitated and stressed than we were at the start! The more we want to be peaceful, often the less peaceful we become. Therefore we need to find a happy place for the mind for this kind of samādhi to be achieved.

When I was young, I was very happy watching the breath, and so I would watch it each day. The reason why the mind runs around looking for this and that is because it is incessantly looking for happiness. Our decision to listen to or to read this Dhamma talk is because we are looking for happiness. After we finish listening or reading, we may look for something tasty to eat to once again in pursuit of happiness. Then after we eat and feel full, we think we will be happier if we take a rest. The mind and body are running around looking for objects to bring happiness constantly. However, if the mind is happy with the object it is involved with already, then it will not go off looking for something else. This is the secret to proper Samatha meditation. This is how we can stop the busy mind and have a restful time of peace.

Samatha has an important purpose. We need it to rest the mind so it can have power and fortitude. If we don't practice Samatha and achieve the first kind of samādhi, our Vipassana practice will be greatly hindered. We won't have the fortitude and momentum to keep up the practice. Those of us that watch the mind well will see that the mind cannot walk the path of wisdom all the time. It will need to rest. The mind will move into Samatha automatically at times, stay-

ing still in one place. In fact, it does this even more often than Vipassana. Wisdom comes up just for a short while at a time, and then the mind becomes still again.

A word of warning to those that prefer to watch the mind: make sure you keep up Samatha practice as well. It is essential in order to keep the mind fresh and powerful enough to walk the path of wisdom well. Those without the first kind of samādhi will have trouble doing Vipassana for longer periods. Wisdom may arise briefly and then the mind will go off on a thinking tangent. Those that are too attached to Samatha should be careful too. The mind may be resting well for a while but then go off into dazes or dream states.

I spent 22 years as a youngster practicing only Samatha, and happily being with the breath. When the mind was busy, I would meditate on the breath for a while and make the mind peaceful. I knew nothing of the knower and was just looking for peace. Then I started going to temples and frequently heard the term “the knower” and became interested in the path of wisdom.

The knower is the mind that knows. The object is that which the mind is knowing. When we are watching an object, know when the mind

has gone off to think. Know the body is breathing or the body is moving and then know when the mind has strayed from knowing the chosen object. Keep knowing the object and then know when the mind sinks into the object or when it moves to something else. If we watch the movement of the arm, know the arm is moving. When the mind moves in towards the arm (as in Samatha) know that it is doing this. When the mind moves off to think, know this too. If we continuously are able to notice on time when the mind is moving towards the object to focus in on it, or away from the object to get lost in something else, then the mind will become the knower or watcher. It will separate out as the one who knows, the awakened and joyful one. It is the opposite of the one who is lost, infatuated or entranced. The lost one is the thinker, deluded and entranced in a fabricated reality. We need to learn to be the watcher or knower and rise above the thinker and the world of fabrication.

The knower (samādhi of the second kind) arises when we practice meditation as I have described. When it arises, it does so with either happiness or equanimity. We cannot intend for the knower to arise. It arises of its own accord when the mind has enough fortitude. The idea about fortitude can be illustrated in the case of

someone who is perpetually bad. Such a person doesn't need to intend to do bad things because he is bad already. The badness has fortitude and momentum. Thus unseemly acts are committed effortlessly, without prompting. Good people do good things with ease as well. Many of us can notice that our minds naturally want to read or listen to the Dhamma without any prompting. Similarly, the knower arises unprompted out of the fortitude of our practice.

We must practice to wake our minds up out of the world of thought and fabrication. The thinker opposes the knower; when we are not knowing, we are thinking, interpreting, and fabricating. Our practice is to simply know whenever the mind leaves the object of our attention. Notice when it goes out think, see, hear, smell, taste or feel. Notice when it sinks down to cling to a meditation object as well. If we do this repeatedly, we will reach the second kind of samādhi, characteristic-examination, and the mind will be in the appropriate state to practice Vipassana.

For both kinds of samādhi, the principles are quite easy. In the first kind, choose an object in the body or mind that we are happy with. When the mind is happy, it will stay concentrated and have no need to look for happiness elsewhere. In

the second kind, we watch a meditation object and notice whenever the mind goes away from or towards it instead of just knowing it.

Let's take the example of the mantra "Buddho" as our meditation object. We could just as easily choose the breath, the body or part thereof. For the first kind of samādhi, we practice Samatha. We happily keep our attention on the repeated word "Buddho". The mind eventually stays with and clings to "Buddho". It becomes still and peaceful. If we are practicing the second kind of samādhi, we keep the mind on "Buddho" just the same, but our perspective is different. Instead of staying with "Buddho" to become calm and still, our objective is to recognize each time mind has left "Buddho" and recognize each time the mind over-focuses on it. The knower will arise and can walk the path of Vipassana wisdom. It will watch mental and physical phenomena passing by from a distance, and it will do so with impartiality. It is as if we are standing on the riverbank and watching the water flow downstream.

I often like to summarize the correct practice in the following way: *Have mindfulness and know bodily and mental phenomena as they really are with a mind that is stable and impartial.*

Firstly, we need to have mindfulness recognizing what arises in the body and mind. Then “to know bodily and mental phenomena as they really are” means that wisdom sees their true three characteristics. In order to have the wisdom that sees the Three Characteristics, the mind must be stable and impartial to phenomena. The knower, the awakened one that I spoke of, is the one that is stable. By stability, I mean the mind remains rooted in awareness; it is not attached to phenomena and doesn’t slip down into them. It also doesn’t get lost in liking or disliking what arises. It is impartial, unbiased, equanimous.

Keep practicing to develop mindfulness, develop samādhi and develop wisdom. If any of us find what I say difficult to understand, then read and listen to what I say again and again. Many people have seen how much their lives have changed for the better once they correctly understand the principles of meditation.

Can we notice that the mind prefers to think than to know? And when it wants to know, it then sinks down and over-focuses. Keep watching in the ways I describe and our practice will flourish. We will become very sharp at distinguishing what kind of samādhi to practice at any given time. We will know when our mind should be

made peaceful and when it is suitable for walking the path of wisdom. This is all not as hard as we may think. I have explained Dhamma practice in great detail. Now let's put the teachings to work.

Some of the day's conversations with Luang Por Pramote

Student 1: I am not sure if I am practicing correctly. I don't think my mind has found its place in awareness because I don't feel so comfortable or relaxed.

LP: **Right. Just know that the mind is not rooted in awareness. Don't hate that it isn't and don't want it to be better. If there is wanting just know that too. Your practice is quite good. Can you see the body and mind separate out?**

Student 1: Sometimes.

LP: **Can you see that for you the world and its ways are at a distance? You have moved further into the practice and the physical world feels further away. Keep watching and see that there is no us. This body and mind are separate. Happiness and unhappiness are not us but are just known from a distance. All good and bad states that arise are at a distance from the mind that knows them. The only thing you are missing in your practice is samādhi (the first kind). You need to make your mind peaceful at times so that it can have**

more energy. Then the mind will have enough power to free itself.

Student 1: Work is very busy. It is hard to be peaceful.

LP: **Don't blame your work. You need to change your perspective to a more positive one. Be happy that you have a decent job. If we think in a positive light, the mind is calmer and our practice will improve. I had a very demanding job as well before I ordained as a monk. I practiced diligently nonetheless. Think in a happier way, and practice more Samatha.**

Student 2: I do a lot of walking practice in my garden. I feel that the world is becoming very dry and boring and there is nothing I can do about it.

LP: **Good. Are you impartial towards that?**

Student 2: No, I'm not.

LP: **See this partiality, this disliking whenever it arises. We need to know all phenomena with a mind that is stable and impartial. That's how wisdom arises, and it is wisdom that frees us.**

Student 3: I practice formally every day. I'm looking for some advice because I can't seem to know phenomena as I used to. I ponder a while before I am able to know what arises. I also use the mantra "Buddho" when I do sitting meditation, but I can't seem to get peaceful at all anymore.

LP: **We don't need to strive for peacefulness. You can keep repeating "Buddho" and know whatever else the mind does. If the mind is restless, just know it with no intention to make it more peaceful. If the mind goes off to think, know so quickly. If we practice this often, we will have awareness of body and mind. But if we don't practice this and just try to achieve peaceful states, then, when we start to think, we will get lost in thought for a long time. I advise you to use "Buddho" or the breath and just keep noticing each time the mind goes off.**

Student 4: I have been ill and very depressed. The body has had a lot of pain and the mind has kept worrying about what will result and has mostly been discontent with my situation. However, recently when I had a migraine headache, I was watching the

body moving and noticed that the pain was just pain. It was just its own thing, vibrating in and out. The mind was the watcher and didn't get startled or involved. I was able to relax and sleep, which is the diametrically opposed to what usually happens in such situations. I didn't get concerned, fabricate my imminent demise and run to the pill bottles as I used to.

LP: **Good. Keep practicing like this. You are separating out the khandhas, the aggregates that we wrongly take to be ourselves. Can you see that the body is one thing, the pain is another, and the mind that knows these things is yet another? When we see this, we have separated three of the five khandhas out (form, feeling and consciousness).**

Student 4: I noticed I am only able to see this with any clarity or stability if the mind is peaceful first. I need to practice Samatha.

LP: **Good. You are understanding the principles of meditation. The mind needs to relax for Samatha. Then when there is calmness, practice separating out the khandhas and see that none of them are us.**

Student 5: You have mentioned that if we don't practice in daily life and merely take some time for formal meditation then we have no chance of enlightenment. However, I find that mindfulness arises so much more in the formal practice.

LP: Sure. The issue is merely that unfortunately many practitioners separate their meditation time out, and don't watch their minds in daily life. They'll say, "Ok, tonight at 7pm I'll practice mindfulness." We should practice in daily life and formally without breaking our life up into times where we practice and times where we don't. The results of each practice will differ, of course. There is much more energy in our formal meditation. We need this energy from meditation to practice effectively in our daily activities. Your practice is fine, but you need to practice formally often as your mind tends to over think.

Some helpful conversations with Luang Por Pramote from April 24, 2009

Student 6: I mostly just hold my attention at my breath, but I have recently started trying to follow what you say.

LP: It is not bad to do this, you feel peaceful and happy. But no wisdom will arise. Wisdom is understanding the truth of body and mind. If we want to understand the truth, we have to watch how the body and mind really are. We have to know what they are doing with much frequency. We cannot see the body and mind as they really are, when we are doing one of two things. The first is when we hold to an object until the mind is still. In this case, there is no natural truth to see. The second is getting lost in thought or in whatever arises. We all know what a wandering mind is like. Notice that when the mind is wandering, we forget about our body and mind. *We don't know that we are thinking, happy, breathing, sitting, or anything else.* You have done a lot of Samatha, holding your attention in one place. Now it is time to let the mind free and watch it work, know what it does. If the mind becomes

too restless and is thinking uncontrollably, then you can make it calmer so it is easier to watch. Right now you are holding your mind still. Let it go and so you can see its true characteristics.

Student 7: When I listen to your talk I can see that my mind goes to think so often.

LP: That's right. We are practicing so that we can see the truth of the body and mind. You are seeing what the mind does. It always thinking and it is never still. A new strand of thought is arising in each moment. We are not practicing so that the mind doesn't go off to think. Just know when it goes off with great frequency. Right now, your mind is not stable, not in the present moment. Just know that, don't try to force it into stability.

Student 8: I have a question about the mind entering samādhi, deep one-pointed concentration. Is it possible that this can happen four or five times in a 10-15 minute period. It seems this has happened to me, and I'm not sure if I'm just misunderstanding what one-pointed concentration is.

LP: One-pointed concentration (the first kind of samādhi) is when the mind comes to-

gether at one point within. There is no awareness of the outside world at all. The mind can go into and withdraw out of this state a few times even within one second. So certainly it is possible that you entered samādhi a few times in a period of minutes. But it is a high state of awareness, so if you are not aware in those moments then the mind has not come together at one-point, but has just lost mindfulness. If the mind is deluded about the truth, make sure to know this too.

Some helpful conversations with Luang Por Pramote from February 28, 2010

Student 9: Last week my practice really went downhill. I can't seem to be aware of my body or mind at all. I can't even breath...

LP: **Make sure to breath! (Laughter)** Sometimes when the mind isn't cooperating we need to use a few tricks. If you like to practice watching your breath, but are finding your mind too restless, too far off in thought to get going, then you may need to add a mantra like 'Buddho'. Breathe and mentally say "Buddho" repetitively. If the mind gets really busy, then you may need to repeat "Buddho" faster and faster, or use a longer mantra like "Buddho Dhammo Sangho". If you keep at it, eventually the mind will cool down and become peaceful.

Student 10: I last spoke with you (literally, "submitted my homework to you") eight months ago. At times I've been noticing the mind oscillating between getting lost in thought and fixing attention to the meditation object.

LP: **Have you noticed any changes in the last eight months?**

Student 10: I am able to know what arises more often, but notice that my mind is off looking here and there and not in its place, not totally present as the knower.

LP: **That is a very important thing, to notice when the mind is sent out and does not have its foundation in the present. True wisdom cannot arise unless the mind is in its proper place. Temporary peace and calmness can arise, but not wisdom that leads to the end of suffering. Many people have their minds sent out into objects of meditation like this and get much attached to the relaxation and stillness it provides. If you find you have rendered your mind still and are too comfortable there, come back and watch the body. The body is suffering. In your case, watch the body.**

Student 11: I've been practicing mindfulness according to your teachings for about one year now. I think that the mind is stable and unattached to phenomena; I think it has found its place because I can see the phenomena arising and fall away. (LP: Good.) I practice formally every morning and think I'm attached to peace a little too much. (LP: That's fine.) Sometimes

the mind gets lost in thought, but when there are noises in my house I see the thinking disappear and the mind arise at the ear. I notice that the mind at that point is watching the body. (LP: Great. Keep at it.) Also, once I was practicing meditation in bed and the mind got lost in thought. I asked disappointedly, “why did I get lost again?” And the answer came, “because nothing can be controlled.”

LP: **That’s right! You are starting to gain wisdom. Sometimes the mind even creates images of our masters or even the Buddha coming to teach us the Truth.**

Student 11: I noticed when I’m watching the breath that there is some discomfort at the end of the out-breath. I focused in on it and saw that there was quite a bit of suffering, and I needed to breathe in to alleviate it. The suffering was there after the in-breath too.

LP: **That’s right. Even each in or out breath is a way of evading the suffering. Your practice is very good. But is your mind in its natural state now?**

Student 11: Right now it is not natural.

LP: **Good. You passed the test!**

Sometimes when we practice Samatha we will see clear and vivid dreams, visions, even premonitions. Once when I was younger I had a dream that a thin elderly little monk approached me and handed me a small round fruit of some kind. I took it and he told me, “Whether this fruit is sweet or this fruit is sour arises only from within itself.” He meant we must learn from within. Don’t just sit with a still mind. A few months later I met this monk. It was Luang Pu Dune, who instantly became my mentor and master. I’m not presenting a miracle here; it was just dream.

Student 12: Before, I could only see the body and mind separate when I showered in the morning, but now I’m seeing the mind and body separate from each other more often in daily life.

LP: When the mind is stable, unattached and awake, the mind and body can be separated all day long.

Student 12: Is this true even though I’m still suppressing defilements?

LP: Yes. Though by suppressing, the mind will be too still; there won’t be enough

of its antics to watch. Gradually set the mind free and notice each defilement as it arises. The defilements will separate out just as distinctly as the body has. So will happiness and unhappiness. Each aggregate (khandha) will separate out and we will see that each performs its own function, and none of them are us.

Student 12: Can I ask for a little more advice?

LP: Go about the practice gently. Take it easy.

To See the Truth



Just Know

Sala Lungchin, Nonthaburi, November 18, 2007

Genuine Dhamma Talks don't come from a script. The teachings come out naturally and are being transmitted from heart to heart. If we practice meditation as we listen, the teachings that are appropriate for us to know at that time will be expounded to us. It is very different from book learning. With Dhamma, there is no need to listen intently, to think, take notes or ask questions. We should practice now in a relaxed way as we listen. It is not important to be able to absorb all of the content, the words that are being said. It is hard to find much sense in what I say. I speak of the same things all the time, and yet amazingly the same people keep coming to listen to over and over.

It is all about mindfulness. Mindfulness is the key, the all important link in the chain that is missing from most other religions. Other religions have meditation and morality as Buddhism does, but their scriptures lack the instructions on

mindfulness, on watching and learning from one's own body and mind. It is a shame to overlook the opportunity to practice mindfulness after one has come into contact with Buddhist teachings. It is the only way to enlightenment, to a pure and free mind. Without it, the best we can do is to temporarily hold the mind in a state of peace, which cannot solve the problems that plague our minds.

Mindfulness doesn't just mean that we know what is going on around us or that we do the right thing. It is deeper than that. Most of us are completely lost in the world of thinking and interpretation. We are thinking all day and thinking all night. Thinking while we sleep at night is called dreaming, of course. Whenever we are thinking, we forget about our body and our mind. We forget about the foundations of mindfulness. For example, if we want to perform a generous act, like helping a stranger or giving charity, the mind is in a state of virtue. But if we do not know that virtue has arisen, we are not mindful. We need to know what the body is doing or what is happening in the mind, not the content of the story that the mind is telling, not the voice in our heads.

Why are the body and mind the foundations of mindfulness? Why do we need to know what

is happening within the body and mind? Simply, so we can see the truth of body and mind. Usually when meditators practice meditation, they are not interested in learning the truth of body and mind. They are essentially trying to control the body and mind. For example, we may try to sit in certain positions so that we will not experience pain. Or if we already feel pain, we may mull over how we should sit so that we can cope with it. In such cases, we are interested in getting past periods of pain, but not looking to see the truth of body and mind.

We may try to determine the ideal way to sit so that we can be peaceful for longer periods of time, to be still and comfortable possibly for days. When we do this, we are pretty much just interested in measures of control. It is of the nature of the mind to think, to fabricate stories, to run from here to there, to be nice sometimes, mean others, happy sometimes, and unhappy other times. The mind moves to watch, to hear, to smell, to taste, to feel sensations, and also runs to think. It's always moving and changing, but the moment we think of meditation, we are looking for ways to make it still, to make it stop thinking. Many people ask how to stop the mind from thinking. The mind's function is to think! The mind is not a tree or a rock. Enlightened people think too! We are not

practicing meditation so that we can make the mind abnormal or force it to no longer perform its function. We watch and know the foundations of mindfulness so that we can see the truth of body and mind.

The truth of the body is that it is material; it is a physical mass of elements. We need mindfulness that can see the body objectively as just a material thing, like a robot that sits, moves and stands with elements coming in and out through processes such as breathing, ingestion and excretion. The body is not us or ours; we are using it, borrowing it from the world. We started by using our parents' elements. After birth, elements come in and out by our own eating, drinking, breathing and excreting. Eventually, we die and give the elements back to the world. Watch the body well and see that it is not us. It is not a person or a being, but just a mass of elements.

It is not a special mass either – it is a suffering one! Even just sitting, we experience pain. When young it may be hard to notice, but as we get older, even sitting for just a moment is painful without even having to do anything! Some people, with all good intentions, wish that their meditation master will live a hundred years. As Venerable Master Thade in forest monk tradition said, those who

wish someone to live a hundred years, have never felt what it is like to be old.

The truth is we are only really our strongest and healthiest until about age 35. After 35, our bodies really start to go downhill. But even youngsters can see that the body is suffering. Sit still for a long time without moving. We'll see that even just sitting gets quite painful, and we'll have to adjust to relieve the suffering.

The body is truly a mass of suffering. Try to only breathe in without breathing out. We'll see quickly that we need to breathe out to relieve suffering. The same is true if we breathe only out. It is torturous; we will need the in-breath to relieve us. Even breathing is a process of repeatedly suffering and trying to relieve it. Suffering is oppressing the body and mind in everything that we do. If we watch the breath mindfully, or watch sitting, standing, walking or lying down with proper mindfulness, the body will be seen clearly as a physical mass of elements, moving about and invariably suffering. It will not be mistaken as being us or ours.

Many of us would like to practice Vipassana meditation. However, for genuine Vipassana we must see the body and mind as the Three Charac-

teristics (impermanent, suffering, and not us). It is not yet Vipassana if we are just mindful of body and mind. Vipassana is seeing clearly, in an extraordinary way, that the body and mind exhibit the Three Characteristics. We do this repeatedly until we reach the first stage of enlightenment, stream-entry, and clearly and profoundly know that the body and mind are not us.

Watch the mind. See it never stays in the same state. Watch the body and see it is suffering. It is hard to see the body is changing since it appears to change slowly. But the mind is never the same, from day to day, from moment to moment. It changes each time it makes contact with a new stimulus. We see some guy and like him, and then we see some girl and dislike her. It is easy to see anicca (impermanence). The mind is changing all the time.

We can also see anattā (non-self) from watching the mind, by seeing that we can't control it. The mind may become happy, but we can't order it to be happy or to stay happy in any real way. We can't prohibit unhappiness from arising. We can't order it away. We can't force the mind to be in a virtuous state either. The characteristic that the mind is beyond control and can't be forced into any state is called anattā.

When we see impermanence, suffering and non-self, then we see the truth of the body and mind. When we see the truth like this clearly, we become bored or disenchanted by the body and mind, by the world as we experience it. The world loses its allure, its flavour. We lose interest in going out to attain states and to achieve things. We start to see the ways of the world as meaningless, senseless, flavourless. Then when different mental states arise, the mind will no longer move towards or grasp at them. Happiness arises, and we remain stable. The mind won't move anywhere. We won't try to keep the happiness alive or try to pursue more of it. When unhappiness arises, we don't run away from it. We don't try to stop it or protect ourselves from it. All this movement ends, and so we don't get involved in fabricating stories, becoming or creating a personal existence. When our old stories about ourselves and the world fade, they are not replaced by new ones.

This is all not so difficult. Actually it is pretty easy. But when I was practicing I thought it was hard for a long time as many of us do. To be honest, getting to the point where it was easy was deadly! We have to die many times to get to where we stop becoming anything anymore. In a war, we only die once. In this game, we die over

and over again for the mind to be mature enough, and to be wise enough, to completely wash away all of the ignorance, all of the greed, and all of the aversion that defile the mind. When the mind is finally free of defilements, we will never be born again as a self in this life or any other.

The reason we are never born again is because we clearly see the true nature of body and mind. To have the mindfulness to do this, we need to be aware of the body and mind. Those that practice a lot will see that usually we don't remember our bodies and minds. We know only the content of our thoughts. We are thinking all day long, knowing what we are thinking but not knowing what the body and mind are doing. If we are not knowing the body and the mind, then we are not practicing in the foundations of mindfulness. If we don't have mindfulness of the body and mind, then we don't see the truth of them. If we don't see the truth of them, then we don't become disenchanted by them. Then we don't let go of our attachment to them. And if we don't let go of our attachment to them, we will never be liberated from suffering. Enlightenment will not be realized.

At first we see there isn't a person. There isn't a being, a me, a you or a them. We see the world as

empty of selfhood. Self only arises out of thinking. We get lost in thinking and then the false ideas that there are a me and a you appear. When we wake up out of the world of thinking, we see that a self doesn't really exist. It is easy once we understand, but difficult when we don't. When we don't, we become disgruntled and wonder what we should do to practice correctly.

All meditators try to figure out what they should do to practice correctly, and when they do this, they are wanting something, wanting to do something. In the four foundations of mindfulness, the Buddha never taught us to *do* anything. But when we set out to practice, we always want to *do*: “What should I *do* to meditate correctly?” “What should I *do* to be good?” “What should I do to enlighten?” “What should I do to be free?” When the Buddha taught what to practice, he didn't use the word *do*. He said just know. Know the body. Know it is sitting, standing, walking or lying down.

If we know the breath, be mindful and know when the breath is short, that it is short, if it is long, that it is long, if it disappears that it has disappeared. If the mind is happy, know it is happy. If it is unhappy know it is unhappy. If it is neither happy nor unhappy, know it is neu-

tral. If it is clinging know it is clinging. If it is angry, then know. If it is worrying, then know. If it is restless then know. If it is deluded, then know. The main verb is to know. But we don't want to know, do we? We want to do. We want to know what to do so that the mind will be this way or that way according to our preferences. We act similarly with regards to the body as well.

This word "do" is what makes us interfere with the natural workings of the body and mind. We then control the body and mind instead of seeing them in their true nature. Can we control them? We can only do so temporarily by Samatha meditation. For example if anger arises, we can concentrate on a mantra or the breath, send out loving-kindness, or fix our attention on the anger until it goes away. Then when the anger disappears we think we practiced successfully. We think we are so great. Can you see that instead of realizing the truth of non-self, we are inflating our sense of self? So don't try to control anything; don't look for solutions of what to do. Anything we do is wrong.

Once I was staying in a monastery in Surin Province, in the northeast of Thailand. As I got out of my hut in the morning, I noticed a nice tree with a chair beneath it by a beautiful little

pond. I thought to myself that it is there that I would practice my meditation for the day. Then suddenly a monk shouted from the other side of the pond, “Hey Pramote, by wanting to practice you are already in the wrong!” How was I wrong? I was wrong because I wasn’t aware of the thinking or wanting. I wasn’t knowing.

The word ‘know’ is the most important word in Buddhism. Buddha means the One who Knows, the Awakened One. When we forget about knowing, then we move away from the Buddhist religion. We move to a religion of self control. Many religions have faith as the path. Others have love. If we are looking to have a Buddhist way of life, then we must be knowing and seeing the truth of body and mind.

We are to just keeping knowing and knowing. Is there anyone here that can’t know? (*Someone raises his hand and says he is not sure*) Just knowing that you are not sure is already knowing! So you can know. You may have noticed that when you were listening and not thinking anything, there was no self doubt. But as soon as you started to think, doubt arose in the mind. If we see that uncertainty has arisen, and don’t continue to entertain it with thinking, then the uncertainty won’t have a cause for remaining, and it will fall

away. We will see that each mental phenomenon or state arises out of cause, and when the cause is absent, the state too will disappear. Who else thinks that he or she cannot know? Has anyone here never been angry? Does anyone here not know what it is like to feel greed? Does anyone not know what a wandering mind is like? Does anyone not know worrying, feeling upset, happiness, sadness, or any of the emotional states? We all know these things.

So whenever any one of these states arises, just know that it has arisen. To see feelings in the right way is to see them as a sort of imposter, not identifying with them as ourselves. Anger or doubt are not us; they are not people or beings. No one sees them as people. So see them without giving them an identity, as just strangers coming in and then leaving. When there is cause, they arise, and when there is no cause, they fall away. We keep learning, keep knowing until we see that there is really nothing to it.

There is nothing to gain either. We don't learn Dhamma to obtain anything. Many masters have said that in enlightenment, we don't gain or lose anything. We don't gain anything because there is nothing in the world that an arahant (a fully enlightened being) attaches to. Even if all we want

to attain is nibbāna, it will never happen. All wanting and attachment must be dropped, even with regard to nibbāna. We don't lose anything in enlightenment, because we never had anything to begin with. The body is just elements that we are borrowing from the world. The mind just arises out of its own causes and falls when they are gone. It does this over and over again with each mental phenomenon. There is no gain or loss.

If we could say that anything is gained, it is an understanding. We see things in their true nature. That is what arises from practicing in the Four Foundations of Mindfulness (body, feelings, mind and natural processes). We see the Four Noble Truths that the Buddha taught: 1) suffering, 2) its cause, 3) its cessation and 4) the path to its cessation. If we can see these truths clearly, then we can end the cycle of birth and death and end suffering once and for all.

When we read the Noble Truths, it seems easy to understand that body and mind are suffering. But to actually see this in our own experience is just about the hardest thing we can do. Usually all we see is that the body is suffering sometimes, and content others; and the mind also oscillates between contentment and discontentment. We don't see the truth that it is all suffering (dukkha). We

also don't see the cause of suffering clearly, the second of the Noble Truths. The cause is desire or craving. Those with the most superficial understanding will think that they suffer when they don't get what they desire. When they get what they want, they are happy. Meditators may understand a little deeper and see that they suffer whenever desire arises. This is still a relatively shallow understanding. When we clearly see the Truth (Dhamma), we see that the body and mind are nothing but masses of suffering in themselves. However, when desire for happiness or freedom from suffering arises, the mind struggles and thus adds an extra dose of suffering on top of the heap of suffering that there already is! It is endless.

The third Noble Truth, the end or cessation of suffering, is another thing that is often wrongly understood as death, or a place we go to when we die. The truth of cessation is the liberation from suffering while we are alive. The body and mind are still suffering and changing about, but there is no attachment to these things. In enlightenment, when the body dies, it is not just a liberation from the suffering that still exists, but it is a complete extinction of suffering.

The fourth Noble Truth, the Eight-Fold Path to the end of suffering, is also hard to understand. (The Eight-Fold Path: right view, right thought, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness, right concentration) People think that these are eight different stages along a path. But actually the path is like a spider with eight legs. Each leg makes up the path, but is not the path. If we have mindfulness (*sati*), all eight factors that make up the path will develop appropriately. When we have mindfulness, then we will see things in the right way (*samma ditthi*), we will think, speak, act and work rightly, we will have the right effort as the mind will develop in wholesomeness and be guarded against unwholesomeness. And right mindfulness will lead to right concentration, characterized by a mind that is neutral and stable, not attached to the phenomena that arise. So our duty is to practice in the foundations of mindfulness, to study the body and the mind. Please keep observing them and keep learning, and reality will be revealed.

Some helpful conversations with Luang Por Pramote from April 24, 2009

Student 1: May I ask for your advice regarding my meditation?

LP: Don't force your mind to be still. Can you see that you are holding it in one place? The disadvantages of fixing our attention like this is that the body and mind will be still, more so than is natural. The body and mind in their natural states are changing, with states arising and falling all the time and will show us the truth of the Three Characteristics. If we are holding the mind together in the way you are, the mind seems permanent. It is happy, and it seems like we can force it to be this way. Don't force it. Let it go and know what it does; let it go and know what it does, again and again.

Student 2: I feel my mind is really deluded and busy today from driving so much.

LP: This is not a problem. Just know it is the case with an impartial mind. Just know the body and the mind as they appear in the present. And do this as often as you can. This is really all there is to do in practicing the Dhamma.

Student 3: It seems like suffering is further away than it used to be. But I'm a little unsure if I am over-focusing or if I am knowing in the correct way.

LP: What you do is ok, but don't be complacent. Sometimes suffering still affects you a lot and you need to be aware of this when it does. We can know if we are over-focusing because our mind will have a heaviness to it. If we are knowing in a relaxed way there will be a lightness. Right now you are over focusing. There will be heaviness. Generally, what meditators tend to do can be divided into two groups. Firstly, the group of over focusing, fixating, pushing, forcing. This group interferes with and takes a managerial role regarding physical and mental phenomena. The other group gets lost in what arises. If we know what group we are fitting into at any particular time, we will practice without much difficulty. The middle way is not to exercise control and not to get lost.

Student 4: I'm noticing the mind moving around, going out to the different sense organs, changing all of the time.

LP: **When you see the mind go out anywhere, are you pulling it back?**

Student 4: No, I'm letting it do what it does naturally and just knowing what it does.

LP: **Good. Can you see that the mind arises at the eyes and falls away at the eyes, arises at the ears and falls away at the ears, arises in mental activity and falls away there too?**

Student 4: Yes. It is always changing.

LP: **You are moving into Vipassana now. It is a different mind or mental moment at each sense organ. Can you see that each phenomenon arises and falls and is distinct from the next? With each phenomenon a different mind arises.**

Student 4: Yes. I can see this. I used to study it in books (Abhidhamma) but now I finally see it to be true.

Student 5: I've been practicing what you teach for about a year now.

LP: **Can you see how your mind is not the same anymore? Your mind is light, bright and clear. Good.**

Student 5: Yes I can see this. I find that the practice grows sometimes and then deteriorates. It changes back and forth a lot.

LP: **That's right! This is normal. When I practiced, there would be progress and deterioration about once a week. For some it is more often and for others it is less. The truth we see, when we practice long enough, is that growing and deteriorating are visible in each moment for every phenomenon: everything comes up and then falls away.**

Student 5: I'm not sure if my practice deteriorates because I'm not doing it well or if it is just a natural thing that happens.

LP: **It is normal, but you need to practice all the time in order to see this. It is very important that you practice all the time. If you practice a lot and see that the mind is progressing, and then get lazy and don't practice and see it deteriorate, you will think wrongly that you can exercise control over the mind. You will think that if you practice all the time, there will always be progress. But if you do practice constantly then you will see that the practice progresses and deteriorates on its own often, and it is beyond**

control. This is seeing the true nature of it.

Student 5: Some days I feel the practice is really good. On days where I have time and I listen to your CDs, I feel that I can be quite mindful. But when I'm out and busy in the world, it is not until the evening that I remember to be aware.

LP: **This is true for everyone that the practice is better sometimes and not others. Sometimes it even feels like we have no idea how to meditate. Try to practice meditation formally each day. Do sitting, walking meditation, or some chanting and watch the mind. This will help you have more energy to watch during the day.**

Student 5: Is my walking meditation correct?

LP: **In your case, you are forcing yourself too much during walking meditation. I recommend you do housework instead. Sweep or mop the floor and watch the body moving.**

Student 6: Right now the mind is deluded. It is moving to this thought and that, and is not stable.

LP: **Good. There is one thing you left out. You are suppressing the mind. Not letting it go fully.**

Student 6: Yes, I was nervous and then I tried to suppress it.

LP: **If you have suppressed something, just know that after it has happened.**

Student 6: A few months ago you told me that I was holding to the watcher.

LP: **It is better now. When you are not holding to it the mind will be clear. When you are keeping it there, it will not be clear.**

Student 6: I've been seeing the ego arising a lot. It takes over sometimes and not others. You told me about eight months ago to notice when the mind is impartial and when it is partial to phenomena. It seems I'm only able to do this if it is really obvious. But I noticed at one point that the arising of the false sense of self is based on our partiality, in our lack of equanimity.

LP: **Correct.**

Student 6: I felt sad after that. Now I can see more subtle contentment or discontentment when they arise.

LP: **Keep at it. You are practicing correctly.**

Student 7: I feel my mind is stable more often and less deluded. Sitting here I can see the mind that is aware as a nucleus with space around it, and then a soft and smooth white outer shell.

LP: **It is not important what you see. All that is important is how the mind feels when it sees things. Remember this principle. If we have a vision or the mind is subtle and we see interesting or beautiful things, pride may arise. If we don't notice the pride, we have missed out.**

Student 8: You asked me a while back to watch the mind. Since then I have reduced my formal Samatha meditation practice. I have found that some mental states are coming up and really affecting me, especially anger.

LP: **That's right. When we reduce your practice of holding attention in one spot, and allow the eyes, ears, tongue, nose and body to do their work naturally, the defilements will be stronger. There is a period where they will be even stronger than non-meditators.**

Student 8: Sometimes the anger is so strong. It is so painful. I watch but it doesn't go away. It just gets worse.

LP: **Just watch. We are not watching to try to make it go away.**

Student 9: My mind feels anxious.

LP: **Do you want it to go away?**

Student 9: Yes

LP: **When a state such as anxiety arises in the mind, we may not like it and may want it to go away. If this happens, we need to know that disliking has arisen. The anxiety has passed and in the present we are disliking the anxiety. The anxiety is already a past phenomenon and now the mind is disliking. We are to know only in the present.**

Student 9: Am I still holding things in my attention, more than is natural?

LP: **Yes, but it is much better than before. Can you see the mind is clearer? If we don't hold to anything at all, then the mind will have no weight to it. In your case there is still some heaviness. Just know when there is holding to something. Don't try to let go. Just know and the mind will let it go on its own. We can't control it.**

Student 10: I still see myself slipping down into phenomena. I also see the mind wanting to stop wanting, with discomfort in the chest.

LP: **You practice very well. Can you see that the mind is more subtle and bright? Happiness can arise on its own accord with no outer means necessary.**

Student 10: But there is still so much suffering.

LP: **Of course! The more you practice, the more you see that this world is completely filled with suffering. However, the mind that is not identified with the world anymore will not suffer along with it.**

Student 11: Am I practicing correctly?

LP: **Yes, but your mind is very busy thinking. It is running all over the place, thinking about this and that. See that it is out of control. When the mind runs to one thing, know that's what it has done. Then when it runs to the next, know it is doing that too. Don't try to control it. Also notice wanting. It arises very often, like just now when you wanted to speak. Seeing the mind move from thought to thought and seeing wanting arise gives you plenty to do. This practice will be of great benefit.**

Student 12: In my practice I see that I get lost in thought often and many defilements arise. However, the thing I see most often is ego, “the me”. (LP: That’s good.) But I feel that I’m deceived by partiality. Sometimes it seems like the mind is neutral but actually it is still affected by what arises.

LP: **As clever as the defilements are, they can never beat the power of mindfulness and wisdom. Just keep watching and knowing and truth will prevail. Your practice has improved a lot. Can you see that the mind is clearer and lighter than before?**

Student 12: I can see that when suffering arises it is much less severe than it used to be. Also when there is suffering in the family, like sickness and death, I see that it doesn’t cause much worry for me at all.

LP: **Good. Keep practicing and one day suffering will not arise in the mind at all. The Buddha’s teachings are quite special. They teach us how to end suffering. When we practice correctly we will see progress, changes in our lives and in our mentality very clearly. We will get lost in thought less, mental suffering will be less severe and for shorter periods.**

To See the Truth



My Journey to Correct Meditation

Suan Santidham, October 17, 2007

Dhamma is something we can study or talk about anywhere. It is a natural and ordinary topic and needn't be something to speak of in a formal way or setting. In the Buddha's time, they taught under trees. Dhamma isn't so mysterious or complicated either. Common people can understand it just fine. But if an ordinary person is to develop the mind to the state of nibbāna (Nirvana), he or she must be very diligent and committed, though not in the sense of a workhorse with the head down and the use of brute force. It is not at all as hard as it sounds. Regular working people can achieve great wisdom into the true nature of things. There is no need to be a monk.

Allow me to share the story of my practice. It will help us to see that we can all practice to see the Truth. It will also provide some insight into how to practice correctly and how to overcome some obstacles we may encounter along our journey.

When I was seven years old I went to a temple called Wat Asokarama and met a monk there named Luang Por (Venerable Father) Lee. He gave me my first lesson in meditation. He taught me to watch and count my breaths and mentally say "Buddho" ("the knower" or "awakened one") as I did this. Each in-breath I was to say "Bud", and each out-breath I was to say "dho", breathing in "Bud", out "dho", count 1, in "Bud", out "dho", and count 2. I was instructed to count up to ten full breaths and then count back down again.

After receiving this instruction from Luang Por Lee, I practiced day in and day out. At the time I didn't know about the Buddha's teaching on mindfulness of the in-breath and out-breath (Anapanasati). The true meaning of this teaching is to be mindful with every breath. It does not mean to force your attention to stay with the breath and not let it go off elsewhere. But the latter is what I did. And since I was only seven, my mind was able to concentrate on the breath very well. The mind of a youngster just did what it was told. I wasn't inquisitive and I wasn't seeking any results.

Not long after, I was able to visit different realms of existence and I became interested in angels and

higher beings. Perhaps by the grace of previous karma or practice, I realized the futility in this curiosity. I thought, “I am not an angel. They won’t let me live with them. So why am I looking over the fence to see what the neighbours have?” I was also very afraid of ghosts, so the idea hit me that perhaps I’d end up visiting them too. In fact I was so afraid of ghosts that I couldn’t sleep when my little cat died. I worried its spirit would haunt me! I decided that enough was enough with my astral travels, and so I decided to keep to the breath from then on.

Every day for the next 22 years, even without a teacher to remind or force me, I continued to practice watching and counting the breath and repeating “Buddho”. I was able to make the mind very peaceful. One day, when I was about 10 years old, I was playing with marbles outside in the yard, and I suddenly saw the neighbours’ house catch fire. It was blazing out of many rooms. In a state of shock, I quickly gathered up all my marbles (still greedy, and making sure I wouldn’t lose any of them!) and darted into the house to tell my dad. After about three steps something amazing happened: mindfulness arose automatically and I was able to see the fear, from a completely detached position.

Many years later I later told this story to a venerable teacher of mine, Luang Por Phud. He said this happened from the karma of a previous lifetime when I had practiced meditation. If a very powerful emotion arises, usually fear or anger, mindfulness that was developed before will come back and see the emotion. Dosa (fear, anger, stress, or any kind of aversion) is the strongest and usually the easiest defilement to see. Learning Dhamma through meditative development is something that never leaves us. It is completely distinct from learning with books and teachers; it is not forgotten, even over lifetimes.

Many people have such experiences, where a separation occurs from a strong emotion even if just for a moment. But at the time this moment of mindfulness occurred, and the moment of separation from the phenomenon of fear, I didn't know it was anything significant and I quickly forgot about it. Luang Por Lee had passed on and I didn't have a teacher or anyone to ask. I knew there were good teachers in Thailand, especially the Northeast, but I didn't know any of them. So I just kept watching the breath and making myself peaceful for a while every day.

In 1981, at the age of 29, I was reading a Dhamma magazine and noticed Luang Pu (Venerable

Grandfather) Dune's paraphrasing of the Buddha's Four Noble Truths quoted on the back cover:

The mind sent out is the cause of suffering.

The result of the mind being sent out is suffering.

The mind that sees the mind with crystal clarity is the Noble Path.

The result of the mind that sees the mind with crystal clarity is liberation.

Regarding the first sentence, it should be noted that it is normal and natural to send the mind out to look, hear, see, touch, taste and to think. In short, this is how we interact with the world. However, when regular people do this, the mind will be uneasy, unsteady. This is not the case for those who have reached enlightenment. This is one of Luang Pu Dune's teachings. I had never heard anything like this before, but it struck me as very interesting. I was great at watching the breath, but really knew nothing at all about Dhamma. I was completely ignorant to it. Luckily Luang Pu Dune was still alive and living in Surin Province. So I set out to see him at his temple, Wat Burabharama.

I waited for him to finish his lunch in his living quarters (khuti), and after which he came out to sit in a chair out front. I prostrated to him three times as is the tradition, and then sat at his feet. I told him that I would like to practice the Dhamma. He closed his eyes and sat silently for at least a half an hour. I wasn't sure what had happened. **Was he going to talk to me?** Was he meditating? Maybe he was taking an afternoon nap! When he finally opened his eyes he told me that Dhamma practice is not hard; it is only hard for those who don't practice. He told me that I had studied enough books, and it was now time to study my own mind. I was so excited that he finally spoke and taught me something. I told him I understood what he meant. He said if I understand, then I should go and practice. And that was it. That was all he said to me. It was time to venture on another overnight train back home, with just that to ponder.

Luang Pu Dune told me to study my own mind. But I did not know where my mind was. On the train home, I started to look for it. I figured the mind had to be in my body. If I stopped being interested in the outside world, and just observed the body, then eventually I would find the mind. This is what I thought. So first, I investigated my hair. It seemed obvious the mind

wasn't there. I then proceeded to investigate the rest of my body, all the way down to the feet. It didn't seem that there was a mind anywhere in the body at all. It was all just material stuff, and the body was just a physical mass.

So then I thought maybe the mind was in contentment and discontent. So I made myself feel happy and relaxed, and then I looked into the happiness for mind. The happiness then started to drift away. It was apparent that there was no mind to be found in the happiness. The same was true for unhappiness. Next, I figured maybe the mind is in thoughts. I decided to do some Buddhist chanting and watch these chanted thoughts carefully. I saw the thoughts, the words of the chant, coming up and realized that the mind isn't the thoughts; the mind is that which knows everything. It is that which knows the body and what it does, knows all the feelings, knows all phenomena.

I watched all phenomena happening and concluded that the mind was just the natural knower of all things. Upon this understanding, the mind completely separated from all things that were arising, if just for a moment, and then was attached to them once again. I saw that the mind could separate out. It was quite a revelation. I prac-

ticed trying to make this happen again for a week straight, and was successful again only for a few quick moments.

I was proud of my accomplishments. Even though I had practiced so much and only was able to separate the mind out for a few moments, I felt it was a great feat. I could have just as easily been disappointed that I'd had only a few moments of clarity after all that work, but I was good at encouraging myself. We have to know the art of when to be comforting or stern with ourselves.

Then in the next week, I could see the mind oscillating between being separated from and attached to phenomena. I could also see the mind moving from the eyes to the ears, to thinking, and all around. I decided to try to make it stop doing all this, and pulled all the attention in to make the mind still at the center of the chest. It felt tight there, but I noticed that the mind wasn't to be found in this spot either. I felt maybe I had to get rid of this tightness.

Please remember that I had not much direction from teachers at the time, so I was just trying to figure it all out for myself. I focused intently on the tight spot in the chest, and eventually the tightness burst and I felt a wonderful sensation of

relief. I thought I had practiced really well that day. But the tightness kept coming back, and I had to be more and more resourceful with my concentration to burst it, like a needle poking again and again at a balloon. Finally, when the balloon in the chest burst a final time, the mind became the knower, the watcher again. After a short time though, the mind started running around to the eyes to see, the ears to hear, into the thoughts to think. I still couldn't figure out how to stop it from moving. I decided to focus on the breath again just to try to keep the mind still. I spent a long time trying to find a solution to stop the mind's antics.

After about three months of this, I went back to Luang Pu Dune. I figured he would be very pleased with my work. With a straight face, I told him, "I am now able to watch my mind." He asked, "Tell me about the mind then." I told him, "the mind keeps running around, but I can keep bringing it back." He then exclaimed, "That's not watching the mind. You are meddling with its behavior! Try again." He didn't tell me what to watch; he just said I was interfering with the behavior and not watching the mind itself. He then expounded some Dhamma to me about how Buddha is mind (*citta*). I didn't understand any of it and felt exhausted. At the end of it, in a

blur of confusion, I asked if I could just go back and watch the mind. He said, of course, as that is all there really is to do in all of the Buddha's teachings.

When I went back I mulled over what Luang Pu Dune had told me. If I was lost in the mind's behavior, then maybe I should stop concerning myself with the mind's antics. I decided I'd just let the mind do what it does and just observe it without interfering.

Seven months after first meeting Luang Pu Dune, I went to meet a monk friend of mine after work at a nearby temple and got caught in the rain. My umbrella could not withstand the intensity of the wind and rain. I was completely soaked. I went into the hut (khuti) and sat in such a way that I would not make the floor too wet. I began to worry that I would surely catch a cold from this weather. From all the practice I had done, however, the mind separated out and saw the worry and the worry disappeared. Not only that, but the whole world disappeared for a moment, and all that was left was mind. The mind showed me in that moment that even the mind was not me. I realized that if not even the mind was me, then there isn't anything in this world that we can call ourselves.

I went back to Luang Pu Dune again and I told him that the practice had come together. He said that I know how to practice correctly now, that I have seen the noble path and the Triple Gem (Buddha, Dhamma, Sangha). He said that I didn't need to go back to see him again. Of course, I still did. I was stubborn in my ways, and I didn't believe him yet.

Can we see here that we don't have to be a monk to practice correctly and receive the fruits and wisdom that it brings? Just watch and see what the mind does. Know in the body, and know in the mind. Just know. Only know.

About nine months later I wanted some help again with my practice. Unfortunately, Luang Pu Dune had passed away. After that, I mostly went to Luang Pu Thade for advice, and occasionally Luang Pu Sim and a few others. I went to meet Luang Pu Sim and told him about an experience I was having. Ever since I was a child practicing meditation, I have never been one to get taken away by peaceful states. I was always alert. But for some reason, at this point I kept getting absorbed and falling asleep, even sometimes while doing walking meditation! I was curious about what was going on. When I explained my situation to Luang Pu Sim, he asked me what a true watcher

could be curious about? He said I'll be fine and that great things are bound to happen soon. That's about all he said. It was hard to understand and certainly hard to swallow.

Few meditation masters provide assistance with the impeccable detail that I do. I'll even tell you what your mind is doing for you! Anyway, I continued with my practice and my understanding of the Dhamma. The mind withdrew and became more and more distant from what arose. Then there was a period where whatever objects would arise, I would bring my attention deep into them with great focus. I really wanted to see them clearly. I was staying with Luang Por Keun, a student of Luang Pu Dune at the time. He told me, "Hey, Pramote, watch the mind! Remember the watcher." So I had to stop focusing deeply on the objects.

I thought he meant to clearly watch the watcher, so then I focused all my attention on it. I held it in my attention as best I could. This is not what we should do. I did this for about year, until the mind was completely still and stuck to the watcher like glue. Many people like to do this, fixing attention on the breath or the watcher as I did, but it really has no use. Be careful of this. Don't make the same mistake as I did, stagnant for 22

years concentrating on the breath, and then another year fixing to the watcher.

Finally, I began to relax and let the mind do its thing. It would slip towards the mental phenomena that would arise and then come back to the watcher or knower. I wouldn't hold to the watcher anymore, so I would let it slip back down into a phenomenon, and then it would come back to be the watcher again. The mind would be the knower and then it wouldn't, moving back and forth like this between watching mind and mental phenomena. At one point, the mind released its attention from both and there was a cessation in the middle. It was not here, there or anywhere between. I thought this must have been nibbāna.

I went to see Luang Pu Thade. He told me to keep doing this. There weren't many people that are able to do what I was doing, so he wanted to make sure I didn't stop practicing. I told him I was scared I'd get addicted to this state, so he reassured me that he would help me if I did. This actually was a type of Samatha practice. But since it was so rare, Luang Pu Thade thought I should keep at it.

By chance one evening I met a monk, Luang Pu Boonjan who asked me about my practice. When

I told him about this beautiful state I was keeping to, he laughed and said, “What kind of nibbāna would have an entrance and an exit?” His words jolted me, and my mind exited the state it had been in. I realized that this state of samādhi, this cessation amidst the oscillating mind as I described was not the way to end suffering. I decided I wouldn’t meddle with or hold to any states ever again. I would only know.

From then on, my practice was to know whatever arises. Phenomena would flash in and flash out all day and all night, like sparkles dancing. It was all there was. After a while, I became very tired of watching this all the time. I hoped I could stop watching for a day or so. Well for better or worse, this proved impossible. Mindfulness was working on its own. There was no way to stop it or get out of this.

I went to see Luang Por Phud. He was very busy at the temple that day but still spent an hour helping me. He told others to wait, because helping me was a priority. We were both exhausted. He told me that at my stage, the mind sees things in this way. I was still discouraged, however, and eventually I insisted that he go and continue with his other engagements.

My next idea was to write a letter to Luang Ta Maha Bua. He answered by giving me a big book to read. In the book, I found some information about the state where I was stuck. He said the same thing as Luang Por Phud. I supposed everything was going fine then, but I was tired and uninspired.

I remember one day I was waiting at a bus stop and decided I would go back to counting the breath, the way I practiced before meeting Luang Pu Dune. It was my old Samatha practice. I thought I would do it just for a rest. When I got to breath number 28, the mind entered samādhi (became one-pointed). The phenomena that were sparkling and dancing finally ceased. I then came out of the samādhi and realized I was silly for completely abandoning this practice for so long. I needed this state of concentration. I was so intent on watching the mind and trying to develop wisdom that the watching became like a dull knife, not able to cut through anything any further. I realized that the Samatha practice gave my mind the rest and sharpness it needed to watch phenomena with energy and alertness. We need to do Samatha sometimes for peacefulness. Once peaceful we let go of Samatha and watch the mind and body do what they do naturally.

I've been telling stories here about a lot of the mistakes I have made along the way. I was addicted to Samatha. Then I was looking around for the mind. Then I was addicted to the watcher. Then I played around and interfered with states and the watcher. Then I tossed out Samatha altogether. We can't abandon our Samatha practice. And one is also ill-advised to only do Samatha and never develop wisdom. Practicing Samatha only is a totally different path than that to nibbāna, but it is important as an ability that gives us strength and energy to support the way of wisdom.

I later received a second response from Luang Ta Maha Bua. In it he told me that proper practice wasn't complicated. We need to just know the body and mind as they are in the present moment. This summarizes it very well. Just have the mindfulness to know the body and mind as they are. Just keep knowing and knowing.

So we can see that we can go quite far in our practice as a normal lay-person. I did, however, reach a point where I felt that I had too many responsibilities. It made sense to have more time in the day to practice, so I decided to ordain as a monk in 2001. Actually, my wife recommended it!

It is not necessary to be a monk to practice successfully; laypeople can do it well. As a layperson, when I reported my experiences to meditation masters, there were often monks listening in. I remember once a monk asked me how I could reach such stages of understanding. He admitted he'd been a monk for 20 years and hadn't achieved even close to what I had, in just a year. I told him that I don't just keep my mind still and peaceful all day.

Once my mind becomes peaceful, I keep seeing what the body and mind do from moment to moment. I watch the body stand, walk, sit and lie down – not myself, the body. The body sits; it is not me sitting. The body lies down; it is not me lying down. The body is just a material thing with a mind in it, just a bundle of elements, with an inflow and outflow such elements occurring continuously. Or I watch the mind. It works all day and all night, thinking and making things up; one moment it is happy, the next it is unhappy. One moment it is nice, the next it is mean. It goes around and around like this non-stop. It goes from the eyes to see, to the ears to hear, to the nose to smell, to the tongue to taste, to the body surface to experience sensations and into the mind to think. Around and around it goes, working by itself all the time. We can't

control it, and we can't choose whether we will be happy, nice or peaceful. It rotates around between all these things: always in a state of flux, with no state persisting, and with nothing under our control. When we see that everything is always changing (anicca), that nothing persists (dukkha) and that it is all beyond control (anattā), then we have seen the Three Characteristics that the Buddha taught.

Physical and mental phenomena will show their true characteristics if we practice Vipassana correctly. This is the purpose of Vipassana. Vipassana is not thinking things out and telling ourselves that we are not our body. That is not true wisdom. We have to watch things as they are and see the Three Characteristics in our experience.

Please watch and know in this way, and one day it will be sufficient. The characteristics will show themselves clearly. The process of enlightenment will occur. When we see that there is no self to be found in the mind and body; that the mind and body are actually the five khandhas or aggregates (body/form, feeling, memory, mental states/formations, consciousness), many of us get scared. Some get sad, some bored and fed up with the world. Eventually we see that happy and sad, good and bad, are equivalent states in that they are

just phenomena that arise and fall, subject to the Three Characteristics. It will seem for many of us at this point that the world is very boring and pointless. This is not an unwholesome boredom, however. It arises because the mind is stable, not attached and impartial to what arises.

Try to be impartial to what arises. Don't hate defilements, just know when they have arisen. The Buddha never taught that we should not have defilements. He didn't teach to try to get rid of anger or other defilements like craving when they arise. He taught us that when they arise, we should know they have arisen. When anger arises, the mind has anger, not us. If craving arises, see that the mind has craving, not us. We are not the mind. There is no us. Keep watching in this way.

When we see that the body and mind are not us, then we can say that we have attained true wisdom. When we have full wisdom the mind will be completely equanimous, impartial to all things. This is a mind that has found the Buddha's famous "middle way". It is unaffected by any arising phenomenon. When happiness arises, we don't get caught up in it as it is only temporary. When suffering arises, we don't get lost in that either as it is also temporary. We see that all

things good or bad are impermanent and just arise and pass of their own accord. When defilements arise we don't hate them. Remember they are our teachers and can show us the Three Characteristics. They bring us true wisdom just as well as virtuous states do. We just keep watching in this way every day, and we will see that all mental and physical phenomena simply arise because of cause. And when the cause for a phenomenon is no longer present, the phenomenon falls away.

The mind will start to know clearly what arises (be mindful) on its own. When it sees phenomena clearly and quickly, they fall away immediately; they do not come up and take over the mind, and don't create stories, pains or any realms of suffering. The mind will move into a deep level of concentration called "appanā samādhi" on its own whether one had previously experienced concentration to this level or not. At this stage the mind will see phenomena arise and fall very quickly. The mind doesn't even know what it is that arises. Each phenomenon simply comes and goes, comes and goes. It knows, but it doesn't know what it knows.

His Royal Highness the King of Thailand came to a meeting of high monks once and asked if knowing but not knowing what we are knowing is

still knowing. The answer Luang Por Phud gave is yes. The mind that is knowing, but doesn't know what it is knowing, is not involved in the relative world. It sees all phenomena as equal and is not thinking, conceptualizing, or lost in stories that are, at best, only true at a relative level. When we see truth on the ultimate level, we see that each thing that arises, then falls away. We see that such things have no name. When we see this clearly, we are nearing the first stage of enlightenment called stream-entry.

Then we see that each thing that arises and falls is just a mass of suffering. The mind is wise, peaceful and is impartial to whatever arises and falls. Then the mind moves towards pure consciousness. When it arrives there the defilements will start to become eradicated. Nibbāna, the end of suffering, is visible for just two or three moments. The stream enterer then returns to the relative world but still contemplates Truth. He or she can also see what defilements are now gone and which still remain. He or she then continues to practice in exactly the same way as always: watching and knowing body and mind.

Non-monks can do this work very well. After all, monk and lay person are just relative positions which hold no truth on the ultimate level. Both

have bodies and minds and know in just the same way.

That's enough theory for one day. Go back to your lives and study the body and mind. But don't sit and think about them; that will slow the practice down, and make it difficult.

To conclude, I'll provide some practical examples of how to practice mindfulness in daily life. When you are sitting and waiting for someone and feel bored, know that there is boredom. At work, when laziness arises in the afternoon, know there is laziness. When you want to talk to a friend, know there is wanting. When talking if it feels fun, know enjoyment has arisen. When hunger arises, know it. When you are choosing food at the cafeteria and it all looks unappetizing, know that dissatisfaction has arisen. Just know in this way. Know directly in your experience and see that every mind of every kind arises and falls; laziness arises and falls, boredom arises and falls, wanting arises and falls. When you taste the food and you are glad it tastes better than you had expected, know there is gladness. When you shower, notice all the mental states that arise. Especially if it is a cold shower, there will be lots of changes to notice: fear will arise and fall, and relief and happiness will arise when we are clean and dry.

A good place to observe the changes of the mind is in traffic. We may be at the back of a long line at a red light and feel restlessness. Know the moment that this has arisen. Then a green light appears and we feel a little bit happy, but then the light turns red again just before we make it through! We get very frustrated. We may notice we are more upset about that than we were a few minutes ago when we were twenty cars back! See and know what arises in the mind, with honesty and humility. We will see the devil inside us, so to speak. We will see that we are as bad as anyone else. We won't blame anyone for our pains and sorrows anymore. The evils of the world are just the defilements. Anger, greed and ignorance take over our minds just as they do the minds of others. Everyone deserves our sympathy in this regard. It isn't hard to watch the mind as in the examples I have given, but we do need courage, patience and perseverance.

Some helpful conversations from the day's talk with Luang Por Pramote

Student 1: I notice the mind wanders a lot from one thing to another. It doesn't stop.

LP: **Just know the mind is running around. It is not our job to make it stop. And if we are wanting it to stop, notice the wanting.**

Student 2: I can't find my mind.

LP: **Don't look for it! Are you a jealous person?**

Student 2: Yes.

LP: **Know when jealousy arises. Anger arises. Happiness arises. Just keep knowing what arises in the mind. Can you see that as you are listening to me, you are not aware of your mind? You are sending your mind out and forgetting to notice within. Now you are trying to be still. Don't force the mind back in or to be still either. Just know what it is doing naturally.**

Student 3: Am I practicing correctly?

LP: **In your case, you are a little too stuck to samādhi. You need to relax out of it and watch the mind throughout the day during regular activities. Many of us have**

an image in our heads about what meditation is supposed to be or supposed to look like. We have to sit still and erect, cross-legged, eyes closed and barely breathing. We see someone doing this and we assume he is a great meditator. Actually, it is much simpler than this. When standing, be aware of standing. When sitting, be aware of sitting. When happy or unhappy, be aware of this too.

Student 4: I'm feeling really neutral towards everything.

LP: Good. There are two kinds of neutral: the first is impartial to or not caught up in mental states as a result of seeing them clearly as they really are. This type of neutrality is ideal. The second, inadvisable type, is usually a result of one-pointed concentration. It is dull and dim. But this is not your issue. Your practice is ok.

Those who would like to reach Vipassana and have never practiced calmness meditation (Samatha) often do a much better job at watching their minds than those who are addicted to Samatha. However, those who were Samatha practitioners but then are able to come out of it and understand

Vipassana will develop more quickly. The ones who have never practiced before are lazy; their minds don't have much power or fortitude and lose interest easily, even though they are able to see their mind moving quite well.

Student 5: I don't think I am watching correctly.

LP: Don't go looking for mental states or phenomena. And don't go looking for the mind. I wasted a lot of time doing this in the past. Let phenomena happen first and then see what has happened. So if we are happy, know that there is happiness. If we are confused, know that there is confusion. There are two correct things to watch when we watch the mind: firstly, we can know the feeling that we have now. Secondly, we can watch the mind's activities, noticing whether it has slipped into meditation objects or into thinking. Or perhaps it has gone to the eyes, ears, nose, mouth or a bodily movement or function. Keep watching in these ways and then we'll see that each state arises and falls, that it doesn't last and it cannot be controlled. In short, we'll see the Three Characteristics.

Can you feel that you are trying to control the mind, trying to keep it still now? This is Samatha, keeping it continuously in the same state. You may get peaceful for periods, but you won't see the Three Characteristics. Notice that your mind keeps going off into thinking. Notice this often. If the mind goes off thinking often that is a good thing. It means we are noticing it often. For most people the mind goes off once, and is off all day long!

Keep watching and we'll see this body and mind are not ours, and not us. They just do their thing, uncontrollably on their own. When we see they are not us, we will enter the stream of enlightenment (sotapanna). When we let go of all attachment to the body, we have reach a further stage, the non-returner (anagami). When we let go of all attachment to the mind, we are fully enlightened (arahant).

Remember well, that we are not trying to better ourselves in this practice. We are not trying to change or control anything, to be happier, more peaceful, or a nicer person. We are practicing to know ourselves better. Know this body and mind as

they really are. And we will see that this body is oppressed by endless suffering: it's either hot or cold, tired or achy, hungry or uncomfortable. The mind is always in flux, moving from here to there, working all day and all night uncontrollably. This is seeing the truth. Learning the truth of the body and mind is learning the truth of life. This is learning Dhamma. When we understand the truth completely in life, we will be free of suffering.

We suffer when we resist the truth, when we don't accept the inevitable. For example, when we resist growing old, we suffer. If we don't want to be old, and we are stressed about it, we get older even quicker! The same is true for pain. Pain is sure to happen. If we don't accept it when it arises, we will be in a great deal of suffering. Meditators don't often accept that the mind is impermanent. They try to make the mind as still as can be and hold it there. When the mind isn't still, they complain that they didn't meditate well that day. Whether we are good or not, the mind oscillates between being still and active naturally. There is no such thing as a permanent state on this planet. We are not trying to be perma-

nently peaceful or anything else. This body is just something we are borrowing temporarily from the world, which we will have to return eventually. Just practice to see the truth, not to try to evade it.

Student 6: I can see that my mind wanders off, and then I try to bring it back and hold it.

LP: Very good. It is good that you can see what you are doing, not that you are bringing it back. Defilements arise and then we see them. This is what we do. You pass! You get a B. The best case is that the mind is virtuous and not defiled and we know that. That's an A grade! Second best is when defilements arise and we see them. Next is not so great, when the mind is wholesome and we don't see it, that only gets a C: Happy and blissful but mindless. The worst of course, is when the mind is defiled and we don't see it. That's a D or an F. I didn't make this up. The Buddha mentioned these four possible situations as well.

Know as much as possible. We can't practice when we are working and are required to think, and need to know the content of the thoughts. We also can't practice

when we are asleep. All other times we can watch our minds.

April 24, 2009

Student 7: I have been practicing watching the mind for a couple years now, and the mind is bright and I feel very relaxed. Lately I find that sometimes mindfulness knows that thinking is arising very quickly. Sometimes I'm about to remember something and then it drops off so fast, I'm not sure if I needed to know it or not. Sometimes I have no idea if there was going to be a thought or not.

LP: **Don't be concerned about this. But in the working hours, or when we need to accomplish something that requires thinking, we need to intentionally focus on the task at hand. We need to concentrate on what we are doing. When we have done mindfulness practice consistently, the mind is no longer interested in what we are thinking. As soon as a thought comes up, mindfulness sees it and it falls away immediately. We are not stuck in worldly things; sometimes we don't even know what thoughts are about as they fall away so quickly. And then another totally different topic may arise. This**

is just how the mind works. But when there is situation that requires information continuously for a while, we need to intentionally think. In working hours we need to focus on what we are doing. We can't effectively watch the mind. We can however, focus on our jobs and then when defilements arise, know they have. When we are at your stage, we need to be able to switch on and switch off our mindfulness practice as necessary.

Some helpful conversations with Luang Por Pramote from February 28, 2010

Student 8: I seem to have chosen a place where I wallow in sadness. I don't have much inspiration in my practice.

LP: Nowhere that you choose to dwell will be happy. We are suffering, so anywhere we go, suffering will follow. It is the mind that suffers, the mind that resists. We don't want to be where we are, so we suffer. If we can be mindful we can see that the mind is suffering because it is not impartial to what arises. The disliking is causing suffering. Try to be aware as much as you can.

Student 9: I find that my practice has improved a lot in the last eight months. I am not overfocusing as much. And suffering has decreased a lot.

LP: Keep practicing as you are. See that everything arises and passes away. Arises and passes. Don't strive for happiness. Looking for happiness is a careless way to practice. See that it goes away just like everything else. Happiness is not constant. See that everything in our lives is fluctuating. Seeing in this way you

can reach a greater state far above both suffering and happiness.

Student 10: I've noticed that I've made progress in my meditation. I sometimes can see my mind wandering off as much as 20 times per minute. I also chuckle at anger that used to hook me in.

LP: **Very good. Keep at it. Notice the mind liking and disliking as well. Soon mindfulness will arise by itself and will be completely neutral, impartial to what arises. Good job.**

Student 11: I feel my practice has worsened lately. I'm holding to phenomena too much.

LP: **So just know that you are doing that. You believe your practice has deteriorated because you are thinking and comparing it to when you were making progress.**

Student 12: I have to thank you. I used to fixate my attention on one object. Now I have let the mind relax, and I understand so much more all the time.

LP: **Good. Can you see that now that the mind is not fixated, phenomena can show us that they arise and fall away? That is the path of wisdom. Holding our attention**

somewhere to still the mind is not. But we can also see that if we are not peaceful enough, we can't see the arising and falling away either. So we need both practices.

Student 12: I can see clearly that the mind isn't me. During daily activities the body and mind are working and mindfulness can see this.

LP: The body and mind are two distinct things. Sometimes we watch the body, sometimes the mind. However, all things will show us their three true characteristics (anicca, dukkha, anattā). We must see this in order to reach Vipassana, not just stare at one object. You are doing a great job.

Student 13: I bounce around in my practice a lot. Sometimes I walk, sometimes watch the breath, sometimes I use the "Buddho" mantra, and sometimes I feel sleepy and then start moving my arm and watching the movements or I just get up and walk. I'm never quite sure if I'm doing the appropriate thing or not.

LP: Just do the things that make mindfulness arise. I'll let you figure out what to

watch for yourself. Watch what keeps you the most aware, whether it is watching walking, the breath or anything else. It is important to be able to observe our own practice and see what works. But be careful not to over think things. If you are thinking too much it is helpful to add a mantra like “Buddho” into the practice. Make sure, however, you are using it not just to be peaceful, but to notice when the mind leaves the mantra and goes off to think. Then the mind will have the appropriate amount of energy and peace to practice effectively.

Student 14: Lately I have been efficient at noticing the mind fabricating, making things up. I am still not completely neutral to what arises.

LP: **Just seeing the partiality when it comes up is enough for the mind to become neutral on its own.**

Student 14: Also, I can see the sense of self, the “me” come up quite clearly and inflate and deflate like a balloon (The lay-student has a tone of shame in her voice.).

LP: **It has always been arising. Just know you can see it. This is a good thing. Now you don’t have to be its slave.**

Student 15: About four months ago you asked me to practice without doing it with so much intention, so much wanting. I can't do what you asked.

LP: **So what can you do?**

Student 15: I can pig-headedly keep trying hard!

LP: **Well that's better than pig-headedly not meditating at all. So tell me about your practice.**

Student 15: I don't know. I'm lazy sometimes. Sometimes it's just too intentional, but sometimes it's ok I guess.

LP: **So you can see that it is not consistent. Each day is different. Nothing is permanent. Just keep practicing all the time. Don't skip even one day. And just know when the wanting comes up as much as you can. Know when the mind is eager for success. So what's the problem?**

Student 15: I've been practicing so long, and I can't see the defilements decreasing at all.

LP: **Can you see them arising and falling?**

Student 15: Sometimes.

LP: **See that happiness arises and falls. Suffering arises and falls too. That is more**

important. We are looking to see that whatever arises also falls away. Defilements will come up all day long. We are not practicing so that they don't. If there is a cause for a defilement to arise it will. When we keep practicing, mindfulness will arise more often. Mindfulness is a virtuous state, not a defiled one. When the mind is used to being virtuous, the defilements will have less opportunity to come up and feed, to come in and take over. They will lose their momentum. Don't be discouraged. Try to notice when you feel discouraged as quickly as you can.

This point is for all practitioners. We can get tired; that is ok. However, we must not let discouragement win out. We must know quickly when a discouraged feeling arises and continue practicing. Just about all meditators have periods of discouragement, thinking they are not getting enough results, and feel beaten. Let's not be so hard on ourselves; let's not be impatient. It is all about being neutral, impartial. Actually, there probably are good results but they are just not up to standards that our minds have decided on.

Student 16: I feel I'm not neutral towards phenomena. I get upset and criticize myself for not practicing well enough. My meditation is not as good as I would like it to be. It brings up anger.

LP: **If you want it to go as you wish, then this is the ego at work. And there is no ego; it is just a delusion, just a defilement. Don't try to be good. Just know it each time a defilement arises, and the mind will be good on its own. There is no point in getting angry with the defilements.**

To See the Truth



To See the Truth

Suan Santidham, April 26, 2009

Dhamma is something we need to listen to with an open mind and open heart. If we are close-minded or guarded when Dhamma is explained to us, we will not understand it correctly. Just listen with open ears and consider it later. Try it on for size. Believing everything I say certainly isn't the right approach. It isn't the intelligent thing to do; we shouldn't be so gullible as to believe what others say too easily. On the other hand, dismissing what I say isn't so smart either. Choosing to not believe what is said is just the work of a busy mind. Listen to what is said here. Try it out. We'll see for ourselves if it is true in our experience. When we reap results from our practice we will know for ourselves what is true and what is not. This is the approach that will make us grow smarter and wiser.

Let us take a look for ourselves if what I say is true. I am saying that the arising of mindfulness is a virtuous mental state. Let's practice and

see for ourselves which mental states are virtuous and which are not. See for ourselves if it is as I say, that genuine mindfulness will arise from watching physical and mental phenomena, that is, from watching what happens in the body and mind. Sense the body breathing in and breathing out. Know the body is sitting, standing, walking and lying down when it is. If the mind is happy, unhappy or neutral, recognize that this is so. If the mind is craving or not craving, know that this is so. If the mind is angry or not, deluded or not, restless or dispirited, know it is so.

Practice recognizing whatever physical and mental phenomena arise in the body and mind. Try it for yourself and see if this practice brings about mindfulness. Practice for a month or so and if I am wrong then you can call me a liar. But don't just think about the phenomena, and don't force attention towards the phenomena. We must truly know what has arisen without interference. Don't hold your attention on the body, the breath, the abdomen or feet (while walking). Just know what is going on in the body and mind as much as possible. Genuine mindfulness will arise on its own.

When mindfulness arises, we keep watching with a mind that is impartial towards what occurs. Such a neutral mind is not eager to know

what arises. It lets phenomena occur naturally and knows just after the fact what has arisen. And when it knows, it doesn't slide down into each phenomenon to have a look at it. It knows from a distance. It is like the mind is standing on the riverbank and watching things pass downstream. It doesn't jump into the river.

After we know what has arisen, we don't go in to interfere in anyway. If a beautiful lady or a handsome man walks by, we don't try to avoid seeing him or her. If the eyes have already seen, then we acknowledge that seeing has occurred. After the eyes have seen and in the mind lust arises, then we recognize that this is so. Don't interfere with this process; just practice knowing. If craving or anger arise and we look for a solution to get rid of it, we are not knowing with a neutral mind. We are knowing and interfering. Just know. Don't mentally run around and try to look for something to know either. Just let whatever happens happen, and know it is so after the fact.

Once we know what has arisen, we don't hold our focus on it. That is staring or fixating our attention; it is interfering. No matter if what arises is good or bad, delightful or painful, just know it with an impartial mind. When happiness or a virtuous state arises (like compassion or even

mindfulness), don't try to hold on to it. Don't try to get as much of it as possible. When an unscrupulous or unhappy state arises, don't try to be rid of it quickly. This is not knowing in an impartial way. When the mind is not equanimous, we will not see things as they really are, and our tendency will be to interfere.

If we don't know how to meditate correctly, the arising of mental or physical pain will be followed by an attempt to get rid of it. That will make us tense and stiffen up. Then we'll look for a way to get rid of the tension. Or the mind will start thinking about this and that, and even think about a way to get rid of the thinking! Thinking is a perfectly natural function of the mind. There is no need to stop or interfere with what is perfectly natural!

So before knowing, we are not to be too intent on watching and thus wait expectantly. When we are knowing something, we should not move towards it and hold it in our attention. And after we have known something to arise, we don't interfere with it in anyway. Then we will know clearly. And we can see for ourselves the great changes that occur in our lives as a result.

If we practice correctly, the changes will happen very fast. One change we will notice is that defilements (anger, greed, lust, etc.) will seem to arise more often than before, but they will be lighter and less effective in taking over the mind. This is because mindfulness sees them and knows them before they increase in size. It is very easy to blow out a match, but very hard indeed to blow out a full-fledged house fire. Once a little flame of irritation is unnoticed, a full fire of hatred can be unleashed. The quicker our mindfulness, the faster it puts out the little fires and the less likely it is for a larger defilement to come up.

We will be able to measure the differences in our lives. As we practice, our suffering will lessen in both severity and duration. It will seem as if we were previously living in darkness or in a fog. While we are still in the fog, of course, it seems normal. It is like someone born with cataracts who thinks he sees as clearly as everyone else. Once he has it removed, however, he can see so much clearer than before. He never knew how blind he was!

The vast majority of the world is totally deluded all the time, living in a dark fog. But only when the mind awakens - when it has mindfulness and is bright, sharp and clean - will we clearly see that our

whole lives were previously in darkness. When there is mindfulness, the mind is happy on its own without the need for stimuli and we just continue watching the body and mind work.

If we are practicing correctly, there should be noticeable progress within a month. If we've been practicing for years without any wisdom arising, then surely we are doing something wrong, or perhaps still stuck in Samatha practice. If we practice recognizing phenomena until mindfulness arises on its own, then we are practicing Vipassana. The mind will become stable, separate from and impartial to what arises, and able to watch phenomena without looking around for them, holding to them, or interfering with them.

We will see that the body and mind are not us. The body is just a physical form that moves about and is always changing. The mind will be seen as non-physical thing that moves about and is always changing. It changes in accordance with causation. If there is a cause for anger, greed or delusion, it will arise. When the cause is gone, it will pass away. We cannot control it. We will see the truth over and over again. We will see that all phenomena that arise are impermanent, that none persist and that each arises according

to causation, and thus is not within our power to control.

These true characteristics, the Three Characteristics of anicca, dukkha, anattā, we will clearly see for ourselves as we develop our practice. Vipassana is about attaining the wisdom of these Three Characteristics of all phenomena, and thus washing away our wrong understanding of the way things are. Firstly, we will wash away the falsehood that the body and mind are us. At this point, we attain the initial stage of enlightenment called stream-entry.

Generally, we as people are completely deluded. We lack wisdom. We think that we *are* this body and mind. We give them a name identify with our names and believe this is who we are. Others have different names which further emphasizes that there we are a separate self. Everything we do is to keep asserting this self. Whether we are thinking, talking or doing, we are always interested in keeping this idea of self going.

We have been at this business of asserting the self for so long, that just a little bit of mindfulness may not be enough to show big results. We need to be patient with our meditation practice. If we

practice correctly, we will see changes, slowly for some and quickly for others. At minimum, when the mind is stable and impartial with respect to what arises in the body and mind, it is a happy or equanimous mind. It is not involved in or attached to what arises.

If we can practice in this way but haven't enlightened yet, there is no need to be impatient. We are already happy as we practice and wisdom is sure to develop as well. The more impatient we are, the less progress we make. Impatience is greed, and thus we will be causing our own negative results. If we produce the right causes for wisdom and awakening, then the appropriate effects are sure to follow.

The proximate cause for wisdom to arise is correct concentration. Correct concentration (*sammā samādhi*) is a mind rooted in awareness, that is stable in the present and does not sink down into what arises (This is "the knower" explained in *Two Kinds of Samādhi*). Most of us who practice meditation, get absorbed in one meditation object, like the in-breath and out-breath, or in the feet while walking. This is incorrect concentration (*micchā-samādhi*). The mind sinks down into the object. This is not a stable mind. It's

a good mind, but not a wise one that sees the truth of nature.

A stable mind sees that the body breathing, or walking, is not us. It is just a body. The mind that is angry, greedy or anything else, is not us either. The mind is angry, not us. The mind is deluded, not us. The body and mind are doing their work. They are doing what they do, not us. Right now if anger arises it will feel like we are angry. But if we have mindfulness, we will see that anger has arisen, and the mind is the watcher of this. Anger is not us. It will all separate out and there will be no us to speak of, just physical and mental phenomena. Keep at the practice all the time. Wisdom will arise and the mind will be pure. We will have an understanding of the way things are that far surpasses any kind of intellectual knowledge. We will know with our hearts and will never forget.

It is not as hard as we think. But we can't be lazy. We can't stop practicing or practice wrongly and expect results. This is why I speak over and over again about the correct way to practice. Observe the body and mind as they really are with a stable and neutral mind. Know what the body is doing and what arises in the mind as much and as often as possible. We cannot force the mind to

know more than it is capable of. It will progress on its own. We cannot force the mind to be mindful all the time. This is impossible of course, since nothing is permanent. In daily life, we may have a flash of mindfulness just for a moment and then get lost for a whole minute. That is if we practice well. If we don't keep up the practice, we will be lost from morning until night.

Some helpful conversations with Luang Por Pramote from the day of the talk

Student 1: I'm able to see what comes up more and more. But I often don't recognize the phenomena quickly enough and get lost in what arises.

LP: **Good. We can't be knowing all the time. Sometimes we are knowing things clearly and quickly and sometimes we get caught in thinking, seeing, hearing, tasting, smelling and touching. Just keep knowing more and more often.**

Student 2: I'm feeling I'm getting better, noticing more defilements, though I am still lost in thought for long periods.

LP: **What is the mind like right now?**

Student 2: There is nervousness.

LP: **Are you suppressing it?**

Student 2: I'm not sure.

LP: **Can you see the mind is stiff and dull? You are suppressing the nervousness, forcing the mind as still as you can because you are afraid that it will not behave. This is not what we are to do. We are to know the body as it is and know**

the mind as it is, and not to suppress or control anything.

Student 3: Am I practicing correctly?

LP: **Are you seeing defilements arising? Which one arises most often: anger, greed or delusion (losing oneself in thought or the senses)?**

Student 3: I'm not so sure. Mostly my mind is just motionless, and then worries.

LP: **Know when the mind worries. The mind is never motionless unless we force it to be so by fixation on a meditation object. Just know what arises as it really is. Like right now the mind went off thinking. Can you see this? If you can't see this, you are better off watching the body than the mind. Watch the body sitting, standing, walking and lying down.**

Student 4: I think I must be over-focusing. Every time I start walking meditation my neck hurts so much.

LP: **You are surely over-focusing. When you decide to do the meditation, you stiffen up, create stress, and then pressure enters the head and neck. Just walk casually, enjoyably. Watch the body walk. When**

you are uncomfortable, know it. When the mind goes off to think, know that too.

Student 5: I have been practicing about a year now. I think mindfulness is arising quite often. I can see anger, greed, jealousy, and I can see the mind getting lost. I can see all these things arise and fall again and again. The other day I saw anger arise and then fall immediately, then the mind went to the ears to hear. It knew it was the wind, and then anger arose again. This was all in succession.

LP: **Your practice is good. You are starting to see things just as they are.**

Student 6: I'm starting to feel like the world is really boring.

LP: **This is how we are supposed to feel when the mind is waking up to the truth. Your practice is improving. There is a space between you and the world now. However, the boredom is still too harsh. It is not an impartiality to what arises.**

Student 6: I used only to be bored with unhappy states. But now I'm getting bored with happy ones too.

LP: So you are getting smarter. Normally we think the world is an amazing place, a place to be happy. Now you are seeing that happiness is boring. Can you feel that happiness is merely a face of suffering?

Student 6: Yes, I can.

LP: You are doing well in your practice. Keep at it, but be patient.

Student 7: I think when I watch what arises I slip into the phenomena and get absorbed in them.

LP: We get absorbed in them because we are trying too hard to see them. Just know what arises, and then be done with it. Then know the next thing and be done with that too.

Student 7: I am also not so good at Samatha. When the mind starts to settle down it wanders off.

LP: Then there is no need to do Samatha. You are a thinker anyway, so you should watch the mind. Keep watching and knowing and it will get peaceful on its own. If the mind wanders, just know it has done so. Do your best to let mental states arise and know so afterward. You tend to

think too quickly when something arises that it will soon drop off instead of really knowing what is there. You are letting intellect lead you too much. We don't get results that way.

Student 8: I do walking meditation every day for 15 minutes. I'm happier than before, and less annoyed with myself. I notice that lately, however, I can walk and be completely unaware for long periods, totally lost in thought.

LP: Practice as much as possible in your daily life as well. Sometimes when we set aside time to meditate, we just try to get through the allotted period and are happy when it is over. We aren't as aware of the phenomena that arise as we are of the time. If walking isn't working, then do some sitting meditation too, or do some chanting and notice when the mind goes off. If we are able to notice the mind float off into thought often, we become much more aware and get lost much less.

Student 9: My practice has improved and I notice quite often when the mind is going off into thought. My mind is far more stable because of this and I'm able to see many more mental phenomena as well. How-

ever, I find that it is hard to stay aware when I'm talking and socializing. Is it ok if we get lost in that and just be aware a little here and there?

LP: Yes, that's fine. But if it is not necessary to speak we really shouldn't. The Buddha taught that those in the earlier stages of practice should not socialize too much. If we do, we are bound to talk, and this will lead to a lot of mindless and pointless chatter. It fills the mind with thoughts. However, we live in this world where talking is unavoidable, and so we talk and just be watching and knowing on and off while we communicate.

Student 9: Sometimes when I notice the mind immediately as it is about to get lost in thought, I feel so happy that a smile appears on my face.

LP: Just be careful that you don't force the practice. The mind will feel tight and rigid. You are doing much better. Mindfulness has arisen. See? You used to have a restless mind, thinking incessantly. I asked you to watch the mind go off over and over again and you weren't stubborn about it. You practiced

and now you are much more aware, and much happier.

Student 10: My mind is much better behaved now and I'm wondering if I am holding my attention on the breath too much because I go into a vast quiet space and my body feels light.

LP: **You are doing Samatha. These are effects of over-focusing. The mind is moving down into the object of meditation and getting absorbed there. The body and mind will be light. When there is lightness, know it. When there is heaviness, know it. Watch from within. But when you do, don't try to pull the mind out of the object and bring it back in. Let the mind come in by itself. Keep at it. Keep watching the body.**

Student 11: I spent some time in a forest monastery recently. When I was doing walking meditation, I could see a mind arise and then fall away. Then another mind arose and fell away. Then a space. Then I had a moment of realizing that this was the way it really worked. After this period of arising and falling of mind, I could feel that the awareness was so clear. Then it was cloudy and then clear again.

LP: **We should be aware of each phenomenon that arises in a clear but relaxed way. It shouldn't be excessively clear. Just a normal amount of clearness is enough.**

Student 11: Then I could notice the mind going to think, and it dropped off. Then an unimaginable brightness came over my eyes. It was so bright that I was shaking. Then it was like my mind exploded, and there was no separation between mind and anything else. Me and the environment were one. When it ended, and everything went back to normal, I started to notice that I was practicing with intention. I noticed that there was intention mixed into my practice all along. Sometimes I'm practicing very intentionally, sometimes less, but there was always intending. I could see the heat that this created and I didn't want to intend anymore. Then I wasn't sure how to practice anymore without intending. I was confused for quite a while.

LP: **You need to keep knowing. See that confusion arose.**

Student 11: Eventually I just gave up, and when I did, the mind became one-pointed. It smiled and saw a path. It saw that we don't practice for any selfish reason, for

ourselves. We practice and the mind does its own thing. There is no need to interfere. As you have said before, like a river, the mind will naturally flow towards the ocean. Mindfulness, after that, continued to be able to notice the heat and movement from intending in the practice, but I still couldn't stop intending. When I walk, I can see that the previous moment and then next moment do not exist, and the place that I am at is all there is. The past moment has dropped away and there is not yet a next one. This type of experience has continued in daily life. For example, when I look over at my spouse, for the first moment I see her it is like I'm looking at a stranger, then memory arises and knows the face.

LP: Yes. When we look at something there is no memory at first. Then the interpretation of who or what it is comes later. Did you notice the mind fabricate after that, like believing she's pretty or ugly?

Student 11: Not like that, but fabrication arises and knows my relationship with her.

LP: Keep practicing. It is still not enough. Can you notice that there is still a feeling of self, of you?

Student 11: Yes I can. I feel I am being deceived by it.

LP: **Good. Know it. If we follow it we will go the wrong way. Just know it. Can you see it has arisen now?**

Student 11: Yes.

LP: **That's fantastic. There are still defilements and you are still seeing them. I thought after your long speech you were going to say that you have seen true Dhamma, seen the Noble Path. You still haven't.**

Student 11: Sometimes the feeling of self arises and mindfulness sees it and it drops off quickly. Sometimes it goes unnoticed and lasts a very long time.

LP: **You are a great meditator. Keep at it. Be careful as you are still controlling, still holding to phenomena a bit too much. And keep watching the self (māna-attā) coming up and falling off.**

Student 12: I've been practicing meditation for about 2 years now and haven't spoken to you in about 10 months. Is there anything that needs adjusting in my meditation?

LP: **There is nothing much to adjust except you need to practice more often. Practice all the time throughout your day in a relaxed way. Right now you are suppressing; let the mind do what it does instead and watch playfully. Your practice is much better than before, and you get very calm at times. But when you do, you are happy or satisfied with the calmness and so you get stuck in it. Try to know when the mind is happy. Be careful of getting stuck in happiness as you will not be able to move forward.**

Student 13: I can see that I'm nervous, scared, and deluded right now. I am able to see phenomena after they arise, and I know that I am neutral towards many of them. I'm having trouble noticing boredom with any efficiency or neutrality. Boredom seems to go unnoticed for a while and then the practice deteriorates and the mind shifts around.

LP: **Boredom is taking over and manipulating the mind. Boredom is a defilement in the same group as anger (dosa). If we don't feel well or comfortable, dosa will arise. We don't have it when we are happy or comfortable. Just watch it**

work. The mind is not us. Whether it is happy or not, virtuous or not, or if there is dosa, it is its own business. There is no need to get involved. The body and the mind do their own work. But when a defilement comes in and takes over the mind, just know it in time. Don't try to resist it. The way to battle defilements is to not resist them. They flow like water. If we make a dam, we will create pressure there; the water will have a lot of power. We should see them come and go. In your case, they are leaving too slowly for your liking. And you don't want them to arise at all.

Student 13: Is there anything else I should do?

LP: You are practicing correctly, but I think you should do more Samatha, more calmness practice because your watching is a little bit dry right now. You are therefore a little dry in your battle with defilements.

Student 14: When I watch the mind, I create a mental state, and watch from there. Is this wrong?

LP: It is utterly wrong. It is always wrong to create anything at all. We are just to know what is really there naturally.

Student 14: But it is like a meditation object for me.

LP: **It is an attachment object for you. You are holding your mind there. Instead, just watch whatever comes up fresh out of the oven!**

Student 14: But when I create this object, I can see other phenomena arise with more clarity.

LP: **They are clear, but more so than is natural. You will see that your object is permanent and everything else is temporary. This is not true.**

Student 14: But it is very calm.

LP: **You are stuck in Samatha. Even fixing attention on the mind is still fixing attention. If you are clinging to an empty and still state, your mind may be peaceful, but it is not a natural human mind appropriate for understanding the truth. It is higher state, but not one that sees wisdom or has overcome suffering. You will see permanence, not impermanence!**

Let the mind do what it does. Let it change according to its own causes and don't be the least bit partial to any of the states. Whatever happens happens. Just

watch contentedly. You are holding the knower, making it still. Don't hold it.

Student 15: I have been watching in daily life as much as possible, and can see that the mind is knowing sometimes, and is lost or over-focusing at others; it is neutral sometimes and not at others; it is making progress sometimes and not at others. Sometimes it is lost in thinking for long periods. Sometimes a strange thing happens where things are flickering and glimmering. I know it is happening but I don't know what it is. (LP: No need to know what it is.) Then curiosity arises and I know that too. I'm looking for some more advice from you.

LP: **Right now can you see that mind is not rooted in awareness, not stable?**

Student 15: Yes. It is not rooted in the present.

LP: **It is good that you can see that. You are practicing well. Keep at it.**

Some helpful conversations with Luang Por Pramote from April 24, 2009

Student 16: Mindfulness has been arising on its own: when I watch my arm moving, it disappears. The breath also disappears sometimes.

LP: You are too attached to being still. Many meditators find a place of stillness and force themselves to stay there. They are afraid of being bad, of having defilements, of the mind wandering away. Let the mind wander off – it's okay. Just know that it has done so. Get lost in thinking, and then know it, over and over again. This is a better practice than holding the mind still and not allowing it to move. What you are doing is Samatha, holding the mind still. If you want to reach Vipassana, you must see the Three Characteristics, that the mind is always changing, that no state persists and that there is no controlling this.

When the mind awakens and sees a phenomenon has arisen without interfering with it, the phenomenon will drop off. In the body and mind we see things as they really are and they will teach us, show us, the Three Characteristics. The mind

will teach us Dhamma on its own. Don't try to force the mind to be still or try to control anything.

Student 17: Am I practicing correctly?

LP: Make sure you are seeing that you are thinking, and not just knowing the content of your thoughts. Your mind just went off to think, do you know that?

Student 17: Yes I know.

LP: Good! That's how we practice. Let the mind go and know what it has done. It is inadvisable to just hold the mind still. If we do, we are involved in fixation instead of meditation! Let the mind get lost, and then know it. When we know what just happened, we will see that the mind is bright and fresh for a moment. Now you are curious. Can you see that?

Student 18: I'm not sure if I'm doing it right.

LP: Just know that now you are feeling doubt. We practice watching all these phenomena to just see one thing: to see that whatever arises, also falls of its own accord. When we see this clearly, we reach the first stage of enlightenment (stream-entry). It's that simple. But

usually when a mental state like doubt arises, we just keep thinking, entertaining our curiosity. We don't acknowledge it has arisen and so we run around looking for a solution. If a teacher gives us an answer, we remember what he or she said and think that we now have knowledge. However, all we really have done is memorize something. It is not real knowledge. We don't really know. Real knowing happens when we see phenomena clearly in the present, that what arises also falls.

When anger arises, usually we just look out at the person with whom we are angry instead of acknowledging that we are angry. Our interest goes out to the one we are angry at. The angrier at someone we are, the more we think of that person! Have you noticed? We love anger and other defilements, like that of craving. Whatever we are angry at or crave is what we think about most. We are under the influence of the defilements instead of simply knowing that the mind has craving at that moment.

Sometimes when we are meditating boredom arises; we get lazy and stop practic-

ing. We don't notice that boredom has arisen. Because of a lapse in awareness, the defilement we call boredom took over, and therefore we become subject to its rule. Also when confusion arises and we don't see it has arisen, the mind becomes blurred and we can drop out of our practice. Each defilement has the same function. Each makes us stop knowing or watching the body and mind. If we keep noticing what arises as much as possible, one day the defilements will not take us over anymore, and we will be free from their power. We must be determined in order to accomplish this.

So when we see doubt or a curiosity has arisen in the mind, no need to be clever and find a solution. Just know the mind is curious. Then we will see that curiosity arises from its cause, and falls away when the cause is gone. Don't just sit there thinking, looking for answers.

Anger also arises out of thinking. Craving does as well. All these things bring on more thinking, and then the defilements can fully do their job – to deceive us! When there is mindfulness, the defilements don't have place in which to

work. When there is mindfulness, there is no defilement in that moment. When there is a defilement, there is no mindfulness.

Student 19: My mind is all over the place. I also try to hold it still.

LP: You are afraid of the mind thinking too much and so you hold your focus instead of just knowing. You are wanting to get rid of this restless mind instead of just knowing it as it is. Just know the mind is restless as the Buddha taught. In the discourse on the Four Foundations of Mindfulness, we learn that we can know in two ways: with mindfulness and wisdom.

If we are practicing Samatha then we are only knowing with mindfulness. For example, when the mind holds to the breath without going off track, we have mindfulness of the breath. The mind is focused on one object. It is Samatha. In another way we can watch the breath and see it is not us breathing; it is always changing, suffering and out of control. Seeing the Three Characteristics like this is seeing with wisdom. Practicing in the Four Foundations of Mindfulness, we are

knowing on both the levels of mindfulness and wisdom. So when clinging arises, we know clinging has arisen. This is mindfulness. To see with wisdom, we see that this clinging that arose is just a lowly mental fabrication that arises, not a person, a being, us or anyone else. It comes up, remains for a bit, and then goes away, all in accordance with causation. If there is a cause for it to arise, it arises. If there is no cause anymore, it falls. This is seeing the Three Characteristics. This is knowing with wisdom.

If we are practicing Vipassana, when we watch the breath, mindfulness sees that the body is breathing and wisdom knows this body is not us. We cannot move to the level of Vipassana without wisdom. The mind will just attach to an object, like the abdomen rising and falling. Just focusing in that area is Samatha. Watching the feet rise and move during walking meditation is Samatha. We need to see the body movement as not us, for it to be Vipassana.

I'm not saying to stop practicing Samatha. Keep doing it if you like it, but when you come out of the deep concentration (the

first kind of samādhi), please keep watching the mind. Luang Por Phud taught that this moment, when the mind comes out of samādhi, is a golden opportunity for meditators. The mind is pure and clean like a table that has just been washed. It is clear and shining bright. When just the smallest bit dust appears, it is easy to spot. At this point it is easy to see even the most subtle phenomena when they come up.

Student 20: Should I practice watching the body or the mind? Which do you think is appropriate for me?

LP: Actually, once our practice really takes off, there ceases to be such a consideration. This is just a starting point so that mindfulness can arise. When it does, mindfulness will automatically switch back and forth between watching the body and the mind. In your case, you are prone to over-thinking. Such people I usually suggest watching the mind move around. Then when the mind is restless, know it. When the mind is happy, unhappy, virtuous or not, just know the state that has arisen, again and again. If we practice this repetitively, the mind will

remember these states vividly. And when one of the states it remembers comes up, mindfulness will then quickly arise on its own. This automatic mindfulness will sometimes know the body, sometimes know sensations, sometimes know mental phenomena. However, in order for this automatic mindfulness to arise, we have to set our intentions correctly. Just practice watching the mind and know what arises when it does. Don't force it or watch too intensely as that creates stress. Just set the mind to watching frequently.

Student 21: I have been trying to practice watching the mind, but within even one minute there are so many things going on that I can't keep track of what to watch. There is worry, there is wanting, there is a me – there are so many defilements!

LP: Just know you are confused in that moment. But seeing all these defilements means you are welcome to be one of my students! Those that say they've been meditating for three days and haven't seen any defilements have no idea how to practice correctly. Can you see that these defilements were not invited, and come of their own accord? They are fabrications

that come up on their own. Don't desire them to go away. Just know what arises. The wanting to get rid of them causes aversion (perhaps anger, frustration, fear, stress or hatred).

Student 22: I can see I'm wanting to ask a question now.

LP: Oh good. When we want to ask, and mindfulness sees it, the wanting will drop off. Then we will ask if it is appropriate and won't ask if it isn't.

Student 22: Sometimes I'm angry and I lash out at others.

LP: It is important to stay moral, to keep the moral precepts (not killing, stealing, cheating, lying or intoxicating). Those who practice a lot of Samatha don't need to be as concerned about this because they are usually well mannered already. But if we are interested only in Vipassana, we let defilements arise, so we need to keep these precepts as a measure of control so that we don't hurt anyone.

Once they understand how to practice correctly, many people get lazy. They think that they'll practice later on when they have more time, or when they are

older. This is a mistake. It is harder for older folks to practice; we should start at as young an age as possible. Keep watching and knowing the body and mind. It is an investment that will reap great benefits. In life we often make investments hoping that we will develop through them and that, in turn, they will bring us happiness. We study for years to be able to provide for ourselves and create a happy life. When we work we strive and develop further to gain status and an improved position in the interest of happiness. We hope a family will make us happy too. We are relying on the world to make us happy. But we are slave to everything we rely on. We are never free. If we practice the Dhamma, there is happiness that doesn't rely on anything.

When we keep practicing, one day the mind will free itself and be met by a state called nibbāna. It is right here in front of our eyes. It is complete happiness. Once the mind has seen nibbāna, any burden in or by this world fades away. We no longer require the world. We cease our futile attempts at making the body and mind (the khandhas) happy, and we move

towards nibbāna. The khandhas are seen as nothing special at all.

Perhaps now I will ask all of *you* a question for a change. What is that which we can call “one”? In Truth, the mind is one. The Dhamma is one. All is one.

About Venerable Pamojjo



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

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

When we watch the mind correctly, we will see whatever arises as it really is. We will see the true nature of body and mind. We will see that they are not us. We will keep seeing the truth of body and mind until we become dispassionate to their constant flux, their insubstantially, their suffering nature. We will release attachment to them, be liberated and know that liberation has taken place. What will we be liberated from? We will be liberated from attachment to this body and this mind. We will be liberated from suffering, because suffering resides in this body and this mind. Can you see that these are the only two places where suffering can be found? Upon liberation, suffering will be gone and we will be fully aware, awakened and blissful without any effort or maintenance necessary.

...There is no end to worldly knowledge. The world fabricates new things incessantly and there is always more to learn. Regarding Dhamma, once there is enlightenment and the mind is liberated, it is no longer fabricating, no longer creating fictions. We are free from suffering. Our Dhamma studies are completed.

