

# MEDITATION IN WORDS

Phra Ācharn Thate Desaransi



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**MEDITATION IN WORDS**

**Translated from the Thai**  
**by Kingkeo Attagara**

**Wat Hin Mark Peng**

**Nongkhai, Thailand.**

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(Not for sale).

This book has been published by the disciples and devotees of the Venerable Luang Poo Phra Nirodharāṅsī Gambhīrapaññācariya (Thate Desaraṅsī). Dedicated to him with respect, on the occasion of the celebration of his 87<sup>th</sup> Anniversary on 26<sup>th</sup> April B.E. 2532 (1989)

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Phra Nirodharasī Gambhīrapaññācāriya  
(Venerable Ācharn Thate Desarasī)

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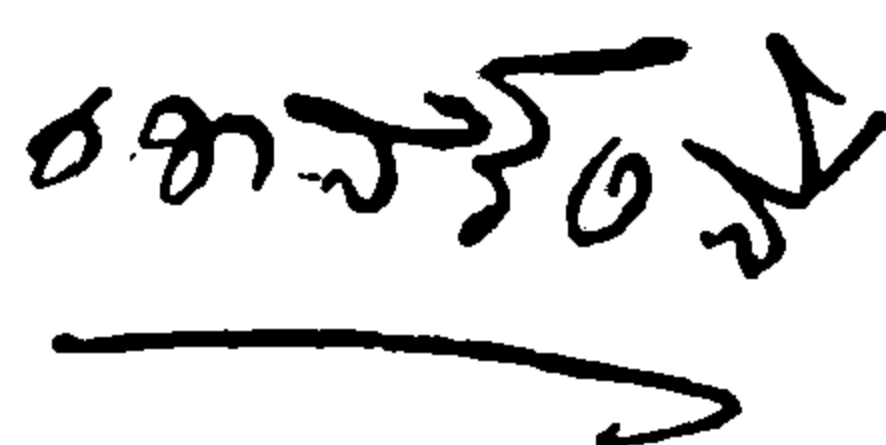
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the practice of a number of students both Thais and foreigners. I feel that their experiences and problems are interesting. At the same time, the solutions that they have discovered by themselves or that are suggested by me are found to be useful both in their practices of meditation and their daily living.

Therefore, I hope that this book will be of some use to readers who wish to learn something about Buddhism or to try some of its methodology to enhance their goodness and freedom from suffering.



*Desaraṅsī*

## Translator's Preface

This book was first published in December, 1976. Two months later I was recommended to *Phra Acharn Thate Desaraṅsī* to do the translation into English. I humbly accepted the honour and found, not to my surprise, that the book was indeed difficult to translate. The subject is in itself extraordinary, while the oral style of the conversations carries with it a large number of understatements, laxity, and repetitions. For example, the speakers of the Thai language habitually leave out subjects from the sentence structure. The task is, therefore, left for the translator to make an interpretation.

I try to retain the original style as much as I can for I believe it is the style that makes a man. Yet there are few places in which I have to do some reshaping. Nevertheless, I admit I am not able to do justice to this piece of work. I must, therefore, beg for forgiveness, if readers find my translation offensive.

# Part One

## **CONVERSATIONS WITH MONKS, NOVICE, NUN**

**Phra Bunta Pasannacitto**

**Age 55**

**Vassa Age 9**

*Native of the province of Maha Sarakham, he sojourned in many places to earn a living. He had just barely enough knowledge to read and write. Once he met a monk who practised meditation. After some conversation with the monk, he was inspired with faith. So he left the life of laity and entered monkhood under the supervision of an Upajjhāya named Phra Thep Bundit of Wat Sri Muang, Nong Khai Province. That was at the age of forty-six. He spent one Vassa season with the Upajjhāya. After that he took leave of him and spent the following Vassa seasons under the supervision of Phra Ācharn Thate at Wat Hin Mark Peng in the district of Sri Chiangmai.*

*He has attended to the practice of meditation regularly. Upon some doubts pertaining to the practice, he asked Phra Ācharn the following questions:*

• **Question 1** Since Dhamma, whether crude or refined, is always present in each individual, why does one not see it ?

•• **Answer 1** Dhamma is difficult to see. It is present not only in individuals, but also in everything. There are two kinds of Dhamma: the form (*Rūpa* Dhamma) and the mental factors (*Nāma* Dhamma). The difficulty in seeing lies in the fact that the heart-base is darkened by defilements (*Kilesa*). Thus, the heart is incapable either of holding or withholding Dhamma for careful examination. This means that the heart is restless. It is not peaceful enough to be the basis for a consideration of Dhamma. Another problem is that one's heart is prone to wander off among external objects here and there. Even if this may contribute to knowledge, it is knowledge on the theoretical side sanctioned by pedantry. This is, by the way, not true Dhamma. It is merely book-learning and is ultimately not efficient. Not until Dhamma becomes *paccaṭam* or personally perceived in oneself by oneself, can one see its optimum value. This is why it is difficult to see.

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\* Student-meditator

•• The meditation-master; Phra Āchārn Thate

**Question 2** Some people say, if there already is Dhamma within oneself, why take the trouble to practise it ? Is his remark correct ?

**Answer 2** No. As I have explained, Dhamma is within us all right, but we are not capable of perceiving it. We may see it only on the surface, acknowledging its form and abstraction through the eyes and imagination. This is the kind of Dhamma that derives itself from the memory of texts and dictates of provosts. This is neither seeing with genuineness nor with one's own insight. Therefore, it is necessary that we train and prepare our heart for holding the Dhamma. As I have explained, if there is no place to hold the Dhamma, the Dhamma cannot sit. Consequently, as much as we wish to ponder upon the Dhamma, we cannot perceive it clearly. Many times we see it not as it is. Dhamma is there all right, but we are incapable of witnessing it. This is why we need to train our heart in a quiet place or with the help of a teacher who knows, so that our heart is capable of holding the Dhamma for consideration.

**Question 3** Concerning the three principles of giving (*Dāna*), morality (*Sīla*), and meditation (*Bhāvanā*). Is it possible to perceive them one in all or all in one, once we have attained wisdom (*Pañña*) ?

**Answer 3** The Teacher wishes to stress the importance of each principle, so he makes the above classification and speaks of them separately. Now, if a person practising meditation speaks only of the heart, not of the external object, that is, if we speak of pacification of the heart, then we may pick up the subject

of meditation and explain the other two principles through it. Whether the Dhamma is crude or refined, it will be perceivable to a pacified heart.

External giving or material giving is one type. This is to give away miserliness. However, observance of the moral precepts is for pacifying the physical and the verbal. Meditation is for pacifying the physical and the verbal. Meditation is for pacifying the heart. If the heart be not at peace, you may see things with the eyes, but it will not be as distinctly as when you look at them with a quiet heart.

In pacifying the heart through meditation, we have to learn to give up mental attachments. This is called *Cāga* also, meaning to give, give away. Besides, in meditating, we learn to keep our body and speech at peace. That is, we do not carry on any disturbance through them. Here is already a realization of the moral precepts. Through meditation, we may say that giving, morality, and meditation are one in all and all in one.

**Question 4** Theoretically, when we speak of morality (*Sīla*), concentrated absorption (*Samādhi*) and wisdom (*Paññā*), we put wisdom last. But, those who practise meditation prefer putting wisdom first. Is this correct ?

**Answer 4** This is similar to what we have just been talking. The explanation is, when we speak to the people at large, we start from the crude to the refined. It is easier for them to understand. For those who practise, the order is reversed. A heart perfectly at peace can very well see that wisdom is the

basis of morality. Wisdom is there to discriminate right from wrong, good from bad, and what to do from not to do. When wisdom grows, we then know that we should abstain from doing ill. This is how we come to observe the precepts. Hence wisdom comes before morality. The same is true with meditation. When we practise meditation in order to arrive at a concentrated absorption in a sense-object and a one-pointedness of the heart, we must have wisdom, subtlety, and intelligence. We must cleanse our heart all round. In other words, we must be mindful of the senses by not letting them wander away in thoughts. We see dangers in such wanderings, so we are likely to give them up. In this way, we attain peace.

Now, let's look at it the other way around. Normally speaking, wisdom is placed last. In this case, wisdom is of the highest degree. It is wisdom for the realization of Truth. If we have observed no precepts and attained not one-pointedness, wisdom cannot possibly grow. **Wisdom which is the Basis of Insight must be built upon perfect observance of precepts and concentrated absorption especially at the level of Appanā-Samādhi. Once withdrawing from the full concentration of Appanā-Samādhi, insight will occur.** Hence wisdom is placed last of all. Some pragmatists, who perceive that wisdom comes before morality and meditation, may regard the other order as a mistake. Nevertheless, those who have attained insight can see the grandiosity and subtlety of the Teacher's explanation and will be able to perceive the Truth of those varied explanations, since they correspond to different levels of Dhamma. Wisdom of the highest degree is called *Paññā Vipassanā*. It will enable one to release attachments (*Upādāna*).

**Question 5** Some say that mindfulness of the body (*Kāyānusti*) is the development of calm (*Samatha-Bhāvanā*), whereas mindfulness of the arising and falling is the development of insight *Vipassanā-Bhāvanā*. Is this correct ?

**Answer 5** This is difficult to say. One has to practise in order to understand it. *Samatha* means calm. There is *not* just one way to reach it. The Buddha does not make it obligatory that you have to use only such and such a meditation method. You may use any of the methods, whether it be a concentration on the word “*Buddho*,” or “*Arahaṇi*,” or “*Sammā Arahaṇi*,” or a concentration on death. You may also concentrate on your body. All are right. There is no objection to any of them. The importance is whether or not the heart is capable of arriving at one-pointedness. If it is capable so, then it is called *Samatha*. All of those varied ways may lead to *Samatha*. If the heart cannot yet achieve one-pointedness, it may just be at the state of verbal repetition (*Parikamma-Bhāvanā*). I have explained that the one-pointedness refers to that state in which the heart is detached from external objects and has come to dwell on one particular object. This is the highest possible state of *Samatha*. At this state, the heart is charged with the fullest power. It will act automatically. We cannot direct it. It is capable of automatically setting itself at, or withdrawing itself to an appropriate state (*Bhūmi*). This takes place in the realm of *Samatha*.

As for *Vipassanā*, this means to comprehend truth as it truly is, so that one is able to dispose of one’s Self-Attachment (*Attānu-Ditṭhi*). If one is still unable to do so, one is not yet up to the *Vipassanā* state. One may probably acquire defilements of comprehension (*Vipassanū-Kilesa*).

**In practising *Samatha* and *Vipassanā*, it's better not to burden yourself with books, or you will become pedantic. Keep them away in a cabinet. Let us train our heart so as to experience calm and One-Pointedness. Then if we wish, we may converse with references to books. If we can do this, we can save a lot of saliva.**

**Question 6** Most of the beginners in the practice of meditation usually wish to comprehend the highest Dhamma, thinking that they have got enough basis for comprehending it. If they do not know and do not practise Dhamma at the elementary and intermediate levels, is it possible ?

**Answer 6** People today are too anxious. When practising Dhamma, they wish to find the quickest result possible. They sometimes do not even know what the high Dhamma is. Most of them, as I have noticed, think of the high Dhamma as miraculous experiences and abilities to "see" this and that. This is the so-called "high Dhamma" of people today. Actually Dhamma is discovered not because of our desire. **Whenever we have confidence (*Saddhā*) and practise efficiently the four principles of mindfulness (*Satipatthāna*), Dhamma will eventually present itself, whether it be the crude or the refined, the high or the low. All these phases will dawn upon you automatically, without your desire. As a matter of fact, desire will be quite a hindrance to the Realization of Dhamma. Be not so covetous that you forget the Buddha's teaching when he says: morality at its height of prosperity does further the growth of wisdom. And wisdom at its height of prosperity does further freedom,**

**a complete detachment from defilements and sufferings for that matter.** The careless ones, who have not acquired a taste for morality and meditation, hearken heartily to the saying that only wisdom brings one to freedom. So they joyfully sit around the tray of foods that are put in front of them and gauge themselves hurriedly. Dhamma is not the foods nor the rice which someone else sets before you. You have to prepare it with your own heart. True Dhamma must be touched by the heart. If we do not touch all things by the heart, how can we achieve the total, mental comprehension or *Paññā*? How can we realize what we have managed to get rid of, and what not?

**Question 7** When we contemplate the word “Buddho,” until we become absorbed in the word, is that called “*Samādhi*” or “*Samatha*”? What is the difference between *Samādhi* and *Jhāna*? How many times does the heart have to acknowledge in order to be considered reaching the *Appanā-Samādhi* state? After the heart has fully maintained *Samādhi*, to what level is one supposed to withdraw one’s concentration so as to enhance the growth of wisdom? And once wisdom is developed, how clear does it have to be in order to achieve insight?

**Answer 7** *Samādhi* and *Samatha* are identical. When you contemplate verbally on the word “Buddho” until you achieve one-pointedness, here you have *Samādhi*. *The calmness of the heart, which does not take to wandering, is called Samatha.* The teachers usually talk of *Samādhi* and *Jhāna* as the same thing. If I explain to you here both the similarities and the differences, it will take too long. In my book *Pramuan Neo*

*Patibut Dhamma (Dhamma in Practice)*, I have explained them quite in detail. So if this is not clear, you may seek more information from there. I will give just the gist of it like this: *Samādhi, can be observed on the basis of the three Cardinal Points of Samādhi, while Jhāna can be observed on the basis of Bhavaṅga (the passive state)*. However, may start out with the same object of concentration, according to one's preference. When you have decided upon a particular object, say, you may choose to concentrate on the body, especially on its solid matter, you may concentrate on it without seeking the train of cause and consequence of that solid state, so that the mind becomes focused to the point of BHAVANGA. Here is what is called *Jhāna*. And let it be understood that *Uggaha & Patibhāga* (the powers to retain and manipulate an object of concentration) is derived from *Bhavaṅga*. If *Bhavaṅga* does not take place, the two mentioned types of power cannot take place. (*Bhavaṅga* is a state in which the heart flashes and rests itself in one particular state of its own. Sometimes it is completely shut off).

In *Samādhi*, after we have chosen the body as an object of contemplation, there must be reflection as to the followings: This body is just an element of earth. What is each of the parts? What is its characteristic behaviour? How is this element of earth developed? How does it take place? And what is the use of its existence? etc. Upon reflection, if the heart remains one-pointed, and there is neither anxiety nor doubts in the object of reflection, we will become clear as to the nature of cause and consequence of the object. In this case, the heart does not enter *Bhavaṅga* or the passive state just mentioned. However, when the heart

is fully charged with power due to thorough consideration, the heart will be capable of entering the *Appanā-Samādhi* (Absorption *Samādhi*). (*Appanā-Jhāna* and *Appanā-Samādhi* are different. It will take quite long an explanation. And those who have never gone through them in practice will, of course, find it difficult to understand just the same.)

You asked how many times does the heart have to acknowledge in order to reach the *Appanā-Samādhi* stage. Now, if you still have to count on signs like that, your heart cannot possibly reach the *Appanā* stage. The *Appanā* does not develop wisdom. It is simply a stage in which the heart rests after work (or after a sufficient amount of reflection).

As to the question of how far are you supposed to withdraw the heart in order to obtain wisdom. The heart withdraws itself automatically to the level of *Uppacāra-Samādhi*.

*Paññā* and *Vipassanā* are different in character and, therefore, are used in different context. *Paññā* is used generally, beginning from the training of the heart in *Samatha* all the way to *Dhamma Vijaya* (mental reflections). If the heart is capable of perceiving the truth clearly so that the heart becomes bored and withdraws itself from attachment to a particular object, while at the same time the heart drops into a calm state, then this is *Vipassanā*.

**Question 8** Some say that various religious rituals, such as the *Pañsukula-Mātika* in which monks are invited to perform funeral rites, are not at all sensible: they are foolishly held by people. Is this right?

**Answer 8** This view belongs to the Samatha pragmatist. All those who are still dwelling in the Samatha stage carry a view like that: anything, that other people do and that are not conformable to their experience, will be considered foolish, ridiculous, crazy, not leading toward an extinction of suffering. Those at that stage of *Citta* are like that. That is, they reach the Samatha without a well-rounded *Paññā*. So anyone who gives a view like that can be predicted right off that he is stuck at the Samatha stage. Once there was a monk who had entered monkhood for more than ten years. After he had gone through the strenuous job of contemplation, he attained the state of calm. He was very delighted with it, but then turned his view against religious rituals, saying they were all foolish. Later his KAMMATTHĀNA (meditation) deteriorated. He took to a widow. So he left monkhood and went to live with her for about five to six months, but he could not put up with her. So he came back again to monkhood. This time he saw that acts and objects of generosity and contribution that laymen rendered to the monks were kindling the monks' *Kilesa* (defilements). Finally, he could not stay in monkhood. Becoming a layman this time, he was even worse than before. He was ridiculed by youngsters and all. This is the story of one being stuck to *Samatha*.

*Religious rituals are signs of Buddha-Sāsana. If there had been no ritual, what would be used as a measuring device, since the heart by itself is not concrete. And the speech by itself cannot call for consent. The religion has been able to stand firm and lasted up to this time because of all those various rituals. Some built the Uposatha hall, Sāla, and Kuti for the sake of a*

*deceased person, This is how a Wat got established and lasted till today. If a tree appears only with its core, it will not be able to stand long. It needs the bark and the periderm to protect the core, so that it will not die. This is also true with the Buddha-Sāsana. It does need those religious rituals as something to protect and help it grow. This is how it has lasted from time past up to this day.*

Those who are stuck in the state of calm feel that they have no more *Kilesa* (defilements). They feel no need to examine further as to the cause and effect of right and wrong. Therefore, they do not know which is which. Later when the *Samatha* power deteriorates, he may not retain himself in monkhood. Some who have left monkhood that way usually are not able to find a way back to the temple.

**Question 9** Some of the *Vatta* or regular duties, such as those due to the *Ācharn* (Teacher), *Upajjhāya* (preceptor at the ordination of a Bhikkhu), *Senāsna* (dwelling), *Bhattakka* (meal), and *Veccakkakuti* (toilet), are considered by some as utterly insignificant. One can attend to them or leave them. Is this right ?

**Answer 9** The regular duties in the *Buddha-Sasana* must be attended to with no exception by all ordained ones. The secular saying has it that : cultured people must know how to attend to what they have got. The Buddha approved of those regular duties and called them *Vatta*. This means, of course, to do, to attend to. If we do not yet know how to attend to

what we've got, we'll be considered uncivilized. The *Buddha-Sāsana* has developed a culture higher than that in the secular sphere. Therefore, if those, who have entered monkhood, see not the value of the Buddhist culture, they will certainly turn out savage indeed. Just consider if there were no one to attend to the dining-hall, if all came to dine and then walked away. What would that dining-hall be like? This is one example. To speak the plain truth: since human beings are not lowly animals, we eat and then we excrete; nevertheless, we must eat and excrete in proper places, after which we must help one another clean them. This is *Vatta*.

Aside from the reference to their being good culture, those duties are also physical exercises for good health. For those who have attained perfection in morality and Dhamma, having at their disposal both *Sati* (awareness) and *Paññā* (wisdom), they will have those duties as their shelter (*Vihāra Dhamma*).

**Question 10**      Some consider the Buddha's Dhamma selfish, right?

**Answer 10**      Right, the Buddha's Dhamma seems to be selfish, if they refer to that Pali text, "One is one's own refuge." However, this saying of the Buddha may have an interpretation entirely different from what it is understood. The point is, in doing or in saying anything, there must be a doer, that is, the subject of the deed or the self, otherwise there cannot be a recognizable deed. Neither can there be an understandable speech. Therefore, the Buddha teaches one to begin with the self, make it accountable and efficient. Then it may be accountable and efficient for other people.

Now if the meditation pragmatist, who is stuck in the calm stage, refuses to do anything but meditation, as already mentioned in Answer 9, he may cause a speculative person to conclude that the Buddha's Dhamma teaches one to be selfish. In fact, the Buddha reminded the monks even in his last words that, "*Bhikkhu, you shall with prudence attend to those deeds both for the good of yourselves and others.*" This shows that the Buddha does not teach one to turn selfish after one has sufficiently confirmed oneself in goodness.

A dogmatist usually conjectures that in carrying on a deed for others, one has to sacrifice all by way of personal matters.... as, for example, the Bodhisatva in the Mahayanist School, who refuses to become enlightened in order to help others. Nevertheless, a Bodhisatva is actually a person working toward enlightenment. He is a person working for the good of himself, but in the meantime he is working also for the good of other people. It is difficult to understand for those who have not trained themselves and for those who do not know the actual self. So, even if they perform good deeds for their own self and for others' so that they succeed in reaching their goals, they are still incapable of conceiving the person or the place to which the goodness goes.

**Question 11**      How does *Samādhi* become deteriorated? How does *Paññā* become degenerated, so that the heart is darkened?

**Answer 11**      If the heart or *Samādhi* or *Paññā*, any of these three undergoes deterioration, it means the rest does also suffer, because they are interrelated. In fact, the heart cannot suffer from deterioration: *the heart is just the one who thinks, who*

*ponders, and who feels.* When we say it deteriorates, we mean it is thinking of defiling matters, so that it becomes disheartened, arid, and uneasy. Here we say, the heart degenerates, or the *Citta* drops. You may coin a word or phrase in whichever way you like. However, the *Citta* still functions in its usual manner.

If the *Citta* is firm and concentrates on one particular object (*Ekaggatā*), which is called *Samādhi*, the *Citta* then brightens and rejoices. When it turns to contemplate on anything, it is capable of seeing brilliantly, minutely, and clearly. This is what we call the arising of *Paññā*. In conclusion, we may say that when the *Citta* attains *Samādhi* upon being firm on one particular object of concentration, it is capable of further contemplation with uninhibition. This is to say the *Citta*, the *Samādhi*, and the *Paññā* are well developed, whereas the contrary will be considered a deterioration.

If there is a question as to the cause of deterioration, the answer must be that deterioration is caused by slackness of attention. Having attained that state of *Samādhi*, one becomes imprudent, while at the same time, one is not yet proficient in the matter of *Citta*, *Samādhi*, and *Paññā*.

**Question 12** In contemplating the *Saṅkhāra* (mental formations), if one contemplates with the right view, it becomes Dhamma. If one contemplates with the wrong view, it becomes *Loka* (the world). What shall we do?

**Answer 12** In this *Loka*, there is no Dhamma: there is only *Loka*. What is *Loka* but a composition of creatures, or, of the physical and mental aggregates. When we were born, the world

had already existed. Since we are still living, we ourselves constitute Loka. What is Loka? It is moving, rotating, and changing; it is not constant. Neither is it firm, nor lasting. This is to say: Loka is in this condition forever. So the Teacher explicates the topic of Loka-Dhamma. Loka-Dhamma consists of happiness and unhappiness, praise and abuse, gain and loss, and honour and dishonour. These are Loka-Dhamma. They signify Loka and are thereby referred to as the Dhamma of Loka. So it is difficult to make a just distinction between Loka and Dhamma. *Whatever is Dhamma is Loka. Whatever is Loka is Dhamma.* I have said in the beginning that this Loka has no Dhamma: there is only Loka. If there were to be Dhamma at all, there would be that *Loka - Dhamma*. This is why the Teacher teaches of Loka - Dhamma.

*Once we understand Loka - Dhamma, we shall not become entangled. Neither shall we become attached nor infatuated. In this way, we shall be considered above the mundane. The Buddha became enlightened in nothing but Loka - Dhamma. This is not the Dhamma above or beyond us. When the Buddha became enlightened in the truth of its condition, he saw its harm. So he became bored and loosened himself of attachment. He was no more infatuated. The heart became clean and brightened, standing above the mundane, higher than Loka, at which stage he attained the Lokuttara - Dhamma.*

And you asked what shall you do. The answer is, if one contemplated the Loka in such a way that one sees Loka as the physical and mental self, while with misunderstanding one becomes attached to it, one is bound to suffer. If one considers the physical and mental entity as it truly is, in the same way as

one considers the Loka, one will not be lost in the wrong view and will not become attached to it. One will certainly loosen oneself and lay down the burden. This is agreeable with the Dhamma and leads not to suffering. When one contemplates and sees thoroughly and clearly the whole truth, one will not make a fool of oneself by becoming attached to the physical or mental entity, for it will only bring about suffering naturally.

**Question 13** At one time when I contemplated the *Saṅkhāra* or the mental formations, I saw it clearly that it was *Anattā*: there was no self, no “I” nor “they.” I saw it so clearly that I became bored and wished to contemplate it no more. But, later when I tried to contemplate it again, I couldn’t see it as clearly. What’s the cause of this change?

**Answer 13** Most of those who practise *Samādhi* have that kind of experience. In the end they will turn out a failure. They are not capable of maintaining the *Samādhi* state. This is because the way they see it is not constituted by *Paññā-Vipassāna* or the wisdom that comes right out of *Magga* (the Righteous Eightfold Path). That “seeing,” on the contrary, comes from *Jhāna*. It might give one a clear vision, so that one becomes bored and all, but it is the kind of boredom that is mixed with anger (*Dosa*), void of rational basis. Therefore, the heart turns toward unrest and develops more of the mental depression and pathos. To make it short, I shall conclude it this way: the one, who sees that the body is *Anattā*, may come to hold on to one’s own view so that the view becomes crystallized into an *Attā* (that is, so possessed that it has become implanted into the

Self). This means that when one does not rationalize the constituent of *Anattā*, one's knowledge will be limited. And one will eventually become bored with the usual contemplation of the subject. This means the heart is beginning to deteriorate from the stage of Dhamma it once reaches. Later as soon as one realizes that one is no more capable of a clear perception as one used to get, one finds that the past experiences have also become hazy. Therefore, meditation students should take this into consideration and should be very cautious. Some misunderstand that they have come to the end of the mundane life. Why is it so? Because even if they have contemplated *Anattā* in everything, they have unwittingly fostered it into an *Attā*.

**Question 14** To say that one is void of *Kilesa* or defilements, does this mean that the *Kilesa* is completely gone, no more hanging around? Or, does it mean that the *Kilesa* is still there, but unable to defile the heart, due to the stronger power of *Sati* (awareness), *Samādhi* (calm), and *Paññā* (wisdom)?

**Answer 14** The various mental defilements are called *Kilesa*. The sources of *Kilesa* are the six senses, namely the eyes, for example. To say that one is void of *Kilesa* means exactly what it says literally. The teacher does not say that the *Kilesa* is completely gone with nothing left as when the fire has burned down the straws. The Teacher simply means that the *Citta* is not being entangled in the snare of the various mental holders, which are going to stain and stifle the heart. Of course, the *Kilesa* is still the *Kilesa*, just as it naturally is. In a certain expression, it is retranslated as "one who is far from all *Kilesa*."

I myself do not know how far gone is the *Citta* from the *Kilesa*; and, how can it turn itself afar? This is only an idiom. As a matter of fact, it probably means that no more does one take hold of the *Kilesa*. No more does one defile one's heart. All this is the result of the power of *Sati*, *Samādhi*, and *Paññā*, which have been efficiently developed.

Whatever is said is interesting all right. Is there anything else you would like to speak of or discuss. Let me hear of your views on your past experiences, or your views on your meditation practice.

**Question 15** May I have permission. When we suffer a great deal from physical illness, should we try to maintain our calm, or should we contemplate the feeling of suffering and fight it off?

**Answer 15** Either way will do. That is, some who suffer from the pain severer than they can bear will need to fight it off by calm, that is, leaving everything completely out of the consciousness. This is possible. That is, they turn toward calm and free the heart so that it reaches the state of calm fully, becoming altogether unconscious. They can drop themselves in that state for an hour or two. And as soon as the heart withdraws, whatever illness or pain may absolutely disappear. There are many cases like this. Those who use this method, of course, is not going through a hardship or adventure. They merely seek an asylum, as if running into a safety ditch upon an air raid. When the bombers come, they are afraid, so they run into the

ditch. Anyway, those who can use this method must be very keen indeed. Their heart must be brave in order to succeed. Yet, the success is not always achieved.

I knew of a Chinese man who liked to follow this method. He belonged to a very old generation that still preferred wearing pigtails. This Chinese man practised meditation by himself and was capable of attaining calm all along. He did not have to eat ordinary food. He usually kept a bag of dried rice with him. Whenever he was hungry, he would hold the dried rice in his mouth and continued to sit in meditation. A superior monk observed this and made a remark to him, “Uncle, is this comfortable?”

“Yes, it is comfortable even without food.”

The Chinese man also lived in the midst of wild animals in the forest. Even tigers came to bear children in the same cave he lived. They lived in the same place and had no fear. This type of person had a great deal of loving-kindness, loving-kindness for animals. He had sympathy for them, identifying himself with those animals. Nevertheless, right before his last breath, as someone told me, I did not see him myself, this Chinese man became quite restless. He became unconscious of what he was doing. Another story, there was a monk, who was the same way. At the time he was dying in his cell, he was in a terrible commotion. He could not hear his brother's call. They had to break in the door. Finally, he died without an awareness. These are examples of the ones who practised only for the sake of calm. There is no wisdom involved. Principally speaking, it is the practice in which one dwells in the state of *Jhāna*, or living in *Jhāna*. This method may be useful, but only on some occasions.

You cannot count on it seriously. That is, if you are going to be completely free from sufferings and their causes, you need wisdom. It is not possible to use calm by itself. As you see, calm is useful on occasions, but not all the time. *Therefore, the best way is: When the feeling of suffering occurs, one should contemplate it in accordance with the method of Satipatthāna (method of conducting consciousness), so that one is capable of perceiving it indifferently, without possessing such a feeling as part of the self. Having a clear perception on the basis of this justification, one will release oneself of possessiveness in the various physical and mental activities.* At the same time, one will eventually acquire a kind of measurement of oneself. Since we are concerned with our physical and mental activities, we can see their various states, as they really are, we can see how much we can free ourselves of possessiveness. *This is walking along the Path of Righteousness, which is considered Vipassanā wisdom.* It is very useful, to follow the Righteous Eightfold Path. To face the problem and to contemplate it will contribute to wisdom which can make us capable of freeing ourselves from attachment. This is why the best way is that after we have practised calm sufficiently, we should learn to contemplate problems. It will be very good to be able to make use of both methods.

**Question 16** To say that all *Saṅkhāra* is suffering, does it mean that the *Saṅkhāra* is suffering or the heart is suffering? And then what is it that does not suffer?

**Answer 16** There are two types of *Saṅkhāra*: one is *Rūpa-Saṅkhāra* (the physical) and the other is *Nāma-Saṅkhāra*

(the heart). These two types of *San̄khāra* by themselves do not suffer. When they say all *San̄khāra* is suffering, they refer to that which is being taken hold as part of the “self.” On the other hand, those who attain *Nirodha-Samāpatti* (absolute freedom from attachment to the *San̄khāra*) do not suffer at all. A dead person, who is no more attached to the body, does not suffer either. However, a living person, who is still attached to the body, does suffer. The *Citta-San̄khāra* is that which makes up things. If it knows that this leads to sufferings, it will certainly refrain itself from doing it. But, if it does not know, it will continue to make up things endlessly. As a result, the attachment, which takes hold of the *San̄khāra* and makes it part of the self, has to suffer. That which does not suffer is that which does not take hold of anything as part of the self.

**Question 17** True happiness is to be free. Why don't people want to be free? True suffering is to be possessive. Why are people fond of possessiveness? If one is neither possessive nor free, what is he called?

**Answer 17** This is difficult to say because people are happy only on account of possessiveness. If the heart does not belong somewhere, it will be completely unhappy. Even those, who practise meditation and are attempting to free themselves from the bondage of the material and mental activities, find themselves letting go of one thing, while grabbing the next. This is because one takes hold of such thing as one's mental activity (i.e. defilements). This is one's natural base. And one will never acquire happiness from detachment as long as one has not trained one's heart and

body enough so as to attain the state of genuine calmness. As long as one does not perceive wrongness and suffering in one's possessiveness, one will not allow oneself to let go of it. Therefore, the one who is wise and intelligent will not allow oneself to become attached or possessive. Nevertheless, one will consider things with caution. This is to say neither that one is entirely free, nor that one is completely possessive. There is no word coined for it.

**Question 18** Nowadays people like to say that the time is over for the Way (*Magga*), the Goal (*Phala*), and Enlightenment (*Nibbāna*). Now, if there are still people who are behaving and training themselves, and the Truth of Nature is still existing, is the time really over ?

**Answer 18** Those who have never undergone mental training, generally rely on rationalization. Thus, to them the Way, the Goal, and Enlightenment are like fruits out of season. They understand that after such and such seasons, there will be no more mangoes and lamyai. However, as a matter of fact the Truth in the Buddha's Teachings exists in conjunction with the world. Those who see no Dhamma, such as those who make the above statement, actually have Dhamma in themselves, but they see it not. The Buddha was enlightened, not by perceiving the truth of anything out of this world. I always say that true Dhamma or genuine Dhamma exists, but people do not see it. This means, Dhamma is the Four Noble Truths. The Buddha points at the suffering which includes, for example, suffering of birth. He points at the causes, which include the three types

of craving, namely, for example, sensual craving. These are genuine Dhamma. They are real and exist in each and every one of us. But people do not see them. They do not understand them. In other words, they have not undergone sufficient mental training; they have not cleaned the heart enough so that they are able to reach the state of purity. That is why they cannot perceive those Noble Truths.

Another point is that there is no absolute Dhamma. It is there only in relation to the world. This is the usual expression, meaning that everything exists in the world, belongs to the world: birth belongs to the world, so do aging, sickness, and death. Cravings, both the *sensual craving* and the *craving to become*, belong to the world. There is no absolute Dhamma existing by itself. Those who train themselves so that they perceive it means that their heart is Dhamma itself. The heart has become relieved of attachments. The heart reaches the state of calm and cool, relieving itself from the entire world. So they begin to perceive the world as Dhamma. That is, they begin to see that everything is nature, natural as it is. So, they do not take hold of anything. This is why I say there is no absolute Dhamma; there is only the world. Whoever perceives the world as it is and refrains himself from getting attached, both he himself and the object from which he is detached become Dhamma. This is a reverse. It is an idiomatic expression. Both are right. At first you said absolute Dhamma exists. Actually the Way, the Goal, and Enlightenment are nothing but the one who has purified oneself with wisdom, who perceives the world as it is with wisdom without getting attached to the world. One may call this the Way, the Goal,

and Enlightenment or whatever. The problem is only that one has degraded oneself from the Way, the Goal, and Enlightenment. That's all. And this is because one does not train oneself in that direction. The Buddha himself was enlightened of the Way, the Goal and Enlightenment, not from elsewhere. He did not bring them from any other sphere. Infinite knowledge is the true knowledge of this very world. And the fact that the Buddha acquires this knowledge by himself, so his knowledge is called *Sabbaññuta-ñāna*. The later generation of disciples learn this from the Buddha's earlier disciples. How can one say that the Way and the Goal have degenerated? They are not degenerated. Many people today are afraid of that. They are afraid that the Teachings will decline from Thailand, being afraid that some political ideologies will tamper with them and destroy them. But truly the one who is so afraid does not realize that he himself is not able to live up even to the five precepts. There, the Buddha's Teachings in himself have deteriorated, isn't that right?

**Phra Chaichaan Chayadhammo**

**Age 31**

**Vassa Age 3**

*He was a son of a well-to-do merchant in the downtown of Udorn Thani. He attended the Assumption School of Commerce and studied business. After schooling, he returned home and helped doing the family's business. He has been interested in Buddhism since he was a little more than ten years old. And this has been gnawing his mind all along. He practised meditation by himself with the help of books on meditation.*

*When he was twenty-seven years old, he took leave of his father and entered monkhood at Wat Bodhi Somporn. He passed the first grade for Dhamma students. Later he went to practise meditation with Phra Ācharn Maha Buwa at Wat Ban Tad, Udorn Thani. After two months, he began to suffer from haemorrhoids. So he took leave*

*of monkhood in order to get medical treatment. At that time he had been in monkhood for eight months. After he had completely cured himself and had become healthier and stronger, he felt he missed the life of chastity which he had gone through during monkhood. So he again took leave of his father and went to Wat Hin Mark Peng for training for several months. Then he asked for permission to enter monkhood, but his father was not willing to give permission for fear that his son's health would decline and become prone to illness again.*

*Nevertheless, with genuine faith in Buddhism, he made a resolution that as long as he had this strong faith and confidence he would not let anybody turn down his intention. Finally his father had to yield permission. So he entered monkhood,*

*this time at Wat Hin Mark Peng. Phra Ācharn Thate was his Upajjhāya.*

*Having entered monkhood, he felt that even if he was able to work up to the state of calm quicker and keener than before, he felt that sometimes he was still shaken by external sense-objects. Nevertheless, since he has deep faith and confidence, he has been able to observe the life of monkhood up to now. He is responsible for translating English into Thai in Dhamma discussion classes, which are held at Wat Hin Mark Peng.*

*Phra Chaichaan Chayadhammo renders the following questions to Phra Ācharn Thate:*

**Question 1**      May I have permission, sir.      In talking about meditation, isn't it a kind of showing off one's superhuman qualities? This is because one has to speak about experiences pertaining to the power of absorption (*Jhāna*), concentration (*Samādhi*), the eight meditative attainments (*Samāpatti*), and even the Way, the Goal, and Enlightenment.      Isn't this going to defile the rules of conduct laid down by the Buddha ?

**Answer 1**      In discussing the practice of Dhamma, it is necessary to talk about the *Citta* (heart).      And in talking about the *Citta*, it is necessary to talk about concentration (*Samādhi*) and calm (*Samatha*).      And in talking about calm, it is necessary to talk about its power and its various stages (*Jhāna* and *Samāpatti*) up to the Way, the Goal, and Enlightenment.      These are all necessary to talk about.      If we do not speak of these things, how are we going to know what we are doing ?      *In the Dhamma or in the Vinaya (Rules of conducts for the ordained), the Teacher expounds: for the sake of higher morality, one must train oneself in higher precepts; for the sake of higher mentality, one must train oneself in higher mentality, that is concentration, and the various stages of absorption and concentration (Jhāna and Samādhi); and for the sake of higher wisdom, one must train*

oneself in higher wisdom, which means the wisdom to transcend and comprehend truth up to Way, the Goal, and Enlightenment. If we do not speak of these things, we will not be able to understand one another. The Buddha laid down a rule prohibiting monks to show off the superhuman qualities, such as the speaking of the power of absorption and concentration, of the eight meditative stages, of an acquisition of the Way, the Goal, and Enlightenment, or even the speaking of mental quietude. The Buddha considers these grave ecclesiastical offenses (*Pārājika*), if the speaker speaks with an intention of showing off his own superhuman aspect. The Teacher makes it clear that "to show off the superhuman aspect" means to show off the goodness and virtue of oneself, starting from absorption, concentration, and the eight meditative attainments up, especially for the sake of getting reverence, or for the sake of material gain, that is either relevant or irrelevant to one's virtue. For this, one is not free from offenses. If one has really got the goodness and virtue as one has spoken of, then the offences may be light. *However, when we are speaking of those things we have no such vain intention. We only intend to comprehend the principle of conduct, as to which is wrong and which is right. How can we be right and how can we be wrong? Which is Samādhi and which is Jhāna? Which is the Way and which is the Goal? Now, if we speak this way, it means we speak for the sake of knowledge, especially in order that we may arrive at the right conduct. If we do not study and do not train ourselves this way, how are we going to understand the subject? The Buddha and his disciples who explicated Buddhism all did so with references to those topics. So, you should understand that this is not an offense. We are*

*training ourselves for the sake of purity, in order to comprehend clearly the heart of Dhamma. For this reason, it is not considered a vain display of the superhuman qualities.*

**Question 2** May I have permission, sir. In general, those who practise meditation assume one sense-object or another. Some times they may hold that sense-object for consideration, or, sometimes they may try to release it. Now, if they by circumstances are able to release it and shut it off, sometimes with an awareness (*Sati*) and sometimes not. What are the differences between the two situations and what are these situations called ?

**Answer 2** Those who are practising meditation usually assume one sense-object or another as an object of contemplation. This is so that the *Citta* (heart) may focus on one single point. Those who practise meditation have to do this, but it is difficult to achieve one-pointedness. Nevertheless, they will try to attain the one-pointedness of attention. Then this is called *Kamathāna*, or, sometimes called *Samādhi*, or, sometimes called *Samatha*. If the thoughts are still wandering off in various directions, then this is neither *Samādhi* nor *Samatha*. If the *Citta* is steady with one object, it is, as I used to say, one-pointed. In the Scriptures, the Teacher talks about *Jhāna*. He explains that it consists of five factors: thought conception (*Vitakka*), sustained conception (*Vicāra*), delight, happiness, and one-pointedness. No need to explain them. When it comes to this last factor, there is left only one-pointedness. *Here if the power of the Citta is ripe and vigourous, capable of retaining itself in that*

state for a considerable period of time, the *Citta* is brave and then shuts off from external sense-objects. There is left only a consciousness. That is, an awareness becomes completely integrative with the *Citta*. Whatever *Citta*, soever awareness (*Sati*). Whatever awareness, soever *Citta*. There is consciousness within itself. In this moment, the *Citta* has no verbal conception, but it has its own exclusive nature. In my personal opinion and expression, that is the one-pointedness of the *Citta* (*Ekaggatā-Citta*). That is, there is only the genuine *Citta*, nothing else. Here, we have the mental state, which is called *Appanā-Samādhi* (Absorption *Samādhi*). This is to say, there are only an awareness and the *Citta*, lightened, bright and omniscient all *alone*. Like a clean and clear diamond, even if it were to be locked up in a tube, it would still glitter. This is called the one-pointedness of the *Citta*, the one genuine *Citta*.

Now let's go back to this point. You ask, sometimes when the *Citta* is steady upon one sense-object, you will release it, make the *Citta* take hold of nothing. You may thus cause it to be free and become indifferent, but this way is not altogether flawless. Mostly those who are keen in meditation will have an experience that, once attaining one-pointedness, the *Citta* will naturally become relieved on its own. However, if we are keen, we may cause the *Citta* to release itself from a sense-object and leave itself at the one-pointed state (*Ekaggatā-Citta*). Yet, this will not give a feeling as intense and steady as it does when the *Citta* becomes released on its own. The same way is true when we first get into a place of wonder. The first time we visit, we are excited. But, once we have seen it and we go there again, we will feel as if we taste something rather bland.

Of course, we get there, we get to the old place all right. This may be called *Appanā-Samādhi*. It's also correct, if you call it *Appanā-Jhāna*. The taste of *Appanā-Jhāna* is a bit different: when the *Citta* flashes into that state, the *Citta* may waver on its own accord, without our intention. It does not waver because of external objects, but it gropes to see this and that as if full of wonders. Then the *Citta* usually gets carried away with joy in the wonders. Sometimes, there appear mental images. Various mental images take place at this stage. Sometimes, one becomes enraptured in such happiness and calm, so that one might become attached to it. Here is what I call *Appanā-Jhāna*. I talked in the beginning of one-pointedness in a sense-object (*Ekaggatā-ramana*), and of *Jhāna* as consisting of five factors, namely thought conception, sustained conception, delight, happiness, and one-pointedness. One-pointedness is the same as *Ekaggatā-ramana*. Generally speaking one-pointedness in the four stages of *Jhāna* refers to the four stages of fine-material sphere (*Rūpa-Jhāna*). This is generally speaking. Now, let's talk of *Appanā-Jhāna*. The *Citta* is one-pointed. Here at the point in which it gets carried away with a sense-object or a mental image, I call it *Appanā-Jhāna*. Don't forget the word *Jhāna*. It means to watch, to contemplate, to be satisfied and to be delighted with one thing or another, with happiness or with various mental images. This is *Appanā-Jhāna*. However, *Appanā-Samādhi* is not that way. It gives no reaction to pleasure, but it (the *Citta*) is full and contented with what it is, not with external objects. Actually both the *Appanā-Jhāna* and the *Appanā-Samādhi* are not particularly useful, except for taking a rest and for gaining strength, that is, for strengthening the *Citta*. That's all. At that moment, we can't do anything:

*we don't know all, we can't do all.* It enters the original sphere of the *Citta*. It enters and stays in the way it's supposed to be originally.

If that state be *Jhāna*, when the *Citta* withdraws from it, it will grope for various sense - objects as usual. The nature of the *Citta* is this : once it comes across a sense - contact, it follows the contacted image, whether it be the visual, the sound, the smell, the taste, or the touch. Nevertheless, the feeling won't be the same as before, for those objects will somehow taste bland to you, or else you will see that the various sense - objects are peculiar, funny, and ridiculous.

If it be the state of *Appanā - Samādhi*, when the *Citta* withdraws from that, it will perceive the Three Common Characteristics of Nature (*Tilakkhaṇa*) in every object and all material things, all even those in the non - conscious realm. It will see impermanence (*Aniccam*), suffering (*Dukkham*), and selflessness (*Anattā*). And it will become grave and bored with those objects. Eventually it will release itself from attachments wherever they are. There is left only graveness.

The fruits of *Appanā - Jhāna* and *Appanā - Samādhi* differ like that. And those are only my own personal expressions and wordings. They may not agree with what you find in text books. If you who practise find them difficult to understand or find something you disagree, feel free to ask. Actually if one wishes to speak further there can still be a lengthy explanation on the subject. But, at this point I would like to stop here.

**Question 3** Your reverend sir, I would like to ask you something about contemplation. In contemplating, at first I exercised an ordinary contemplation. But as I continued on and on, even though I still took hold of such an object, I lost an awareness and didn't know when I happened to withdraw deep down. When I came back to myself, it's as if I had had no thought. It's as if I had been outside, but it's deep down like in a dream. That situation was very strange. What is it called?

**Answer 3** It's as what I have already explained to you. When the *Citta* has been deeply concentrating on one single sense-object, if we lose our awareness, we'll be completely shut off, shut off like falling asleep for a moment. Sometimes you may be shut off for an hour or half an hour. Then you may become conscious again. This is in the situation of *Bhavaṅga-Citta*. There are several explanations of *Bhavaṅga* in text books. In connection with *Jhāna*, the Teacher calls it *Bhavaṅga-Pāda*, *Bhavaṅga-Carana*, and *Bhavaṅga-Paccheda*. If you drop off just for a very short moment and become aware again, this is called *Bhavaṅga-Pāda*. In *Bhavaṅga-Carana*, you'll still be wavering a bit in the drop-off. Nevertheless, it's not due to an external object; it's a kind of groping within one's own recollection. As for the *Bhavaṅga-Paccheda*, when one becomes absorbed in contemplation, the various external sense-objects become totally shut off from consciousness. All these are comparable to *Khanika-Samādhī* (that is, dropping off for a very short moment and then comes to), *Uppacāra-Samādhī* (that is, dropping off and then groping, similar to *Bhavaṅga-Carana*, but mostly groping for Dhamma or *Dhamma-Vicaya*, so to speak), and

then *Appanā-Samādhi* (as I used to explain: it is dwelling in contemplation and turning off from external sense-objects. There is an awareness within, and [the Citta] shines by itself).

*Bhavaṅga* and *Samādhi* are very closely related. Consequently when the Teacher explains Dhamma in connection with meditation practice, he tends to mention both *Samādhi* and *Jhāna* together. Sometimes he speaks of *Jhāna*, sometimes he switches to *Samādhi*. However, in my explanation, I separate *Samādhi* from *Jhāna*. *Samādhi* concerns one single sense-object in the same way as *Jhāna*. When an awareness controls the *Citta* so that the *Citta* is steady enough to perceive and consider a corpse or a certain loathsome aspect, or death, or whatever; when the *Citta* comes to focus and turns to consider a particular sense-object, while not becoming attached nor delighted with it, as I have explained in the beginning, this is *Samādi*. To have an awareness in control of the *Citta*: the *Citta* is fully focused for a moment and then shuts off from outside, and then comes to—these may become *Khaṇika-Samādhi*, *Uppacāra-Samādhi*, *Appanā-Samadhi*, as I have said. As for *Jhāna*, the *Citta* is steadily contemplating one single object just the same, but once it has become fully focused and attained one-pointedness, it turns out to be *Bhavaṅga-Citta*. During the time the *Citta* drops into *Bhavaṅga* and withdraws, the various defilements that used to exist still exist as usual. So *Jhāna* contributes extremely little to the Goal. *If it be Samādhi, when the Citta withdraws from the Appanā-Samādhi to the level of Uppacāra-Samādhi, it will gain knowledge and wisdom about the various things and perceive in them impermanence, suffering, and selflessness. It*

will eventually purge self-conceit and attachments in various things. These are their different values. Thus the *Citta* that drops into absorption is called *Jhāna*. People in *Jhāna* states are mostly considered asleep, that is, falling asleep and unconscious while sitting, not knowing anything whatsoever. To use the common term generally used, they may be aptly called *Brahma-look-fak*: having only the form, but no *Citta*. That is, they are sitting straight without any *reaction*. It's not known where the *Citta* goes. Actually the *Citta* is there, within. But when the *Sati* (awareness) is gone, we don't know where the *Citta* is. Eventually it turns out to be that one falls asleep. If he is going to turn up to be *Brahma-look-fak* in human form, it's all right (this is my own personal invention). But, since the *Citta* has left, how can the form exist? I'm afraid. Those who practise will turn out to be *Brahma-look-fak* here before they can actually become one.

**Question 4** Your reverend sir, there is another situation for those practising meditation. When I was contemplating something and the *Citta* dropped deeper and deeper until I didn't know what it's contemplating, I felt that it was lightened within, comprehending something very distinctly. I felt fully delighted and contented, but I didn't know what I was contemplating and why I was so contented. After a moment I jerked and came to, but I didn't know what it is all about. However, when the *Citta* had withdrawn deep down, there were mental activities without my volition; the *Citta* made up things by itself. It was as if it had no restraint. It felt very hearty, a great deal indeed, so it seemed. When the *Citta* withdrew, if I tried to consider the passing situation, just the passing moment, I found nothing.

**Answer 4** The first point has to do with the *Citta* in the state of *Bhavaṅga* as I have explained in the beginning. The last point is the same, but it shows more distinctly the state and the plane of the genuine *Citta*. The nature of *Jhāna* is like this. That's why I have explained that our heart is not yet detached from our Aggregates (*Khandha*). Of the Five Aggregates, there are still left four. That situation consists of four aggregates. That is, there is no consciousness of the physical form or the body. After the detachment from the body, there are left just four aggregates. Nevertheless, there are in reality five, but they are the five that are conceived in the *Citta*. Now, the *Citta* has divorced itself from the body. So there is left only the *Citta* by itself. However, since the *Citta* has not become cleansed enough so that it is wholly detached from the body, it cannot escape from the Five Aggregates. And these Five Aggregates here are those which bring us to rebirths in the various planes, in some significant and insignificant existences. We can see it clearly that the manner in which it takes place is similar to what we experience in our everyday life. Sometimes, we acquire the state equal to what we have got. Sometimes we acquire the state higher, for example, we may be more joyful than we used to be; we may be sadder; we may be happier. Therefore, those who have acquired the state of *Jhāna* may be reborn, as the Teacher said, as a god, happier than man, plus having a longer age expectancy than man, because in the state of *Jhāna*, there are still life formations (*Khandha*). So, those who are following the Path, the Goal, and Enlightenment will not dwell in that formative state. They will be in between the external formations and the internal formations. In other words, they will be between the world (*Loka*) and Dhamma. They see both *Loka* and Dhamma

at the same time. They perceive the true nature of *Loka* and Dhamma, until they are able to leave both. In other words, they see the harm of the gross Five Aggregates and pay no attention to them. Nevertheless, if they turn to the internal Five Aggregates with pleasure. They then will become attached to the mental formative plane, which is called *Amisakāya* (god). So, upon leaving these gross Five Aggregates (upon death), it will take hold of the mentally conceived form.

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**Phra Poonsak Nānavadhako**

**Age 56**

**Vassa Age 3**

*Native of the province of Cholburi, he graduated from the Military Academy and served the Air Force up to the rank of lieutenant colonel. He was married and had three children. He was interested in meditation and went to practise at Wat Mahā Dhātu. After some training, he noticed that when he worked up to a certain degree of concentration, his body would be shaken. His teacher could not help him solve this problem. And he became quite annoyed by it, so he gave up the practice. Later he read a book on Mindfulness of Breathing (Anāpānasati). He followed the method until he mentally perceived an image of a corpse with its loathsome aspects (Asubha). He became so much graven that he cried. Besides, there were also other images that appeared to his mental perception.*

One day he happened to meet Phra Ācharn Thate at Wat Phra Sri Mahā Dhātu, Bangkok. Phra Ācharn Thate had come from Phuket to spend a few days there. So he went to pay respect to Phra Ācharn and asked him some questions on meditation, especially on the experiences he had had from the beginning of the practice. For this he received quite a clear explanation. Furthermore, he also received advices on the way to practise, which he made use of until he came to his own realization. One method included a contemplation on the Five Aggregates. From then on he came to be trained by Phra Ācharn, communicating with him mainly by mail, since Phra Ācharn stayed in the province of Phuket.

He followed the method and advice of Phra Ācharn Thate for not less than ten years. In

*the meantime he began to feel braved at the prospect of entering monkhood. That was because he felt that it was difficult to attain an expected goal while being a layman. For three years he led a life of chastity. He used to submit a letter of resignation to his superior, but the resignation was not granted. At the same time Phra Ācharn Thate did not quite agree to his resignation.*

*However, in the year 1974 he felt that blemishes in the life of laity were more than he could bear, so he decided to ask for permission to enter monkhood. It happened that at the time his superior was changed and Phra Ācharn could not detain him any longer. Therefore, he entered monkhood at Wat Hin Mark Peng. Phra Ācharn Thate was his Upajjhāya. Now he has made a good progress in meditation. Having some problems in the practice, he presented to Phra Ācharn the following questions:*

**Question 1**      May I have permission, sir.    I beg you to explain: the body within the body, the feeling within the feeling, the heart within the heart, and the Dhamma within the Dhamma, so that I may understand.

**Answer 1**      According to text books, the body within the body refers to the *internal body and the external body*. The external body means the outside of oneself; the internal body means the inside of oneself. The internal feeling (*Vedanā*) and the external feeling may be explained the same way. We may say it simply that they are the external Five Aggregates and the internal Five Aggregates. The internal Five Aggregates are what we are. The external Five Aggregates are those outside of ourselves. This is what is said in text books. Now let's speak from the pragmatic point of view. When the one who practises is not able to get at the genuine heart, he will have to depend upon the functioning of the physical body with its mental activities. To those who are capable of getting at the genuine heart, the consciousness will be detached from the physical body and from the mental activities connected with it. The heart will be conscious of the heart itself. This heart also contains its own set of Five Aggregates, similar to the one we see in dreams. That is, it is

not concrete. Nevertheless, it has a form visible only to the heart. It has feelings and can perform any volitional activities. In other words, it can at least be conscious of contacts. This inner “self” is most difficult for us to part with. Even if we are to leave the physical, external body upon death, we will cling to the inner “self”. This “self” is what leads us to rebirths in the various spheres. This means we take our “Aggregates” along to rebirth.

**Question 2** When I started out practising and was not fully concentrated, there were usually mental perceptions of things past lurking here and there. Sometimes various sense-objects passed by and new mental formations arose. So I scolded myself...why did you behave like this? And so on and so forth. Sometimes I even punished myself, blaming myself for my own doing. Then I would be sorry and cry for some time. After getting over, I felt that was not the right thing to do, because at first there was only mental flurries, but later there was anger added. That was not the way to get rid of defilements. It was, however, the way to increase them. So I tried to console myself, and the heart became quiet. What’s the reason for doing that?

**Answer 2** That is a device in the training of each and everyone of us. If we have no gross sense-object and have not been able to perceive any blemish in the heart, we will allow our thoughts to roam about, grope about. We will cherish those thoughts. The point is, if we do not see the blemishes, we will

not abandon them, we will not want to leave them. Only when the blemishes become quite large almost beyond correction, that we begin to see them distinctly. The truth is, if we do not see a blemish of a particular object, we will not be able to leave it. Now this time we see the blemish quite clearly. So, as soon as we see it, we have wisdom. When wisdom arises, the heart releases the object, detaches it and becomes calm indeed. This is the way to train the heart. And we all have the same experience. The various sense-objects are like this. When a sense-object comes to our heart, it may be light or it may be heavy. If we have not come across the heavy one, we will still feel happy. However, as soon as the heavy one comes, then it is time for Dhamma. We can catch that object and use it best as an object of contemplation. If we are not able to see Dhamma, we will certainly be pestered by it over and over again, so much so that you had to cry as you related just now. Then we may see Dhamma or the Truth (that is, attachment is suffering.)

**Question 3** After the heart was calm enough, I began to consider the Four Noble Truths, namely Suffering, the Cause of Suffering, the Cessation of suffering, and the Eightfold Path. Suffering is supposed to be confronted; the Cause is supposed to be avoided; the Cessation is supposed to be realized; the Path is supposed to be traced. Having considered the Four Noble Truths clearly enough, I came back to consider myself as to whether or not I had any weaknesses. I found that I was still behind in the Right View; that is, I still held ideation (*Saññā*) as myself or mine. This was why I continued to think and elaborate further and further, until I came to and had to correct

myself. The next matter had to do with the Right Speech. I came to think that I had to be more cautious with my actions and my speech than the way I used to be. So I tried to improve on them, until my heart gets better. Was I doing the right thing ?

**Answer 3** Er..... it agrees with what I said just now. *Sammādiṭṭhi* means the Right View, which means wisdom. When wisdom or actually *Sammādiṭṭhi* occurs and becomes clear, the other seven factors in the Eightfold Path occur simultaneously. They are the followers of wisdom or *Sammādiṭṭhi*. As soon as wisdom or the Right View occurs, it contributes to the perfection of the whole Eightfold Path. In the beginning we may be wandering aimlessly; our mind may still be groping around in the manner explained earlier. That we understand and try to keep calm by using this device, or by making ourselves consider this way and that. The more we catch a sense-object or take it as part of ourselves, the more we get agitated. This is the Cause of Suffering (*Samudaya*); it is indeed very confusing. Now, as soon as wisdom or the Right View occurs, the Cause will disappear. *Nirodha* or the Cessation of Suffering takes place. The fact that we see things with the Right View is actually the whole Eightfold Path itself. We can say that when the Right View takes place, we will come to the realization of the Cause, that is seeing the confusion as the Cause of Suffering. You yourself came across such a realization, but could not help being moved by it. So you cried. This is to say you saw your sufferings before the occurring of the Right View. The fact that you realized

your own sufferings and defilement is the Right View. And this is, of course, the Eightfold Path, too. As soon as the Path occurs, the Cause of Sufferings disappears. And this in itself is the Cessation of Suffering. They are all the same thing, occurring in the same place, whichever way you speak. For that reason, the eight factors of the Path are in the same place. They are in the same spot. When the heart attains one-pointedness and becomes steady, the Right Concentration (*Sammāsamādhi*) occurs. You'll see the suffering and the Cause. However, how much you can get rid of the Cause depends on the power of your wisdom or the Right View. Whenever you arrive at the Cessation of Suffering, you yourself will experience more or less the feeling of coolness.

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**Phra Stephen Paññobhāso**

**Age 24**

**Vassa Age 5**

*His lay name was Stephen Towler. He was an Englishman. In the beginning he had no religion. Later he tried to study a number of them. Then he developed some faith in Buddhism. And he started to observe the five precepts ever since he was fifteen.*

*He wished to come to Thailand in order to enter monkhood. At first his parents did not know of his intention, but even if they had learned about it later, they did not say anything against it. Yet they did not encourage it. Finally he did come to Thailand and entered monkhood at Wat Bovorn Nives Vihāra. Somdet Phra Yana Sangvorn was his Upajjhāya.*

*He went to several places to practise Dhamma. In the end, he came to Wat Hin Mark Peng. Here he was supervised by Phra Ācharn Thate. The followings are part of the conversation between them.*

**Question 1**      You are an Englishman, aren't you ?

**Answer 1**      Yes, sir.

**Question 2**      What's your religion ?

**Answer 2**      In the beginning I had no religion.

**Question 3**      How come ?

**Answer 3**      I had no faith, sir.

**Question 4**      So you did not have a religion.      What did you study ?

**Answer 4**      I studied sciences.      I did not go to university. I only finished middle school.

**Question 5**      How did you get to be interested in Buddhism ?  
What was it that caused you to become interested in Buddhism ?

**Answer 5**      At first I was bored with Christianity.      I began to study other religions, such as Islam, Brahmanism, Hinduism, but as soon as I came across Buddhism, I felt fascinated.      I was happy with it.      So I observed the five precepts ever since I was about fifteen.

**Question 6**      What did your parents and your family say when you came to profess Buddhism ?

**Answer 6**      They were not pleased; they did not agree. They thought it was strange, but they did not say anything against it.

**Question 7**      Did you read many books on Buddhism ?

**Answer 7**      Yes, some. They were written in English, many of them, such as the *Tripitakas*. When I read them, I was interested. When I was eighteen, I was bored with reading. I did not want to read. No matter how much I learned, I did not get at the Truth. So I was thinking of entering monkhood. In the beginning my mother was against ordination, but anyway I said I had to come to Thailand. I did not tell them I would come to Thailand to get ordained. Afterwards I told them. They gave me permission. They said they did not quite agree to it, but they would not be in my way. So I made a trip to Thailand.

**Question 8**      What Dhamma principle is most impressive to you ?

**Answer 8**      The most impressive one is the Four Noble Truths, because the Buddha points out that the world is suffering. When I consider it, it's true as he says. For example, to enter university, to get out of university and to find a job, to find a wife, to look for materials and money...all these, I feel, are sufferings. The Buddha becomes enlightened of the Four Noble Truths, because he sees the Truth as it truly is.

**Question 9** Before deciding to come to Thailand, with whom did you study? With whom did you first come into contact?

**Answer 9** In England I lived in Hampshire. There was a Buddhist Society. I went there and I was introduced to Phra Khantipalo. It just happened that Phra Khantipalo went to England at the time. So I went to see him and he suggested that I came to Thailand.

**Question 10** And did you become ordained with Somdet Phra Yana Sangvorn?

**Answer 10** Yes, sir. Somdet Phra Yana Sangvorn was my *Upajjhāya*.

**Question 11** How many Vassa years have you been ordained?

**Answer 11** Five Vassa years now (since B.E. 2516).

**Question 12** Where did you spend your rains-retreats?

**Answer 12** For the first retreat I stayed with a friend at Wat Tham Kham of Phra Ācharn Funn. From the second to the fourth retreats I stayed at Wat Doi Dhamma Chedi, in the province of Sakon Nakorn, with Phra Ācharn Ban.

**Question 13** During the time you were with Phra Ācharn Funn and Phra Ācharn Ban, how did you feel about your practices?

**Answer 13** At the time I was at Tham Kham, I felt that my meditation practice went well. I liked to contemplate my own breathing, contemplate the breathing, *Ānāpānasati*. But at that time I could hardly speak Thai. I had Than Don as my friend. Whenever I had a problem, I would speak to him first. At that time, when I practised, I felt that my breath went deep down in the chest. When I breathed in and out, I felt the breathing very much in the chest. So I told my friend. My friend said that's not right: in *Ānāpānasati* one contemplated at the nose. This time when my awareness moved down to the chest, I tried to shift it to the nose. My friend only said that that was not right. And I did not have the courage to go to talk to Phra Ācharn Funn. So I was not too happy. But since my friend had already told me once, I did not want to go to tell Phra Ācharn Funn. I did not want to say that I was not happy or that I disagreed with my friend's suggestion. I only knew that when the *Citta* moved down to the chest, it became calm and felt at ease. But when my friend told me that was not right, I tried to make it go up to the nose.

**Question 14** When the *Citta* was in there, it did not waver ?  
It was calm ?

**Answer 14** Yes, sir.

**Question 15** All right that was the first experience in the practice of *Ānāpānasati*. After that, did you continue in the same direction all the time ?

**Answer 15** Not all the time. Later there was a Kathin ceremony. It was disturbing and my meditation deteriorated. After that I went to stay in the forest with Than Don, but my practice did not go on very well. Then I went back to Tham Kham. I contemplated walking. Sometimes I felt like a skeleton walking. I walked back and forth in the skeleton.

**Question 16** Were you afraid ?

**Answer 16** No, sir. At first I felt it just a little because I had never seen it before. Having seen it several times I was not afraid. Sometimes while I was in walking meditation, I saw some whiteness among trees as if there had been people at the trees or along the edge of the woods. It was strange. They were walking back and forth. I did not know how these came about ? I watched them for about five to ten minutes, but they did not disappear either.

**Question 17** Did you see bodies or just lines ?

**Answer 17** Just lines.

**Question 18** Lines like a fly whisk ?

**Answer 18** Yes, sir. After that I went to Wat Doi Dhamma Chedi to stay with Phra Āchārn Ban. I was at Wat Doi Dhamma Chedi not very long when my breathing within the chest became

very distinct to me. I was feeling at ease while I was meditating. So I asked Phra Āchārn of advice. I told him, “now, while I was meditating on my breathing, I felt the breathing going in and out of the chest. Was that all right?” I asked. “When I asked Than don, he said it was not right.” Now Phra Āchārn Ban said, “Right, right.” After I had talked to Phra Āchārn Ban, I felt better. Phra Āchārn Ban told me to concentrate on that spot. So I made a strenuous effort at concentrating. When it went deep down into the chest, I felt very comfortable. After that a feeling occurred, that is, I felt tired and needed rest. When I felt tired and needed rest, I did not want to rest. I would sit for at least one more hour. When I sat and breathed in and out for a little while, my breathing would feel deep down in the chest. I felt illuminated. It was comfortable and I felt happy, fascinated. Later it changed. I saw the arisings and fallings of the Five Aggregates several times and they were very disturbing. The disturbance I faced, I did not want, because before this I was calm and comfortable. When I rejected that condition, it died away. After it had died away, I thought to myself that I was foolish. We were supposed to contemplate the disturbance: we were supposed to know the disturbance. This time I tried to bring back that condition, but it would not come back.

[*Phra Āchārn Thate* made a further explanation:] The point is we are not used to seeing the arisings and fallings. The arisings and fallings of the Five Aggregates we have never seen. Those practising Dhamma are fond of happiness and calm. They meditate on happiness and calm. Or, if they happen to see images, lights, or colours, they will become carried away by them.

This is what most of those practising Dhamma are fond of. If we see the arisings and fallings of the Five Aggregates, *actually if we see the Five Aggregates, consider the Five Aggregates, watch the arisings and fallings of the Five Aggregates, this is wisdom. To watch light and calm, this is not wisdom.* To attain calm and to be pleased with it, to be carried away by happiness and calm and illumination, are what I classify as Absorption (*Jhāna*). Whoever is in the state of Absorption likes it. Everybody likes it. It's happiness but they don't know that to be attached to happiness is a hindrance of wisdom. Right, but not thoroughly right. To get to that happiness and calm is right; it's *Samatha*. However, to see the Five Aggregates, to consider the Five Aggregates, and to see the arisings and fallings of the Five Aggregates, this is wisdom from seeing the truth as it really is. I have also explained that to consider the arisings and fallings of the Five Aggregates is wisdom from *Samādhi*.

*Jhāna and Samādhi differ from each other here. In Jhāna one is fond of happiness and calm and will be displeased with considering things. One will be attached to and satisfied with that condition. If it be Samādhi, it will develop wisdom. Actually Jhāna and Samādhi start out with the same sense-object, say, the same method of Anāpānasati. However, in Samādhi we are interested in contemplating the arisings and fallings of the Five Aggregates so that we see them as nothing substantial. This is the point that leads to detachment. Wisdom must let go attachment.*

But in this *Samādhi* state one is not as happy as in *Jhāna*. People don't like it. So they turn frequently to *Jhāna*, in the

same way you were. You enjoyed only the happiness and calm. That's why you turned to the old, the old *Jhāna*. As a result, *Samādhi* and Wisdom disappeared. When they had disappeared, you wished for them to come back. You tried to pull them back, but they would not come. If we want to make them up, they will not be. *We can't make up Samādhi and Wisdom; they have to rise on their own.* To consider and perceive the arisings and fallings of the Five Aggregates through a theoretical learning and assumption may seem clear to you all right. Nevertheless, it is not the same as when you obtain a perception through an actual experience. This kind of perception is not based on old memories. It comes out spontaneously. Have you anything else you wish to ask ?

**Question 19** Next, after the rains-retreat, I went to stay in a cave. When the breathing in and out became deep down inside the chest, there occurred an image of the head bone. But when I saw the head bone, the important thing is I saw it whiter than usual. Sometimes I saw the skin whiter than usual. Or if I saw the whiteness of the teeth, it would be whiter than usual. Whatever I saw was white. So I concentrated on it. After I had concentrated for an hour, there was an illumination. When I felt like walking in meditation, I got up to walk. I felt comfortable and wanted to practise meditation even more. So my effort increased.

**Answer 19** The matter concerning the *Citta* is delicate. When the *Citta*, that has become more sensitive, observes things

however refined, it will be able to see them in distinct and magnifying details. For example, the white colour, it's white all right, but when the *Citta* becomes sensitive and calm, it will perceive the colour so distinctly white, whiter than usual. This is why it is said that *in practising Dhamma and in attaining calm, one will experience the marvellous, not the usual. Whatever one sees is marvellous, not as ordinary as in a common experience.*

**Question 20** I would like to ask Than Āchārn this: while I was meditating on the breathing, I saw whiteness arise. If talking in theoretical terms, what is this level of practice: Fixed-Absorption (*Appanā-Samādhī*), or Access-Absorption (*Upacāra-Samādhī*), or what level of the worldly *Jhāna*?

**Answer 20** To meditate on the breathing in and out is a preliminary practice. Perception of mental images take place at the stage of Access - Absorption, not yet reaching the Fixed-Absorption stage. Once one gets to the Fixed - Absorption stage, there will be no more mental images. These *Jhāna* stages are considered worldly, if the person attaining them are still subject to defilements. However, if the person in *Jhāna* is already in the supermundane state, then his *Jhāna* becomes supermundane.

**Question 21** I would like to ask Than Āchārn this: my friend used to explain about one type of meditation. He said when he lay down to sleep, he would try to make himself aware of the whole body and of the various cells. When he felt a cell, he would concentrate on it and would then think of making the

cell soft and bent down until it had no more feeling, until there was nothing to disturb him. Then he would continue to do this to the whole body until every cell in the body became calm. When he did this, the *Citta* became calm. So he followed the practice until the body extended larger and larger. Then he would turn to the breathing in and out. When he breathed in, he would think that the *Citta* was getting calmer, and when he breathed out he would think that he was breathing out the disturbance. And when he used this method, he could follow it a little while. When he began to feel comfortable, the condition would change. He felt as if there had been someone squeezing his heart. He felt so filled up. I can't quite explain it. He felt like bursting out with the exhalation, but then he could not. When he wanted it to burst out, he would at the same time want it ease out. The condition kept changing until it became calm.

**Answer 21** Scientists usually take the material (cell) as the regulator of action. So when meditating they would direct their attention to the cell. This is good all right, whether it be a cell or anything else. It's all right if the *Citta* concentrates on it and is able to arrive at one-pointedness. However, if there is a device which helps one to turn to concentrate the "one" that concentrates the cell (that is, the *Citta*), and then is able to detach from the cell, the *Citta* will become more delicate and will obtain inordinary wisdom. However, since he was not able to get detached from the cell, the condition was then changed and that was why there were all sorts of powerful, potential outbursts. The best he could do then was to turn back to calm, that's all. That's a shame. If he had had someone who was

keen on the *Citta* to advise him on the principle of *Citta* and on the nature of the genuine *Citta*, he would have made a considerable progress.

**Question 22** Sometimes I concentrated on making my breath extend all over the whole body; I could do so. Sometimes when I concentrated on making my bodily temperature increase, my body became as hot as I wished. And sometimes the body was very shaken.

**Answer 22** If your concentration has become one-pointed and you concentrate on the wish to make it hot or cold in whichever part of the body, you may be able to do so. That your body was shaken was actually due to delight (*Pīti*), and the power of calm. It is good, if we practise and become keen on it. The most important thing is that we don't get attached to it.

**Question 23** I used to meditate and obtained a mental image of Jesus Christ. I still saw it even after I had opened my eyes, but I had no faith and said nothing. Later that image disappeared. And I decided that the image of Jesus Christ was just like any image. Once it had its arising, it naturally had its falling.

**Answer 23** In calm, people encounter many different experiences, depending upon their old memories and habits. For you, when the *Citta* became calm, the image of Jesus Christ appeared. However, since you're firm in Buddhism, you decided that it was not impressive. That was a kind of teaching reinforcement, to make you more certain and clear.

**Question 24** When I had been able to attain calm, the *Citta* was illuminated and empty. I saw flashes of sense-objects now and then, and they would disappear. So I came to consider the nature of the sense-objects of the *Citta*. If they followed their own course and we did not get attached to them, they would not be of any harm to the *Citta* at all. They had their own arising, and they naturally had their own falling. If we were to keep watch of them all the time, when would they come to an end? So I let them go. I left them to whatever they would. And I felt comfortable indeed.

**Answer 24** This is what I mean when I explain that the *Citta* is neutral. When we have cleaned away or got rid of the defilements, attachments, or anxieties and all the various entanglements, the *Citta* is said to have laid down everything. In the end, even this very body of ours, we would lay it down. However, even if we were to lay it down, there would still be left the nerves: the cells and the nerves would still be functioning, if we still live in this body. In this case there will still be contacts with those which come to hit both our body and our heart. There will still be contacts with various sense-objects, since we are among them. So there must be a number of occurrences, since there still is this living body which is the consequence of past volitional formations (*Vipāka*). Therefore, it's necessary that there be an object of consciousness. And the fact that a sense-object disappears means we do not become attached to it. So it disappears. The fact that we come to consider the nature of the disappearance, whether inside or outside, physical or mental, we will be keen in catching up with each

contact. Consequently we will never let ourselves become attached to any contacted object. Whatever we see, it will be just a matter of seeing, not as “ourselves,” not as anything at all, and not as the “*Citta*”. It will be just something that happens to hit and make an appearance to the *Citta*; it is at the *Citta*. When we have not cleaned the *Citta*, we will see that it is both at the *Citta* and is the *Citta* itself. Now, when we have laid down the attachment, when we have practised so that we are keen on the doing, we will see that the sense-object is not the *Citta*, but it only hits the *Citta*, just as any external object hits our body. For example, when gnats or gadflies or mosquitoes bite us, the itch is not “we” or “ours”, but we feel it this way. So it’s necessary that we practise laying down attachments until they are no more. And this is possible through the practice of “separation,” to use a common meditation terminology. We separate the *Citta* from a sense-object. This is it. It is not really to separate. We are merely using an idiomatic expression in the field of meditation, so we say that we should “*separate*” the *Citta* from the sense-object, or that we’d better not become involved in it. This is it.

**Question 25** For the last rains-retreat (B.E. 2518), I stayed at Wat Doi Dhamma Chedi. One day while I was walking in meditation at the cave, there appeared to me an image of a white deity. Later, while I was sitting in meditation, there appeared an image of a golden deity coming out of a tree near the dining-hall, but they were tiny deities. I saw them twice. So I wondered whether they were real or were made up by my own imagination,

**Answer 25** This is difficult to say. Even you who saw them yourself were not certain. Deities are mentioned in many instances in the Buddhist Suttas. For example, there are those deities that live on trees which are called *Rukkha - Devatā*. Those who live in empty spaces are called *Akāsa - Devatā*. These deities have no material form. They can be seen only by those who have cleaned their *Citta* well enough. These people will be able to see the deities. Yet even so there are still some who do not see them. There is a story that in those days, many of the *Sākaya* princes went into monkhood following the footsteps of the Lord Buddha. Many became enlightened. After the gods had received the news, they were delighted and fixed the time at which they would pay a visit. That night the Buddha suggested to those *Sākaya* princes to enter *Jhāna* and to watch the *Citta*. He himself would explain to them as to the ancestry of those gods including their followers, how many they were and where they came from. When the gods arrived, the Lord Buddha pointed them out to the enlightened disciples. Some saw one hundred, some a thousand, some ten thousand, not the same. This is an example. Therefore, whether that was true or whether our *Citta* made it up, we should not speak of, except only among those who practise Dhamma. And after we have spoken, there are bound to be both good and bad consequences. The good consequence is...when hearing of the gods, some might have faith, saying, “Oh, they have accomplished such a strong concentration power that they can see the gods.” Then they would all gather to pay obeissance and to make merits in large quantity. But there might be only a small number that think that meditation is a good thing and that they should follow it. The bad con-

sequence is...those who live in the science vogue, unable to prove it with their own physical eyes, might claim that it was fanatic. Therefore, what's the use of talking about this sort of thing to them? It will only cause them to be contemptuous and quarrelsome with us, the fact that agrees with an analogy the Teacher once made that it was no use to describe the beauty of a girl to a person blinded from birth, because the latter would find it very amusing indeed.

**Question 26** At the time I was concentrating on the inhaling and exhaling and the *Citta* became concentrated to one point, there occurred a mental image of an analytical nature (*Patibhāga-Nimita*), in which the object perceived was quite different from its usual condition. Actually we will see ourselves as we are like this. But when the *Citta* became focused, why, it became decomposed and completely rotten. Sometimes there was left only the skeleton. The teacher used to teach that those who practised Dhamma had to be a contender. So I tried to persist in sitting, fighting against my bodily ache and pain. It was not very long when the *Citta* became one in focus and it just appeared that I was on fire. At that moment, it appeared that my whole body became cooked all of a sudden. I looked at my robe only to see that it had all turned red. Some part of my skin broke open and some lymph came out and it was very hot. I would like to know why this happened. Was it because of the power of the *Citta*?

**Answer 26** This is the same as I have explained to you. There will appear a number of transformations, all on their own

accord. They happen in whichever way at all. This is, of course, after the *Citta* has become one-pointed. If the *Citta* be not one-pointed, it won't happen. There may be many different things happen just like the image you mentioned. That the whole body is burned down to dust, this much may also take place. Sometimes colossally black, our body appears colossally black. This is not good. It is caused by our physical disorder. When you come back to yourself, you will feel torpid. This shows that your circulation is not normal: the air element moves upwards. If you have medicine, you'd better take it.

**Question 27** My experience in meditation is like this: in the beginning I had to fight with my thoughts and feelings by reinforcing my mindfulness to safeguard the *Citta*, not letting it wander off to the outside. I kept a very close watch. The *Citta* became calm a bit, but was not able to become one in focus completely. Then after some consideration I came to a conclusion that the reason why my *Citta* could not get down to focus was because I screwed up my mindfulness too tight. So I relaxed it, letting the *Citta* stand rather lightly and moderately. I only used mindfulness as an observer of the *Citta's* behaviour. This time the *Citta* gradually became focused and I had no more distraction to external sense-objects. Then there arose many mental images. For example, I saw Sergeant Preecha (who had died few days previously) walking to me. I then told Novice Vince to look at him. Novice Vince was afraid and was taking after running. So I induced Novice Vince not to be afraid because even we would die and become an apparition just like him one day. And

I talked to several others. This is an example. When I came out of absorption, I looked at my watch. Goodness, it had been three to four hours. I would like to know why it happened that way.

**Answer 27** It was very good that you had subtle devices in contending and in training your own *Citta* until you were able to put it into focus, especially the way you relaxed your mindfulness and made it docile. That's very important. It was difficult for one to realize and manage it properly. To establish the mindfulness as an observer of the *Citta* and to make it concentrate on one point sometimes get to be too tenacious, so much so that it might cause a headache or a puffing up in the chest so that you won't be able to breathe. It is so because most of those practising Dhamma think that "to have perfect mindfulness is to concentrate steadily and to hold on to one particular sense-object without easement. But, actually this is not the case. If a mindfulness still has to hold on tightly to a sense-object, then it cannot be considered "perfect mindfulness." *Perfect mindfulness needs no watch nor protection, but there will be a check and balance between mindfulness and the sense-object that arises. This kind of mindfulness will function in conjunction with each arising of a sense-object. There is no wandering into anything beyond the sense-object that arises at the Citta moment by moment. If you just acknowledge it, you will become neutral. Sometimes the Citta may feel a certain graveness. Here there is no need to make your mindfulness guard the Citta. The mindfulness and the Citta are proportionate. They watch each other. Now this is what is called perfect mindfulness.*

When the *Citta* becomes fully focused, it may reach the point where there is no awareness of the physical body. This state is called *Bhavanga* (mental state of becoming). Here there is left only the *Citta* functioning by itself. Nevertheless, the *Citta* still contains the total conception of the mental and physical Aggregates. Therefore, upon death, when we truly leave the physical (external) body, the *Citta* with its total conception of the Aggregates will be responsible for transmigration and rebirth.

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**Phra Busana Sudhammo**

**Age 38**

**Vassa Age 3**

*His lay name was Busana Burhanudin. He was an Indonesian. He graduated from a technical school and worked in an insurance company. He had an interesting incident in his life. That is, at the time he was about fourteen, his sister passed away. This caused him a great deal of anguish. He kept asking himself, "What really is life? Why does man have to die?" He confronted himself with these questions time and again until they became an object of verbal contemplation, this at the time he was still an Islam and had no knowledge of meditation. Finally he decided to go into a forest, quite far from the village, in order to reflect on life and death.*

*While living in the forest, he prayed strenuously to God, asking God to give him answers to*

*those questions, but he received none. At that time, he lived on leaves and fruits.*

*One night after having lived in the forest for about a year, he happened to lie down watching the stars in the sky. By and by he became absorbed into oneness with them (Egakkatā-ramana). He felt calm. He saw the stars in the sky all joined into one big star (state of Patibhāga-nimita). His heart was illuminated and there appeared to him a deity who taught him the method of meditation as to what was right and what was wrong. He followed the deity's advice for more than three years, yet he could not find an answer to his questions about life and death. The deity suggested that he became Buddhist:*

Finally he came to Thailand and was ordained at Wat Bovorn Nives. Somdet Phra Yana Sangvorn was the Upajjhāya. He felt that to become a Buddhist monk gave him an opportunity to practise meditation, which might enable him to find out answers to the questions he had in mind.

After entering monkhood, he came to practise meditation under the supervision of Phra Ācharn Thate, Wat Hin Mark Peng. He was satisfied with the method of practice and felt that he was making a great deal of progress.

**Question 1** My experience in meditation has been marvelous since I came to receive my training at Wat Hin Mark Peng and at Wat Wang Nam Mog here, having you as my teacher and counsellor. Before I came to Wat Hin Mark Peng, I was at Wat Bovorn. There I felt I had not developed as much mental power as I do now. When I came here, I have been able to sit up straight and have gained much mental power. Before I came to Thailand, I lived in Indonesia. I had practised quite long enough in *Samatha* meditation. But in speaking of *Vipassanā*, there used to be a monk back in Indonesia, who suggested that I concentrated my consciousness on my walking, sitting, lying down and on every posture. But that was not the principle of *Vipassanā* in the least. After my training in Indonesia, I came to Thailand and was ordained at Wat Bovorn with Somdet Phra Yana Sangvorn as my *Upajjhāya*. Then I asked for his permission to come and stay with Than Ācharn, sir. Somdet granted me permission. I was very happy. As soon as I received the permission, I came here. If not, I would have gone back to Indonesia immediately. I did not want to stay.

During the time I was practising here at Wat Hin Mark Peng and was being trained by you, one day while I was sitting

in meditation, my head happened to come off my body and it set itself right in front of me. I watched and contemplated it until there were left only bones and teeth. Sometimes the tongue stuck out too. I watched it for about two or three days. The bones, the flesh and the skin all turned into the soil element, water element, air element, and fire element in the end. Later I asked you what to do in so far as my meditation was concerned. You said that everything took place in the heart. If anything happened, it was the behaviour of the heart. The heart itself was neutral. It was by itself. If there occurred a thought, the thought was actually a gesture of the heart. I tried to watch the gesture of the heart with the heart. I practised quite strenuously. I slept very little, maybe two to three hours, or four hours a day. But I was not able to improve my meditation.

One day my teeth were all aching very badly. So I took the aching as an object of concentration. Then I made the heart acknowledge the pain without feeling the pain. I tried to separate the two kinds of consciousness. Finally I succeeded. Suffering was suffering after its own condition, but the heart did not suffer with it. I was not effected by the ache and pain, but the ache and pain were going on by themselves. This is another progress I've made since I've been practising with you.

**Answer 1** You said in the beginning that a monk taught you to do *Vipassanā* by making yourself aware of every posture. That is not *Vipassanā*. That is just a practice to sharpen the consciousness; it's *Samatha*. This time you have learned to distinguish the heart and the gesture of the heart. Now that we know how to observe the heart and the gesture of the heart,

we should learn to leave the gesture of the heart and be left only with the heart by itself. Upon leaving the gesture of the heart, we will realize the state of Conceptualized Image (*Patibhāga*). The fact that you saw your head cut off or fallen off or whatever, until there were left only bones and teeth, shows that you were in the realm of Conceptualized Image, still in the stage of *Samatha*, not *Vipassanā*. Now speaking of the time you contemplated the feeling (*Vedanā*) of toothache. That was in the realm of the Eightfold Path (*Magga*) or Right Concentration (*Samādhi*). That is, the heart was concerned only with the feeling, contemplating the feeling so that you were able to see the feeling just as the feeling, and the heart just as the heart. This is in the realm of *Samādhi* and *Paññā* (Concentration and Wisdom). Here is what is called *Magga* (the Path). In the beginning, you were going through the various stages of Absorption (*Jhāna*). Later you were walking along the Path of Righteousness or *Vipassanā*, being coarse or refined depending upon the stages of the Path you're in.

**Question 2** Later on I began to consider the Five Aggregates. In speaking of the physical body, there was the fact that I could separate the heart from the physical body. In speaking of the mental aggregates, I could also separate the heart from the physical body and so could I separate the heart from the feeling. I was able to do the same thing with Ideation (*Saññā*), Volitional Formations (*Sankhāra*), and acts of consciousness (*Viññāna*). I could separate them. I hastened to practise along this line. The more I hastened, the less I wanted to sleep. The more I hastened, the more the heart became concentrated on one object.

Even while I was sweeping the mat and cleaning the temple-ground, my hands were doing the sweeping all right, but my heart was not attaching to it. There was a separate consciousness. Even though I had worked for hours, I felt as if I had not done anything.

**Answer 2** This I usually explain, in the same way as Āchārn Mun and other meditation masters, that it is called the Great Mindfulness (*Mahā-Sati*), meaning perfect mindfulness at all times. In other words, the Great Mindfulness is *Buddho*, the one who is awake and is enlightened, being aware of oneself always. One has no concern with sleep or with lying down. The heart is fully awake and bright all the time. This is it...*Buddho*.

**Question 3** Even these days when I went out receiving food offerings, sometimes the heart simply acknowledged things. It saw this body: walking with the left foot or the right foot, it was mindful. There was no tiresomeness. There was perfect mindfulness coming automatically in conjunction with consciousness all the time.

**Answer 3** To practise in mindfulness and arrive at this much result is superb. But an insight based on *Vipassanā* has not yet taken place. So go on practising and training yourself. Don't be discouraged. By and by such an insight will arise. Don't be in a hurry and don't get covetous, or else destruction will arise in its place without your knowing.

**Question 4** Later on I tried very hard and very hurriedly. When memories arose, I knew that they could very easily be remolded into new, volitional formations (*Saṅkhāra*), so I would strengthen my mindfulness and try to acknowledge what was arising. If the heart was becoming attached to beauty, I would shake it off immediately, otherwise it would lead to suffering.

**Answer 4** Mindfulness had to function that way. That is, it is careful with the various sense-objects. Whenever a sense-object appears, it will realize its disadvantage, that is, suffering. When one has trained oneself longer and longer, mindfulness will be just right, not too hard. Neither will it be too soft and soggy so that it extends itself to peripheries or external objects. Whenever *Mindfulness*, *Concentration*, and *Wisdom* are automatically in balance, *Insight* will arise. This means that no matter what we see or what we know through the six senses, the realization of the Three Common Characteristics (*Tilakkhaṇa*) will take place. All three of them will be realized at the same time.

**Question 5** When the heart is attached to the Five Aggregates or whatever object, I think this only leads to sufferings. Things arise and fall all the time. It is like ourselves: we were born only to turn old and ill and then die. Things turn around and around, sir, under the condition of the Three Common Characteristics.

**Answer 5** The Three Common Characteristics are realized through *Vipassanā* (Insight). They in this case will be perceived altogether in conjunction.

**Question 6** Concerning this volume of life (*Saṅkhāra*), sir, it is capable of reaching out and of becoming attached to an external object. At the same time, there is still another volume of life within the *Citta* (heart) itself. If we are detached from all external objects, there will be left only the *Citta*. The *Citta* is therefore transient.

**Answer 6** Right, it has to be that way.

**Question 7** What is *Viññāna-Khandha*? What is *Citta*? What is *Mano*?

**Answer 7** *Mano* is the original state. *Mano* is the heart. As I have explained, the heart is neutral. It is neutral. It contains nothing, neither good nor bad, neither meritorious nor sinful. And nothing is in there, empty, neutral. When there is a contact through the senses, there is a consciousness. This is called *Viññāna*. When the *Viññāna* gropes after a sense-object through the sense bases, this is *Citta*.

**Question 8** I would like to know the difference between *Appanā-Samādhi* and *Appanā-Jhāna*, sir.

**Answer 8** It seems I have explained it once, probably to Phra Chaichan. All right, I will explain it further here. *Appanā-Jhāna* is similar to *Appanā-Samādhi*. When the *Citta* becomes perfectly one-pointed and firm, it will go beyond the state of

One - Pointedness - in - a - Sense - Object ( *Ekaggatā - ramana* ). That is, it will lay down the one - pointedness, which is its sense - object. The result is, there will be left only One - Pointedness - of - the - Heart ( *Ekaggatā - Citta* ). This particular state withdraws itself within, like a flash that is turned off. It constitutes a separate consciousness. That state is usually void of harm and hindrances, which may give rise to mental images. It is the state in which one is transported by tranquility and happiness. Now, this state is *Appanā - Jhāna*. As for *Appanā - Samādhi*, it begins with a concentration on a particular sense - object in the same way. They are also similar when they get to the stage of One - Pointedness - in - a - Sense - Object ( *Ekaggatā - ramana* ) and the stage of One - Pointedness - of - the - Heart ( *Ekaggatā - Citta* ). But, when one comes to the latter stage, the heart will contain both a mindfulness and a consciousness, which constitute an entity by itself. The whole experience cannot possibly be transferred into a verbal language. Words are just an assumption of reality.

**Question 9** I would like to ask what I should contemplate next ?

**Answer 9** Contemplate these Five Aggregates. No need to turn to other things because the Five Aggregates are the base of Attachment ( *Upādāna* ). Consider the arisings and fallings of the Five Aggregates so that you see them as the common characteristics. They are not “we;” they are not “they.” But they have their own condition just like that. It’s by illusion that one gets carried

away and becomes attached, taking the Five Aggregates as “we,” as “ours.” So when the Five Aggregates happen to change and disintegrate, we suffer.

Even if you have not been able to obtain a clear insight, don't get discouraged. Know that the reason why you don't get a clear insight is because your mindfulness and concentration are still weak. In this case, lay down the contemplation and come back to train yourself in mindfulness and concentration so that they become stonger. Don't ever wish for a clear insight without working on mindfulness and concentration, otherwise you will fall into distractions. Now, when mindfulness and concentration have gained considerable strength, the arisings and fallings of the Five Aggregates will appear distinctly right there and then. If this does not happen, you should feel inclined to contemplate the Five Aggregates once again as you used to. This is the only way to purge attachment (*Upādāna*).

Phra Stephen : It goes against the current, to contemplate what is difficult to comprehend. It's not easy.

Phra Ācharn : This is good already. Sometimes the explanation is beyond your knowledge. Yet other people will find it even more difficult. It's difficult even when explaining among ourselves. This is good enough.

**Question 10** May I ask Than Ācharn, sir. I beg you to explain *Appanā-Jhāna* and *Appanā-Samādhi* again because this is difficult to understand.

**Answer 10**      *Appanā - Jhāna* and *Appanā - Samādhi* may begin with the same sense-object. That is, you may choose to be mindful of your breathing, or, of a certain aspect of loathsomeness, or, of any element at all. But, they are different right after the stage of One-Pointedness (*Appanā*). In talking about *Jhāna*, there must be *Bhavaṅga*. This is when the *Citta* is absorbed in a concentration of a sense-object and when it is inclined to go whichever way it wishes. If the *Citta* drops into *Bhavaṅga* for a brief moment and is not able to maintain itself, then a mental image will not take place. If it were to take place, it would not be discernible. This is called *Bhavaṅga-pāda*. If the *Citta* drops into *Bhavaṅga* and is able to maintain itself there longer, there may occur various mental images and perceptions. Then the *Citta* will usually grasp those images as objects of contemplation. But, sometimes there might not be any mental image and the *Citta* might not withdraw either. It might grope within itself in delight and rapture. This state is called *Bhavaṅga-carana*. If the *Citta* is fully withdrawn and perfectly charged with confidence and faith, being contented in that peaceful and happy sense-object, it means the *Citta* drops completely into *Bhavaṅga*. Here one will not be aware of what is going on. Sometimes one might be aware all right, but it's an awareness not of this self or this world. It's a different self and a different world apart. One eventually gets transported by delight and happiness. This is *Appanā - Jhāna*. *Jhāna* is like that.

If we talk of *Samādhi*, there is a different angle to it. The Eightfold Path (*Magga*) is the major concern of *Samādhi*. That is, when the *Citta* attends to or attaches itself to a particular

sense-object (here I don't use the word *concentrate*, but I call it *attend* or *attach*), the *Citta* then lays down other sense-objects, thus being able to become one-pointed momentarily. This is called *Khanika-Samādhī*. However, if the *Citta* lays down all of the external sense-objects completely, and comes to contemplate the behaviour of the sense-object within itself, apart from other things, or sometimes it comes to contemplate a particular Dhamma principle, all without groping after the past or the future, this is called *Upacāra-Samādhī*. Sometimes, at that moment the *Citta* might become one-pointed so that it drops into *Bhavaṅga* and then withdraws. Then there might arise mental images and various perceptions. If this were to happen, *you should realize that the Citta has turned into Jhāna*. You should realize also that the mental images and the various perceptions classified under the name *Six Abhiññā* (six supernormal powers) all come from *Jhāna*. When the *Citta* is fully concentrated, the Mindfulness which guards the *Citta* and the *Citta*, which is conscious of sense-object and which knows that it is being so conscious of a sense-object, will join into one. Then it will remain by itself. At that moment we can neither speak nor utter a word of explanation. Even after we have come out of that state, we will not be able to explain it clearly. The best thing we can do is to speak in metaphorical terms, which might partly convey the situation. That is called *Appanā-Samādhī*.

*Jhāna does not make use of Wisdom. Even if one needs Wisdom as a basis for contemplation, but when Jhāna takes place, it will concentrate on the pleasureable and attach itself to calm and happiness, which are its objectives. This is not the way to purge defilements. It only pacifies the five hindrances (Nivarana).*

*Samādhi needs wisdom, starting from a contemplation in a sense-object. When the Citta has attained the stage of Access-Samādhi (Upacāra - Samādhi), the Wisdom that is used to consider the Elements, the Aggregates, or the Sense-Bases, will become all the more clear. With the use of Wisdom one is said to be walking along the Eightfold Path (Magga). The purposes are to abandon Wrong View about the Self (Sakkāya-Ditṭhi), Doubt as to the Truth of Enlightenment (Vicikicchā), and Attachment to the Practice of Ritualism and Magic Formulae (Sīlabbata-parāmāsa). In other words, in Jhāna the Citta is bold, but not wise, whereas in Samādhi, mindfulness, concentration, and wisdom are in balance, walking along the Path evenly.*

**Question 11** I beg you to explain the meanings of *Mano*, *Viññāna*, and *Citta*. How do they differ ?

**Answer 11** Just a minute. I will explain further about the interchanging conditions of *Jhāna* and *Samādhi* because I have not explained them fully. After that I will explain the meanings of *Mano*, *Viññāna*, *Citta*.

How *Jhāna* and *Samādhi* differ, I have explained in item ten. Therefore, I will not explain it further. I will explain only how they can be interchanged.

When the *Citta* is deep in concentration so that it reaches the state of one-pointedness (*Appanā*) and the passive state of *Bhavaṅga-carana*, you may have mental images and perceptions. The *Citta* might get carried away by them. Sometimes, it might

be satisfied with a concentration in calm and happiness. This is truly the condition of *Jhāna*. However, if we turn to consider suffering, or the arisings and fallings of ourselves or of objects outside ourselves until we gain insight into the Three Common Characteristics (*Tilakkhana-ñāna*), so that we become bored and grave, which leads to abandonment of attachments, this is to say *Jhāna has given way to Wisdom: there has arisen Samādhi along the Path of Righteousness (Magga)*. When the practice of Righteousness is firm and is supported by an insight into the Three Common Characteristics (*Tilakkhana-ñāna*), the various folds of the Path will be in balance (*Magga-samaṅgi*). That is to say, the Moral Discipline, Concentration, and Wisdom become one in the course of practice. There arises a distinct and clear-cut understanding, no more doubt and uncertainty in the *Citta*. After that the *Citta* will become bright and illuminated. Whatever we contemplate, whether it be Dhamma or a worldly object, there will be clarity and uninhibition. Everything becomes Dhamma.

As for *Appanā-Samādhi*, when the *Citta* is fully concentrated to the point of *Appanā-Samādhi*, it will have a consciousness and a knowledge apart by itself, but that knowledge cannot possibly be of any use, except for strengthening the mental power that may be used in the practice of Righteousness. That's all. So you should know that whenever a balance among the folds of the Path arises, it does not arise during the *Appanā* or one-pointed state. On the other hand, it arises when the *Citta* is dwelling in the *Upacāra* state. Now, when the *Citta* has

withdrawn from the *Appanā* to the *Upacāra* state, and mindfulness and concentration are still firm, insight into the Three Common Characteristics (*Tilakkhaṇa-ñāna*), or any other Dhamma principle will be quite distinct and clear. However, if mindfulness and concentration are weak, there is bound to arise sloth and torpor. There will be a fondness for calm and happiness. Even if one wishes to contemplate the Three Common Characteristics (*Tilakkhaṇa*) or whatever, it won't be clear. Then the *Citta* will eventually turn into *Appanā-Jhāna* once more. This is to say that *Samādhi* has turned to *Jhāna*.

Next I shall explain the meanings of *Mano*, *Viññāna*, *Citta*.

*Mano* is the one that inclines, but not to the point of forming or taking hold of this and that for attachment. *Mano* is the heart that is still neutral, but with a slight inclination toward thinking, forming, and taking hold of a sense-object. It is the heart that is about to move from its place of origin.

*Viññāna* consists of two types. One functions at the time one is still alive. And the other is that which leads one to birth at its first moment. The latter is called *Paṭisonḍhi-Viññāna*. The first is the consciousness that arises through the sense-bases, mainly eye, ear, nose, tongue, touch, and heart. It is just a consciousness. *Viññāna* in the Five Aggregates is in this category.

*Paṭisonḍhi-Viññāna* is that which carries with it volitional activities and defilements (*Kamma* and *Kilesa*) to birth at its

first moment without the person being aware of it. It's the *Kamma* that makes up the *Patisonndhi-Viññāna* and leads one to birth.

*Citta* is the one that thinks and ponders. It forms and cooks up this and that. In other words, it may be called the behaviours of the heart. All of the behaviours of the heart, whether they be on the good side or the bad side, are called *Citta*.

For this matter, if one practises meditation until the *Citta* becomes one-pointed, that is, the *Citta* is there without any behaviour, then will one be able to distinguish the genuine heart from the behaviour of the heart without a need to ask for someone to explain them at all.

**Question 12** Than Dhammacando and I would like to ask Than Ācharn: if the *Citta* reaches the state of *Jhāna*, will there be any defilement left? Or, if there are still defilements left, will they be more or less hidden and inactive?

**Answer 12** The coarse defilements may be rid of completely, but the subtle defilements may be integrated or sink down. This is similar to one falling asleep. He may not think or work, yet his work is not finished.

**Question 13** May I ask Than Ācharn about the last Vassa season in which I saw the body disintegrated. And then I also had a mental image of bones burning to dust. When I lay down

to sleep, I saw a mental image of the head bone without skin. Then I saw them disintegrated into the four elements, the air element, water element, fire element, and soil element.

**Answer 13** This is an outcome of *Jhāna*. It's *Jhāna*, not *Vipassanā*. You are keen on this. I must admit. Good. Some train themselves by concentrating on a certain aspect of loathsomeness, such as the skeleton and many other things. But some do not have to concentrate. When coming to that point, images arise on their own accord. They are mental images arising on their own. This is in the state of *Jhāna*. This is not wisdom yet, but it's good all right. It's something you can dwell upon and play with. If you are keen on it, it's good.

**Question 14** May I ask Than Āchāra this: at the time I was trying to approach *Vipassanā*, my teeth ached very badly. So I considered the pain. While I was considering the pain, I saw that the pain was going on its own accord. The heart was another thing apart. After I'd experienced this, I could not go to sleep. I was pleased to see that the heart (*Citta*) and the feeling (*Vedanā*) were apart.

**Answer 14** That's not true *Vipassanā* yet. Nevertheless, it was good for you to see that. You concentrated on the feeling because your power of *Samatha* was strong. That's why the heart and the feeling could be separated automatically. The

feeling is one thing; the heart is another. If we continue to concentrate on this until it becomes *Vipassanā*, it won't be that way. We will simply see the arising and falling, that's all. We will see it neither as "we" nor "they," not as anything at all. Everything including the feeling arises and falls, arises and falls; this is an attainment of *Vipassanā*. In the middle of the last Vassa Season, I wanted to advise you to consider life by means of *Vipassanā*, but it was impossible because you were just beginning to train yourself and we had not enough opportunity to talk. Now that we have this opportunity, I would rather that you don't go back to Indonesia at this time.

**Question 15** I would like to ask Than Āchārn this: one month after the Vassa season, I considered the Five Aggregates. I saw the Five Aggregates of the past, future, and present arise and fall, arise and fall continuously that way. There was no one who could manipulate it or control it. The *Citta* did not even have anything to do with it or attaching to it.

**Answer 15** If you consider yourself that way, then it is *Vipassanā*. *Vipassanā* must consider these Five Aggregates. When they arise, they arise from the four elements. When they fall back into the four elements, going back and forth like this on their own accord. There is no self, no identity, no "we," no "they." There is nothing substantial. That which we hold as "we" or "they" is so only by designation and by our attachment to it. As a matter of fact, it does not have any feeling for our

attachment. *Anatta* does not mean “not having any self”: there is a self all right, but there is nothing substantial. So we let go of the self (*Atta*), letting it be *Atta* on its own accord. This is *Vipassanā*.

**Question 16** May I ask Than Āchārn this: I tried to train myself in mindfulness. While I was sweeping, I saw the body sweeping. The *Citta* was apart. I swept for an hour and a half. I was not tired. So it was with going out for food-offering. While I was walking for food-offering, I saw the body trotting along, but the *Citta* was a different part. I trained myself this way.

**Answer 16** That's good. It's good that you have trained yourself that way. The Teacher talks of Foundations of mindfulness (*Sati - patthāna*). To see is just a matter of seeing. The body is just the body. Here we are not yet speaking of the feeling (*Vedanā*). We shall speak of the body first. The body is just the body, not an animal, not a human being, not a self, not we, not they. For the self, what is the self? I don't know. It only exists like that; it only behaves like that. And the *Citta* sees it. If you could train the mindfulness to see it this way, it would be very good indeed. But at the moment, you were still at the stage of training in mindfulness, not yet up to an attainment of wisdom in *Vipassanā*. Train yourself more in mindfulness, wisdom in *Vipassanā* will arise on its own accord. When wisdom from *Vipassanā* arises, it will be capable of seeing in all directions, everything. It will see both the arising and falling as has been explained earlier. This is then wisdom in *Vipassanā*.

**Question 17** May I ask Than Ācharn this: in training myself in mindfulness, I tried to contemplate the heart itself. It's as if I had seen something arising, a living thing. Then it disappeared. It was an image, alive. Then it disappeared. I had the same experience with feeling (*Vedanā*), ideation (*Saññā*), and volitional formation (*Saṅkhāra*). Each arose and disappeared: it was transient, not substantial.

**Answer 17** That's it. If we train ourselves perfectly in mindfulness, an insight into the Three Common Characteristics will arise on its own accord. This is to say the transitory nature of life will be automatically inculcated in our insight. This is because our mindfulness is strong enough. Whenever there is a perfect mindfulness, an insight will arise by itself. We should train ourselves this way all the time. If we don't get attached to whatever we see, we will be able to lay it down. There will be no attachment in ourselves. Since we don't have any attachment in ourselves, how can suffering ever take place?

**Question 18** May I tell Than Acharn this: at the time I meditated, there were loud noises. I heard the noises, but the heart did not get involved in the noises. The noises were one thing; the heart was another thing apart. Those noises did not bother the heart.

**Answer 18** As long as we are still alive, we will continue to be conscious of various sense-objects. If we do not get

attached to them, they will simply pass by. This way of practice is better than a useless attainment of calm, which sometimes leads to blankness and torpor.

**Question 19** May I tell Than Ācharn this : I contemplated myself and saw it composed of the four elements, that's all. It arose and fell. The *Citta* with its volitional aggregate contributed to various formations, and then it fell. It's transitory also. Then there was left only the *Citta*, the knower. Then it also fell. There was nothing. There was left only emptiness.

**Answer 19** Our body is a volitional formation (*Saṅkhāra*). It's called *Rūpa-Saṅkhāra* (material formation). The *Citta* or the heart that contributes to the formation is called *Nāma-Saṅkhāra* (mental formation). All formations go through arisings and fallings all the time. One, who comes to consider the formations and see their arisings and fallings as they really are, being not attached to those formations not holding them as the self, not clinging to anything, is left with the knower, illuminated, and solely with oneself. Then this knower arises and falls just the same. So there is nothing substantial.

**Question 20** May I tell Than Ācharn this : I considered the formations, seeing them arise and fall. Then it's empty again.

**Answer 20** That's it. It's as I explained just now. Since life is still functioning, the nerves or the cells do their job. When

we have considered and seen that the various formations are not substantial, we are only the watcher. Imagine that we are watching a movie.

**Question 21** May I tell Than Acharn this: Now ordinarily, when I look at friends and people walking here and there, I see them all transient. Sometimes I see just skeletons. I don't know where the humans are gone. The *Citta* does not get involved with anybody or anything at all.

**Answer 21** It has to be that way. That is, we see the transiency, the unsatisfactoriness, and the selflessness (*Aniccam, Dukkham, Anatta*). Things go through all of these conditions. As we see these distinctly, we shall not be attached to anything. But, if we are not yet keen, we shall be carried away by whatever we see. This can become an attachment without our awareness.

**Question 22** May I ask Than Acharn as to what I should do next, since I have seen the transient nature of everything. The Five Aggregates are transient also.

**Answer 22** In concentration, if we concentrate on something to see its transiency, unsatisfactoriness, and selflessness, we will sooner or later see them. But this is under the condition of *Jhāna*. However, if the state of one-pointedness were to yield insight, we will perceive the three Common Characteristics all at the same time. And the consequence will be that the heart becomes detached from everything. Then we will be free from care. We will be illuminated in all places.

It's good that we have conversed. I would like to give a guideline to the practice of calm meditation. If you do not understand the way you'll be walking or practising, you will have a tendency to turn backward, or else you might go wrong. Whether to progress or to fall aback depends on this, on whether or not one understands the way to practise. In the practice, you cannot get away from the principle of *Samatha* and *Vipassanā*. The Teacher explains *Samatha* and then *Vipassanā*. This is the most important principle in meditation practice. Theoretically speaking, the Teacher speaks of *Samatha* plainly like this: *Samatha* is calm; *Vipassanā* is to know the truth as it really is. However, when we actually come down to practice, *Jhāna* is to concentrate so that the *Citta* becomes absorbed in one object, whereas *Samādhi* is to make the *Citta* watch and consider one particular sense-object. Both aim at one-pointedness. This is *Samatha*. The difference in the doing and the taste is: *Jhāna* just concentrates, while *Samādhi* concentrates and considers. But both aim at one-pointedness. In *Jhāna*, there may appear mental images, to which one gets satisfied and attached. However, in *Samādhi* one acquires true and clear knowledge. Sometimes there might appear mental images, but one does not become attached to them, being freed by insight into the Three Common Characteristics. In other words, *Jhāna* belongs to the mundane. *Samādhi* can lead to the Noble Path.

**Question 23** I heard some say that there was no need to practise *Samatha*. It was enough to practise *Vipassanā*. *Samatha* gave one only occasional calmness. It could not lead one to

the Path nor the goal in *Nibbāna*. But I think that *Samatha* is a very important base. I would like to know what is correct.

**Answer 23** There are many meditators here in Thailand who think that way. That is, they claim that *Samatha* is not necessary. One must practise only *Vipassanā*. To them there is even no need to observe the precepts. They point out that one reaches the Path and achieves the goal in *Nibbāna* through wisdom. For this they refer to the saying: *Pāñña Ya Pārisudāsati*, meaning, **One Becomes Pure Because of Wisdom**. Here they forget another principle. When one becomes ordained, the *Upajjhāya* will have to teach one before anything else that: *Sīlāparibhāvito Samādhi Mahāṅgalo hoti Mahānisamsa*, **one who progresses well in the Precepts has One - Pointedness as One's Merit;** *Samādhiparibhāvītā Paññā Mahāṅgalā hoti Mahāni Samṣā* **One who progresses well in One-Pointedness has wisdom as One's Merit.** Then the Teacher explains the consequence. When one progresses well in wisdom, one will reach liberation, being free from all defilements. This is it. Those who explain or those who think that *Samādhi* is not necessary are the ones who have not yet reached *Samādhi*. That's why they cannot see the merit of *Samādhi*. Those who have attained *Samādhi* will never speak against it. Or else, those who speak against it might have attained *Samādhi*, but have not yet acquired Wisdom. Since they are not successful with it, they may claim that the principle is wrong. This is a personal defilement.

**Question 24** I had an experience like this: when I meditated and became firmly concentrated on a particular sense-object, I was all illuminated and was filled with joy. Sometimes I could not sleep for two or three days. Sometimes my mindfulness was not that full, but I was conscious enough of the various sense-objects that came through the six senses, but I caught it right away that those were subject to the Three Common Characteristics. Once I caught on, I became indifferent. I don't know what I'm supposed to react to that experience.

**Answer 24** That experience was good enough in that you realized it yourself. No need to make it otherwise. Let it go in whichever way it will, that's all. The only thing you need to do is to practise until you are keen on it. Be observant of that situation so that you see: because you have set your mindfulness in such and such a degree, you then earn such and such result, or, because your mindfulness is weak, so you come to earn such and such result. After that if you wish to conduce it whichever way, you may be able to do so. Then whatever is good or bad, right or wrong, you will realize it yourself.

**Question 25** May I ask Than Āchārn this: in meditating, when the *Citta* became absorbed in a particular sense-object, I felt calm and happy and satisfied with that object. I didn't want to consider anything, thinking that that was good enough. At times the *Citta* dropped into *Bhavaṅga* and shut off. When I came to, I felt that I had not been fully calm nor happy. But, when I looked at anything, I had a strange feeling: I tended to become grave and bored, I felt this way often. What am I supposed to do? Should I let it be that way?

**Answer 25** Never mind. Whatever it is, no need for us to rearrange or correct it. It's actually impossible to rearrange or correct it. When we have trained the *Citta* to that point, whenever anything takes place on its own accord, our only duty is to make ourselves keen on catching up with it and on gaining insight into it. Don't get carried away and don't take hold of it seriously, that's all. I've already explained to you, but I would like to add that, when the *Citta* drops into *Bhavaṅga* and shuts off, turning to enjoy the happiness and joy within the internal Aggregates, this means *the Citta becomes enraptured within the Jhāna state*. When the *Citta* (still in *Samādhi*) comes out of *Bhavaṅga* to be in contact with the external Aggregates as it used to, it will be capable of perceiving *Dhamma*, that is, seeing everything as subject to the Three Common Characteristics. Principally speaking, this means that wisdom as derived from *Samadhi* is the Path of Righteousness (*Magga*). It will lead one to perceive the various defilements until one is able to leave them. If both *Jhāna* and *Samādhi* go hand in hand like that, it's as a person working without rest and won't be able to work at all. Yet, if one takes a rest too long, one won't be able to progress in one's work.

**Question 26** Sometimes when the *Citta* had attained one-pointedness, I concentrated and considered the arisings and fallings. But, by and by I got bored, so I tended to turn to calm and drop into *Bhavaṅga*.

**Answer 26** This is as I always explain to you. The *Citta* becomes attached to *Jhāna* and enjoys the happiness and calm. Since you didn't get a clear vision of the arisings and fallings you're considering, you lapsed into the state of calm again. Therefore, if we don't want to lapse into the state of calm and happiness, wanting especially to gain insight from consideration, we must try to consider the arising and falling of every movement. When they are clear to our heart, we will be delighted and joyful with our doing.

**Question 27** May I ask Than Āchārn this : at the time I was in Indonesia, living in the forest, there was an incident in my meditation practice. That is, my blood began to flow from the tip of my toes upward and it shot upward higher and higher, but I took hold of mindfulness and told myself that everybody would die eventually. Every creature had to die just the same. There's nothing that did not die. The body belonged to the soil element, the water element, the air element, and the fire element. This was so until the *Citta* shot out of the body and saw that the body was the soil element, the water element, the air element, the fire element. I sat from one morning to the following morning. At the time my *Citta* left the body, I felt that I had died, but when the *Citta* returned to the body once more I began to feel conscious from the forehead down to the eyes, the nose, the mouth, and to every part of the body. At first I was not able to move. When I wanted to speak, I could hardly do so. What made it that way ?

**Answer 27** These are the characteristics of the *Citta* in *Bhavaṅga* state. They are the same things experienced by one entering *Nirodha-Samāpatti* state, except that the one who enters the *Nirodha-Samāpatti* state proceeds step by step from the first *Jhāna*, second *Jhāna*...up to *Nevasaññā-nāsaññāyatana* and then to the *Nirodha-Samāpatti*. At the time he is entering the *Nirodha-Samāpatti*, he will have to determine as to how long and at what time he will come out of it. The experiences of the two situations are alike, but yours differed in that you did not know the stages or the planes. You did not know the levels or the parts. The *Citta* was just getting focused and turned off. This is called the *Citta in Bhavaṅga*. And most of us have this type of experience, as those who practise are likely to say that the *Citta* turns off and becomes completely quiet. But, if it be conditioned by the strength and courage of one's mental power, it will last long. Mostly it does not last long, just a little while and then the *Citta* will turn on again. Therefore, this is the character of *Bhavaṅga* in the *Jhāna* state. Even though the *Citta* there is sensitive and refined, it still is not constituted by wisdom. So it is not yet capable of perceiving the Three Common Characteristics. As a result, when the *Citta* comes out of *Bhavaṅga*, one may experience a fear of death.

**Question 28** Three months after that I had another experience. That is, I was meditating I don't know for how many nights and days, because at that time I did not pay attention to time. After I came back to consciousness, I found my whole body full of dirt and all stained by water. There were also fragments of woods

all around the place where I sat. This indicated that there had been a flood. After that I had another experience. That is, I could perceive my father and my mother in sexual communion, with the sperm mixing with the egg. Then there was light. The feeling at the time told me that that was the conception of my *Viññāna* (consciousness). They all joined together and spun around until they came to a stop. Then there appeared a form, a tiny form which grew up gradually until it became myself.

**Answer 28** That's strange. That was a mental image which took place so that you could consider *Jāti*, birth. Conception was in such and such a manner. It was so that you could consider, that's it, so that you could see it clearly that it had such and such characteristics. That was all, nothing else. As for the flood, that really called for a great deal of sympathy. It was not known how long the flood lasted. It could be hours or days; there was nothing to measure them.

**Question 29** I felt it was very strange for me to perceive the manner of conception because I had for some time wanted to know how man was born and obtained life. When it was this way, I wished to find a teacher who could guide me in my practice. After I had this experience, I came to consider my body, starting from the brain, the skull down to the tip of my toes. Each part that I considered became more and more distinct, from the outside to the inside, for example, from the skin

deep down there were the flesh, the blood and so on and so forth. And deeper still there I found various body organs, sir. As I was looking at them, it was as if I had been seeing them with these physical eyes. I considered each part slowly one after another. Sometimes one image appeared very long, sometimes not very long. It could be five minutes or more. When I turned the *Sati* (mindfulness) to watch each part of the body, I fell to wonder as to why all these happened. And at that time I had no teacher and I had not yet professed Buddhism. If I had at that time studied more of Buddhism, or, if I had professed Buddhism and had had teachers to guide me as I have you today I would have been very happy and the level of my *Citta* would have been much higher.

[*Phra Ācharn* asked whether this day he could still see each of the parts as distinctly as before. *Phra Sudhammo* replied that he still considered the various parts of the body and they were distinct indeed. Sometimes while he was considering the body, the *Citta* flashed to other mental objects of the past and the future. Then he searched as to their causes and consequences, so that he was able to see their transitory nature. Consequently when *Than Ācharn* suggested that he considered the rising and falling, he followed the suggestion.]

**Answer 29** This is correct I suggest that you consider the rising and falling. This means to consider the rising and falling of your very body. Before, you considered each part

separately. This is the same. We consider the internal side of ourselves in the same way as we consider the external. Whether it be a material object or a mental object that shows up within the *Citta*, we should consider it in such a way as to see its arising and falling.

What I would like to remind you is this: *whenever you consider the arising and falling, if the vision is not clear, you should stop doing so. You should then come back to the practice toward calm once more. That is, you should turn to concentrate on a particular part of the body that used to bring you calm. Do so until you have enough strength. Now while you are concentrating, if you gain enough strength from the calm, you may perceive the arising and falling clearly right then and there.* If this does not occur automatically, you observe it yourself. To gain enough strength is to be firm in one particular sense-object. Try it this way, you may find that you progress steadily and properly in your practice of meditation.

Moreover, in practising *Samatha*, if you concentrate with too much tenacity, you might come across various reactions, such as headaches and pains around the eyeballs and at the chest. Therefore, we should relax and let the *Citta* keep pace with the sense-objects. What we have to do is to watch its manner, to see whether it falls to a liking, a loving, an attachment, or a hatred, anger, a dislike, or, whether it is happy or unhappy. If we can do this, the *Citta* will slow down until it finally comes to rest in a focus.

**Question 30** Once in Bangkok, I was invited into a home together with friends. A friend wanted to tease me or what I don't know : he told me that that girl was pretty. When I looked at her, I saw the girl all deprived of her skin. I could see her all through. There appeared only the skeleton. After a while my friend touched me. I came back to myself. Goodness ! I realized there I was with my friend in the house.

**Answer 30** That you perceived the loathsomeness or parts of the body was not *Vipassanā* yet. That was still in the *Samatha* stage, called *Patibhāga-nimitta*. Nevertheless, that's good. Even if it was still *Samatha*, in the stage of *Patibhāga-nimitta*, it was something you could make use of. It was the best tool, something to play with, to dwell on. As to what I explained to you beforehand : after we have concentrated until we can bring ourselves to focus upon one sense-object, until we have a perfect *Sati* (mindfulness), we may come out of that concentration. After that whatever we see or whatever we hear, we will perceive it in the light of the Three Common Characteristics, namely *Aniccam*, *Dukham*, *Anattā*. Did this ever occur to you ?

**Question 31** Yes, it did.

**Answer 31** That is good. I would like you to practise a great deal along these two lines. Don't neglect any. Practise both in parallel. As I said : if *Vipassanā* does not come out clearly, leave it awhile. Go back to concentrate along the *Samatha* line, practise *Samatha*. It's all right if you wish to concentrate conceptualistically in the *Patibhāga* style, or to analyse bits and pieces of the internal organs so that you perceive their ills and

loathsomeness, or to break yourself up into the four elements, soil, water, fire, air. All these are all right. Let the *Citta* dwell on them. When it dwells on them, it will eventually lay them down. Then it will drop into *Bhavaṅga*. When it withdraws, it may become *Vipassanā* as I have already explained to you.

*In the practice of meditation, if one does not understand what is Samatha, what is Vipassanā, one may easily degenerate. Sometimes one just experiences, the Patibhāga-nimitta from pure Samatha, for example, seeing a corpse, seeing one's own body dissolved into the four elements, or seeing everything in this world as the four elements. Then he misunderstands that he has achieved Vipassanā. As a result, he is carried away and becomes attached to that opinion. Sometimes Vipassanā did take place, that is, one considers and sees oneself and the rest, plus everything else in the world, subject to arising and falling. But, if one does not see the nature of suffering and selflessness at the same time, one may misunderstand and get carried away by one's own opinion without searching into the cause of such arising and falling. If one is not yet capable of detachment, one is still bound to degeneration.*

*Therefore, you who are practising should try to practise until you are keen on both Samatha and Vipassanā. Then should you carefully observe the differences between both. Don't you mix them up, or you will be at false and eventually you may degenerate from the goodness that is difficult to perform. And that will indeed be quite a shame.*

**Phra James Dhammacando**

**Age 26**

**Vassa Age 2**

*His lay name was James Chadbourne. He was an American. He graduated from a university and used to work in several places. Since he felt that man's life was of no substance, he decided to become ordained as a novice in Buddhism. He practised meditation with Phra Āchārn Ban at Wat Doi Dhamma Chedi for one Vassa season. After that he journeyed to visit meditation masters in various places, but he felt that this kind of journey was not worth while.*

*Later he was ordained as a monk at Wat Bovorn Nives Vihāra, having Somdet Phra Yana Sangvorn as the Upajjhāya. Then he went to practise meditation with Phra Āchārn Thate at Wat Hin Mark Peng. After he had been trained and given some advices, he felt that they*

*were agreeable to his character. The heart that was used to being distracted became quiet so much so that he perceived impermanence of all things in the world. Thus he trained his heart, so as not to become entangled with the various sense-objects.*

**Question 1**      May I ask you this before I forget : before I came to study with you, *Than Ācharu*, my *Citta* was deep in tranquility. And you told me that it was the state of *Jhāna*. So I tried to maintain myself always in that state. I tried as hard as possible to keep watch of the *Citta* at every single mental moment. As for sleep, I tried to sleep less than four hours, but the more I tried to maintain the *Citta* at that level, the worse the *Citta* became.

Later I tried to strengthen my effort, but I did not use death as an object of contemplation as I used to. I put the heart itself as an object of contemplation for two days straight. After that my back began to ache. One day I went out for food offerings. I reflected as to the reason why my heart failed. Finally I came to a realization that I failed because I had too much covetousness in maintaining the *Citta* in the state which, I thought, was *Jhāna* state. Therefore, I decided to let go of that feeling. As a result, the *Citta* became lightened and I felt enraptured a great deal at the same time. And the backache was gone, too.

Later I began to contemplate death again, but I felt I did not obtain as good enough an appreciation as I used to. So I decided to give up death contemplation. I turned to consider the body by cutting the hand out and breaking it into pieces, slicing it. I tried to look for substance from these pieces, but I could not find any. I found only impermanence and change. Even though I had considered each and every part of the body, analysing it bit by bit, I could not find any substance either.

**Answer 1** That's good. That's a good device, very good device. You found it out yourself. That's very good.

**Question 2** After that I began to contemplate impermanence. I did so upon waking up, during meditation, while going out for food offerings, partaking of foods, and also while doing other kinds of routine work. Certainly I saw only changes. One day while I was going out for food offerings, I came to think of an object I should be concentrating in my meditation. I decided to concentrate on the heart and tried to find permanence in it. I considered it on the basis of the Five Aggregates. I tried to consider it from every angle, but I could not find anything substantial, not a single thing. Finally I turned around to see who was the one to consider impermanence. I tried to watch the one who did the thinking. My *Citta* began to extend deep down, down, until I began to feel that all the thoughts that were taking place could be lumped together into one piece or chunk, and I saw that it had no substance at all.

**Answer 2** That's right. In working toward an insight so as to gain perception of the Three Common Characteristics, one has to focus on the Five Aggregates. Once one gets a clear perception of the nature of the Five Aggregates, one sees the same nature in other things.

**Question 3** Later I could separate the one who watched the Five Aggregates from the Five Aggregates. They were not the same person. Whenever I watched an aggregate, that particular aggregate would disappear.

**Answer 3** You're right in separating the one who watched the Aggregates from the Aggregates, otherwise you would have mistaken the Aggregates for the self or the self for the Aggregates. May you contemplate along that line always and at all times. Then will you realize that the Five Aggregates are not outside the self (that is, the *Citta* or the heart); neither are they within the self. Since there are the heart and the body, so there are the Five Aggregates. When one is capable of separating the one who considers the Aggregates from the Aggregates so that one realizes the Five Aggregates as subject to the Three Common Characteristics, one will not be lured to become attached to them, nor to consider them as the self or not the self. One will see the Five Aggregates only in terms of the Five Aggregates. Even the one who considers the Five Aggregates as the Three Common Characteristics is subject to the Three Common Characteristics.

**Question 4** Your explanations are very clear to me. I have tried to contemplate and search for the permanence of the Five Aggregates, but I have not been able to find it. Whenever I contemplated, I found always the impermanence of the Five Aggregates. And I got so wrapped up in this kind of contemplation.

**Answer 4** Did you catch on any principle? What did you consider as the principle of your practice?

**Question 5** I have not been able to work up to that point, sir.

**Answer 5** As I have explained to you just now, you should consider the Five Aggregates in terms of the Three Common Characteristics. This is one thing. Then should you perceive the one who is the considerer of the Five Aggregates so that one sees them as subject to the Three Common Characteristics. This is another thing. You should practise this way until you become keen. Don't be anxious to know whether anything is going to come out of it.

**Question 6** Sometimes I watched my feeling until that feeling uttered exclamations, one word after another. And I took watch of just one word. But as soon as I left that particular word, I got startled and had to open my eyes right away.

**Answer 6** The fact that you were attentive to one object means that you achieved one-pointedness: the *Citta* or the

heart is steady on just one sense-object. The fact that you uttered something bit by bit, or, the fact that you uttered exclamations or whatever, shows very clearly that whatever arose, arose really from this one and only *Citta*. Having realized it this way, don't you ever become attached. Leave it and then turn to watch only the *Citta* which acts as the knower or considerer. In the end, the state of One-Pointedness-in-a-Sense-Object (*Ekaggatā-ramana*) will dissolve into the state of One-Pointedness-of-the-Heart (*Ekaggatā-Citta*). There is then void and equanimity. The fact that you got startled and opened your eyes means that the heart or the *Citta* withdrew from one-pointedness of the heart.

**Question 7** After getting startled so that I had to open my eyes, thoughts began to pop up again. So I came to think that all were results of Ignorance (*Avijjā*). Then those thoughts began to weaken, but as soon as I became less mindful of Ignorance, a variety of thoughts popped up again.

**Answer 7** This makes it quite clear that in the state of Absorption (*Jhāna*) the heart (*Citta*) is refined (that is, reaching the passive stage of *Bhavaṅga*), yet without Wisdom (*Paññā*). Therefore, when the *Citta* arose from *Bhavaṅga*, various thoughts and sense-objects popped up. The more you were interested in them, the more they multiplied themselves. Nevertheless, the *Citta* was still refined enough to make you capable of knowing that all were results of Ignorance. Yet you were not able to pull yourself out of Ignorance. You just knew that such was Ignorance. Even so, that was useful in weakening the various

thoughts that were arising. As soon as you became less mindful of the role of Ignorance, the *Citta* that was void of Wisdom turned into Ignorance itself. As a result, the thoughts that had already been infiltrated by Ignorance marched out in a parade.

**Question 8** The various thoughts and the Five Aggregates are a part of the heart. And the mindfulness (*Sati*) that watches the heart is another part. These Five Aggregates come out of the original heart. When one is capable of leaving the Five Aggregates, is it possible to say that the heart and mindfulness join together and become one ?

**Answer 8** The point is, after we have practised meditation until we experience a complete nothingness, there will be only the heart that is neutral, no thoughts, no groping whatsoever. There will appear enlightenment all by itself. This is the original heart. Now, since the Five Aggregates are responsible for driving the heart from its original state, we should consider them in such a way that we may see their Impermanence, Suffering, and Non-Self. That is, to come down to the Three Common Characteristics. Then we will not become attached to the Five Aggregates. Even if anything were to appear, one should acknowledge the appearance as it is. The point is, one must know that the appearance is not the heart itself. That is, the original heart contains nothing at all, void and neutral. As long as there are the Aggregates, all these mental activities have to take place.

**Question 9** Once after my heart had calmed down, there appeared a vision. In the vision, I went back home and met my adopted father. I told my adopted father that there was nothing permanent in this world. I repeated this several times. After that I felt as if I had been in the universe. I saw a myriad of stars. I tried to find permanence in them, but I could not find any in the whole universe. Even in a single grain of sand, there was no permanence. Then I went back home again. I saw the house, the trees, and the dog that I once took care of. I saw my car, but whatever I saw I could not find permanence. Even the feeling that arose in the heart was not permanent.

**Answer 9** Knowledge that is illustrated by a vision like that has caused many a one who practises Dhamma to fall aback. I call it Knowledge (*Ñāna*) without Intuition (*Dassana*). With this, one is capable of seeing some aspects of the Three Common Characteristics. **If it were to be an insight (*Ñāna - Dassana*), one would conceive all three aspects of the Three Common Characteristics at the same time, at the same place.** The kind of knowledge you mentioned arose from Absorption (*Jhāna*): it may degenerate.

**Question 10** From the incident in which I saw my house and other things, I turned back to my thoughts, telling myself: “Oh! Don’t you ever pay attention to external things. It’s better to watch your own hearts”. As soon as I told myself to watch

my own heart, I felt as if I had gone back to my house. There I told my adopted father: "It's better to watch our own heart, better to watch our own heart." I kept repeating it.

**Answer 10** It's good that it happened that way, so that we would know the wonder of the heart. Those other than the practitioners of Dhamma would never have an experience like this. It's like falling and dreaming. **For those who practise meditation, this is a meditative vision, or to put it more complicated, it's the heart teaching the heart, or, Dhamma follows and repeatedly teaches the practitioner of Dhamma.** But what you experienced still fell in the visionary condition arising from Absorption (*Jhāna*) or knowledge arising thereof (*Ñāna*). You must use Wisdom to reconsider it, that is, after the heart (*Citta*) has withdrawn from that condition. This will then be useful, otherwise you will be attached to that condition again.

**Question 11** After I had told my father to watch his own heart, I turned back to watch myself once again. So I pulled out my heart to contemplate. I did the same with my liver, kidneys, and intestines. I pulled out every part of the body. And I saw only impermanence in all of them. Even my thought was not permanent. This went on until I got startled and opened my eyes.

**Answer 11** That's right. That principle of consideration was right. Your consideration along the line of *Vipassanā* (Insight) is getting keener. Even in the vision during the state of Absorption,

you made use of this Insight. Absorption (*Jhāna*), Tranquility (*Samatha*), Insight (*Vipassanā*), Supernormal Powers (*Abhiññā*), the Path (*Magga*) are interrelated within the practice of meditation. If one is not particularly observant, one may easily get confused. Also, this is understandable only among those who have undergone considerable practice. To others, it's as if we were piping to a buffalo, that's all. Let me just remind you that you should not manipulate anything to suit your desire. Let it be in accordance with its own condition. We are simply the one who acknowledges it as it is.

**Question 12** I have one thing I would like to ask you: you explained that the Five Aggregates were part of the Five Aggregates. When speaking of the heart, you spoke of two things together. I would like to know whether both mindfulness and the heart can be called *Mano* ?

**Answer 12** I usually say that when you first practise mindfulness, you must learn to follow and keep guard of the heart which is used to groping away in various directions. You should try to make it focus on one point. This is not yet *Mano*. **When mindfulness earns strength to the full, capable of controlling the heart so that it stops groping, that mindfulness would attain one-pointedness in a sense-object (*Ekaggatā - Ramana*) until it becomes a one-pointed heart (*Ekaggatā - Citta*). They join together and become neutral, void, and without volition: there is left only the knowing capacity. Here it is called **MANO**.**

**Question 13** I wonder why Than Sudhammo said he was able to separate the Heart (*Citta*) from the Form (*Rūpa*), the Heart from the Feeling (*Vedanā*), the Heart from Ideation (*Saññā*), and the heart from Volitional Activities (*Saṅkhāra*), but he did not speak of separating the Heart from consciousness (*Viññāna*). I wonder whether it is possible to separate the Heart from Consciousness ?

**Answer 13** There is no actual separation. The mental components are Feeling (*Vedanā*), Ideation (*Saññā*), Volitional Activities (*Saṅkhāra*), Consciousness (*Viññāna*), *Citta*, *Mano*. There is no actual separation. The Teacher only teaches us that we should acknowledge a sense-object in time whether it be a form or an ideation, without manipulating it. Once a sense-object reaches *Mano* (the state of perfect union between Consciousness and Mindfulness), it becomes tranquil or neutral by itself. To say that both are “separated” is simply a figurative language. In fact, there is no separation. Once one comes to acknowledge various happenings without manipulation, one will automatically lay them down. This is comparable to light: when light is present, there we also have heat and no darkness. We can see things all around, lots and lots of things. Once light disappears, everything else disappears. So those elements are not actually “separated”. The knower is only the one who distinguishes things, that’s all.

**Question 14** I would like to ask Than Āchārn this. When I started on meditating, I had a great deal of energy. I sat for

not very long when my heart would become calm. It happened like this every time. It's the same when I walked in meditation. I had a great deal of energy and it increased all the time until it reached its peak. The heart fell to calmness, but then it withdrew. Then the heart degenerated. However, when I started anew, the heart picked up more energy once again. I would like to know why it was that way.

**Answer 14** I use to mention several times that preference for happiness and calm in mere Absorption (*Jhāna*) goes without Wisdom (*Paññā*). This is because whatever you do, you aim at nothing but quietude. However, if you were to aim at Wisdom, you should try to acquire keenness, say, keenness in a contemplation of breathing. The word "keen" here does not mean that you are going to achieve the same result each time you practise. The meaning is that you are going to use all your mindfulness to consider its behaviour. You are going to learn how to lay your heart in a fine and proper position. Here is what is called "keen." It's not that once you start upon contemplating, you are going to dive right in. This is not the right kind of keenness. It's how we set on getting mindful or contemplating, how we lay our heart properly and finely so that it gradually becomes focused, that is important. **"Proper and Fine" here is something you know for yourself. No one can speak for you. No one can tell you. Neither can one remold it for you. Here I just tell you simply that when you practise you purify your heart this way, then the heart will be clear like that and it will become calm like this. In fact it is all one's own business. If you are**

**keen, you won't degenerate easily.** Calm and happiness are what all who practise meditation desire. Yet, Calm without Wisdom may degenerate. Once it degenerates, one is again driven by desire. This makes one further and further from the goal of calm and happiness. So one should lay down the desire and start on working toward calm once again.

**Question 15** I would like to ask you some more, sir. You said, to become deepened in the state of calm was a matter of Absorption (*Jhāna*). I felt that experiences of calm and one-pointedness at different times did not bring the same degree of happiness. Why was it that way?

**Answer 15** For everything that you get and for everything that you see, the first experience always gives you delight, joy, and a great deal of happiness. After you are used to it, the feeling began to wane.

**Question 16** I would like to ask Than Āchārn this: when the practice was going on well, my mindfulness was set on thoughts. I contemplated thoughts until they became distinct. I noticed thoughts arising every moment, but when the bell rang I still heard the bell. At the same time, thoughts appeared and they were also distinct. Sometimes I observed my Feelings (*Vedanā*). My mindfulness was then fixed on feelings. Sometimes I observed Ideation (*Saññā*), my mindfulness turned to Ideation. Then I contemplated thoughts. I would like to ask

whether the way I kept shifting my mindfulness was good or not. However, if the practice did not go on well, I did not get any flavour out of it. Then after that I contemplated pieces of my hands and body, but the heart could hardly get calm. So I also would like to ask whether it's good to set my mindfulness on such thoughts. Was it correct ?

**Answer 16** To set your mindfulness so that you could acknowledge each thought in time was good, but if you were to hear the bell ring at the same time, let it. Senses were there to sense things, let them do their function. It's all right as long as the heart did not take possession of the various sense-objects you mentioned. If you could practise up to this point, it's a wonder. That has to do with the abstract aspect. Now we come to the corporeal aspect. You said, you turned to contemplate your body, that is, contemplated chopping up your arms and legs, for example, but the heart could hardly turn calm. The reason was that you were not keen on contemplating the corporeal aspect. Nevertheless, you should practise until you are keen on both. This will be very good because both aspects are within yourself.

**Question 17** I would like to ask Than Āchārn : someone used to explain to me that the heart and the Five Aggregates are not the same. Is this correct ?

**Answer 17** The heart (*Citta; Viññāna*) is the abstract, that is, one of the four abstract qualities in the Five Aggregates.

The Five Aggregates consist of one corporeal and four abstract qualities. He does not understand the Five Aggregates. If he did, he would not have any problem in this matter.

**Question 18** I would like to ask you this. When the heart is not attached to anything, when it lays down everything, it is empty and equitable. I think that the state in which the heart is empty and equitable like this is certainly not the Five Aggregates, because the Five Aggregates consist of actions.

**Answer 18** In my opinion, the state of emptiness and equity is called the heart (that is, the state of neutrality). The heart is the chief of the Four Aggregates, namely the Feeling (*Vedanā*), Ideation (*Saññā*), Volitional Activities (*Saṅkhāra*), Consciousness (*Viññāna*). But, the heart is not classified as any of the Aggregates. The Four Aggregates are the behaviours of the heart. So they are called *Khandha* (Aggregates). The heart without behaviour is not classified as Aggregate.

**Question 19** I understand that one cannot choose between good and bad *Kamma*. One is going to be good or bad depending upon *Kamma* which influences the course of happenings.

**Answer 19** When the Teacher points out that *Kamma* is the classifier of beings, he refers to the past *Kamma* that contributes to the consequences. However, so far as the new *Kamma* or the new course of action is concerned, one can always choose

according to one's own will. If one were not able to choose between good and bad *Kamma*, one would have to remain the same all the time, just as the various species of trees, namely jackfruits and durians, for example. This is because trees have no heart. They have only life. At the same time, they are not capable of performing all of the three kinds of *Kamma* [physical, verbal, and mental—translator's note]. Nevertheless, man is capable of transforming the heartless plants and trees in whichever way he wishes. Man certainly can transform one's new course of actions at all times, but the point is only that once an action is completed, one is bound to reap its consequence. For example, if one performs actions which contribute to one's rebirth as an animal, one is bound to be reborn only in that form. He cannot just yet choose to be born in a human form.

**Question 20**      Where does one conserve one's past *Kamma* or actions ? For example, a person who used to practise meditation in his past lives, why doesn't he in this life pick up from where he left off in the past ? Why does he have to start all over again ? The person who once attained the stream-winning level (*Sotāpanna*), why is he reborn as an ordinary worldly man ?

**Answer 20**      A living person performs his actions mentally, physically, and verbally. In death, he is left with only the mental actions. All three types of actions that he performs while living will be incorporated into the mental asset (*Mano-Kamma*). The heart is the conserver of the *Kamma*. When the heart

triggers off another birth, the physical make-up is bound to be the reflection of the heart. If the heart is crippled, the physique is going to be the same.

**You asked why we had to start learning all over again. Why didn't we pick up where we left off? The answer is, it is because there is a breaking off between the physical and verbal actions of the past life and this life. So with each new birth, we have to begin anew. Nevertheless, there is a good advantage in that the heart still conserves the past *Kamma*. Even though it is still incapable of producing the reflections of the past *Kamma*, it will be capable of doing so more readily and easily after it has learned how to correspond the physical and verbal actions with the conserved *Kamma*.**

It is like a musician. Even if he has changed his profession to something else, for whatever reason, he will still recognize the pieces of music that he used to be familiar. He will recognize right away what they are, how they are supposed to be performed rhythmically or stylistically, what is right and what is wrong, and so on. Even if he were to leave his music profession for a very long time, once he were to relearn, he would pick it up much more quickly than those who have not had any previous experience. This is also true with the practitioner of virtue. If he still has to go through rebirths, he will be able to understand and follow the path of virtues quickly and easily once he receives good advice and teachings.

**Phra David Pannacaro**

**Age 39**

**Vassa Age 2**

*His lay name was David Tyler. He was an Australian. He graduated with a bachelor's degree in pharmacy from the University of Adelaide, plus another bachelor's degree in sciences from the University of Melbourne. He used to work as a pharmacist and a scientist and used to live in a self-help settlement. He had been interested in meditation for a very long time, but did not know with whom to study. In the years 1973, he met Phra Khantipalo in Australia. He received the first meditation lesson, but his practice was not yet successful.*

*In the same year, he went to see Phra Āchārn Bunyarit, a Thai monk who came to Rumbimby. He received very simple instructions and understood them quite clearly. So he decided to come to Thailand. He stayed at Wat Bovorn Nives for two months. He also went to visit a number of*

*forest monasteries for meditation. Then he decided to enter monkhood and spend a Vassa season at Wat Wang Nam Mog, which was an extension of Wat Hin Mark Peng, under the direction of Phra Ācharn Thate.*

*Each time he started on meditating, he would keep watch of the heart (Citta). As a consequence, he felt that he was unable to progress to the high levels of Absorption (Jhāna). However, from the first experiences in meditation he could get rid of most of that feeling and he began to get a better understanding of the Buddha, because sometimes he obtained answers from his own heart at the time of meditation. This helped to increase his interest and confidence in the practice of meditation.*

*He asked Phra Ācharn Thate the following questions:*

**Question 1**      Than Acharn Bunyarit taught me to practise mindfulness of breathing, that is, to be mindful of the breathing in and out. He explained Dhamma in short sentences. He told me not to take hold of anything: I should be left only with mindfulness. I have been following this principle up to now.

*[Phra Ācharn Thate did not have any answer to that. He went on to ask whether he had made any progress from the time he came to stay at Wat Wang Nam Mog. Phra Paññācaro responded that his heart had turned much calmer. He admitted that he still had some desire, especially for purification of the precepts (Sīla). Nevertheless, he was trying to get rid of anxiety.]*

**Answer 1**      It's good that you have tried. Whichever way that contributed to your success in getting rid of your desirous feelings is good. You should practise so that you become keen. You must understand that sense-objects that come in through the six doors of the sense are dangerous to our peace. So you must shake them out and try to keep calm as much as you can.

**Question 2** I have not been able to maintain calm all the time, but I let it develop regularly and spontaneously. When thoughts popped into my head, I tried to shake them off and I became calm once more. But I could not conserve it all the time. Sometimes memories bothered me, but I also tried to get rid of them. This has been my experience so far.

**Answer 2** That's natural enough. In meditation, you are bound to encounter and fight various sense-objects, something of the present and something of the past. Something of the past surges; this is called *Saññā*. We must fight it. **In fighting, if we do not have calmness as something to hold on to, we will only be defeated.** Therefore, you must be able to maintain the state of calm. If you feel you are not able to fight off whatever sense-object, you should return to the state of calm. **That is, you must be successful in conserving SAMĀDHI.** Don't think only of fighting. If you have enough energy, continue fighting. But, if you are not strong enough, return to calm. Try to do it this way.

**Question 3** From the time I left Wat Bovorn and came to stay at Wang Nam Mog, I had the most important and strangest experience. Once I could experience the state of complete calmness. That is, I felt all empty. And sometimes a thought arose. It appeared as if it had a form, but it then disappeared. And I had no experience like that any more, because as a monk I still had a problem in adjusting myself. At the same time I also had to fight off old memories, but I could not do it as well as that one time.

**Answer 3** That happened on its own accord, on its own accord. No matter how you tried, you could not make it that way. Whenever our Mindfulness and One-Pointedness (*Sati* and *Samādhi*) and Wisdom (*Paññā*) are balanced and come in conjunction, there will arise calm and knowledge on their own accord, without our intention along with it. They cannot be dressed up. They arise on their own accord. All we need to do is to train the heart (*Citta*) so that it lays down all attachments and becomes one-pointed. You said it's as if you had seen a form. That was the behaviour of the *Citta*. The *Citta* itself has no form, nothing. Since we came to realize its true nature, it had to show itself in material form. Actually that was the behaviour of the *Citta*, that's all. If we were to consider it wisely, we would see that the image was the same as the behaviour of the *Citta*. That's why we should pay attention to the *Citta*. If we can control it, we can perceive everything that is its consequences. Then we will be capable of cleaning the *Citta*.

**Question 4** Yes, I tried to consider it that way, that the heart was one thing and the behaviour of the heart was the other. I tried to make myself realize that this was the heart, this was the behaviour of the heart. But, I was not able to reach the point I wanted. I also tried to use the method of Than Bunyarit, but I was not able to realize it fully. Also, I had problems in communicating even through the English translations. Therefore, this might have been the reason why I could not progress fast enough in my practice. The most important thing to me is to get advices from you, sir.

**Answer 4** Actually from the way you had practised until you reached the state of calm shows that you did experience the pure *Citta*. The problem is, you did not realize that it was the *Citta*, thinking that there must have been a *Citta* beyond that. So you could not understand it. The way you come to talk to me here is in itself a language lesson. You are too anxious about language and customs.

**Question 5** Another experience is, when the *Citta* is empty, the sounds of birds or trees felt like waves. Sometimes they were soft, but sometimes they were strong and loud. When the sounds stopped, there appeared like big waves, sir, with lines and lines like those on the radar. After that they disappeared. Very strange, sir.

**Answer 5** That's all right. That is, whenever we see the pure *Citta*, it is calm. This is its genuine quality. Once it is hit by a sense-object, it wavers, wavers without changing the mood. If the mood is changed, it will reach out. For you, you only wavered, but did not change the mood. The *Citta* is a very sensitive and delicate thing. So even though it was hit by a tiny object, you felt as if it had been hit by a big one.

**Question 6** The fact that I felt calm and empty was one incident. There was another incident similar to that, sir. When I reached the state of calm, I was able to get rid of thoughts, but I could not get rid of the breathing consciousness. I was all the more conscious of the breathing. And from your advice,

sir, you told me to catch the one that watched the breathing, not the breathing itself. So I tried. I tried to catch the one that watched the breathing. And I found something much to my wonder. At first there were a great many flurries of thoughts, which I could get rid of once in a while. Finally I could get rid of them completely. After that I returned to watch the heart. At that time I felt as if I had two hearts, one at the very heart, the other at the brain, sir. The breathing went in and out regularly. I can only say that both the heart at the brain and the heart at the very heart turned out to be one, and I felt mindful all the time.

**Answer 6** It was from our memory, from our former learning, that told us that the brain was our chief command, that the brain was actually the heart. However, when we come to practise meditation in Buddhism, we don't talk of the brain. We talk of the heart as the watcher of the breathing. We concentrate on this. But when you came to practise, your memory still reminded you that the brain was the chief commander. That's why you encountered the bipartite experience. Nevertheless, when the *Citta* became strong enough, the two parts were incorporated into one and thus the old memory disappeared.

**Question 7** I would like to tell you about my feelings concerning the two hearts, one at the very heart itself and the other at the brain above. I watched that feeling and found out that it became cooler and cooler. I felt like that all over my body. There was also another heart that had that feeling, sir.

**Answer 7** The heart has no special dwelling. It is wherever we pay attention. Now, if we are not rid of old attachments, it appears in both places. Whenever we look at the heart, it's at the heart ; whenever we look at the brain, it's at the brain. Just pay no attention to where you think it should be. Then it will become one -pointed and will exist as a separate entity.

**Question 8** This is similar to question number 7. Here I would like to talk about on emptiness of the *Citta*, whereas in question number 7 I talked about the feelings and thoughts. Now in question number 8 I will say that even if there were more than two hearts, they were separated.

**Answer 8** You were uncertain because you were not calm enough. That is, you were still attached to old memories. If you had been rid of attachments, you would not have encountered such an experience. If the *Citta* were to be completely focused, it would be empty and exist as a separate entity. It would be impossible to point out its position, whether it be the breath or any particular part of the body. It's empty and exists as a separate entity by itself. Therefore, even if the *Citta* is yet unable to fall into focus, try to be mindful of that which is conscious of the empty *Citta*.

**Question 9** I have one problem. That is, when I concentrated on the breathing, I felt so tense in my head. To every time I concentrated on the breathing, I concentrated on my tenseness, while I also concentrated on my heart. This time I tried to rid

myself of the tenseness in my head by thinking that there was nothing but consciousness. So I was able to shake off that tenseness. Then I turned back to the breathing and the heart, separately. Sometimes both moved close together, but they did not quite join together. Sometimes they went far apart. But if I concentrated on the heart, the breathing moved closer to the heart. sir.

**Answer 9** That means that you were not able to rid yourself completely of attachments. That's why you felt that it would be better to hold on to this, it would be right to hold on to that. So it became confusing. And you, of course, could not be certain of anything. Actually you were on the right path. You rid yourself of everything until the *Citta* became almost one-pointed. The problem was only that you did not know the way to conserve the one-pointed *Citta*. And that was just because you had a particular intention to pinpoint it. You did not let the *Citta* develop spontaneously and catch it at the point where it reached the final, spontaneous outcome. So you were tense and confused.

**Question 10** Sometimes I could succeed, sometimes not.

**Answer 10** That's it. You were not rid completely of attachments.

**Question 11** Sometimes the more I concentrated, the more headache I had.

**Answer 11** Certainly, you will feel an ache wherever you concentrate. It's aching because you grasp it too hard. This makes you suffer right there. Once you see its disadvantage, you'd better rid yourself of attachment.

**Question 12** Where should I concentrate then ?

**Answer 12** You should be conscious of the knower. Who's the knower, catch it.

**Question 13** I would like to ask Than Āchārn how to get rid of memories of things past. They kept coming up during my calmness.

**Answer 13** During the stage of *Khanika Samādhī* or momentary concentration, memories are prone to arise. This is natural. And one usually gets bored and discouraged right here, because the more one goes on with the practice, the less happy one becomes. The easiest way to get out of the problem is to pay attention just to the present. There is neither the past nor the future. Just the present. Consider it simply this way that the past has already past and the future has not yet arrived. Whatever happens is what we can be conscious of here and now. The past is gone and the future is not here. At this very moment, there is neither. However, if you wish to solve the problem by analysing the cause of its happenings, the nature of its existence whether it be permanent or impermanent, happy or

unhappy, as to who is responsible as the first cause, you should not be worried about the past or the future. You should keep watch of the present origin of things.

**Question 14** I would like to ask you this. In concentrating on the breathing, the breathing sometimes got quite fine, yet I could still feel it. At this stage of calmness, when a sound reached my ears, it's as if it touched my heart. The heart was moved like waves. This is one condition. Another condition is that when the breathing had not become fine enough, thoughts arose. They did not disturb, but the breathing was not fine enough yet. You mentioned some time ago that the consciousness took place at the head and at the heart, I would like you to explain why it was that way.

**Answer 14** In concentrating on the breathing, if you turned your attention to the sound, it means that you were not fully concentrated. If you had been fully concentrated, or had achieved one-pointedness, you would not have turned your attention toward any other sense-object. The sound, say, might reach your ears. It would come and go on its own accord. And you would be void of attachments. In so far as thoughts are concerned, when your heart begins to take hold of the past or the future, you have to catch it right away. Once you catch it, you would not run after the past or the future any more. This is the behaviour of the *Citta* or the heart within the chest. But sometimes we think that it's the head that directs. So our consciousness is

divided into two. It's as if we had two hearts. That's why we become dubious and doubtful, unable to attain one-pointedness.

**Question 15** When a sound reached my ears, I did try to concentrate on the breathing, but I was not very successful. The heart did not like to stick to the breathing. It would rather go elsewhere which I could not tell. The only thing I knew was that in that particular condition, the heart was in two places, at the head and at the heart within the chest.

**Answer 15** It's as I have explained. You were not able to understand the whole nature of existence. You were not void of attachments, so sometimes you felt as if you had your heart in two, sometimes three, places: the one that goes out the one that stays in, and the one that knows so on and so forth. There's no end, That's why it's confusing.

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**Phra Keith Dhammaviccayo**

**Age 25**

**Vassa Age 1**

*His lay name was Keith Morgan. He came from New Zealand. He graduated from the University of Waikato in the field of psychology and sociology. He worked in a number of places both before and after going to university. He also did a great deal of travelling and almost lost his life in the doing. He actually was trying to find true happiness. He practised Yoga for three years, but was not successful. Then he went to practise meditation with Khantipalo Bhikkhu for two weeks, after which he went to work on the breathing exercise in the forest by himself for four months.*

*Then he travelled to Thailand and was ordained at Wat Bovorn Nives. Somdet Phra Yana Sangvorn was his Upajjhāya. He stayed at Wat Bovorn Nives for six months, after which*

*he came to practise meditation under the supervision of Phra Ācharn Thate at Wat Hin Mark Peng.*

*He used to think that knowledge and understanding made up the heart, but ever since he began to practise meditation, he has come to realize that the state of calm, without any attachment, is the true heart. And with this true heart, he is able to perceive the true nature of his existence.*

*From his experiences in meditation, he feels that his heart is becoming more harmonious with calmness. There are flashes of enlightenment in his heart, which cause him to realize that in order to see the true nature of things one has to take off attachments. One has to accept one's ignorance before blurting out one's opinions.*

**Question 1** Before meditating, I was confronted with a tremendous fear. I tried to meditate more strenuously, but the more I meditated, the more fear I had. I then asked myself who feared. I watched myself very closely. Nevertheless, my fear persisted and I got more and more confused, sir. So finally I told myself I'd better not try to find out who feared. I laid down this thought and turned to concentrate on the breathing. After that I felt better. I followed your instruction by holding on to that principle object so that I would not get lost.

**Answer 1** You could not get rid of fear because you yourself were clinging to it. The more you asked who feared, the more you kept thinking about it. That's why it became stronger and stronger in your feeling. It's better to forget about it, substituting it with mindfulness of the breathing.

**Question 2** After fear had subsided, I began to think of the time before I was ordained. At that time I was full of doubts. But now that I have been ordained and have had such experiences, I have doubts no more. I realize that I have a lot of defilements and all I need to do is to strengthen myself and fight off those defilements.

**Answer 2** That's right. Those who are not confronted with a fear of death are full of doubts, whereas those who face it have no more of doubts and uncertainty. It's good that you have turned back to contemplate yourself and have realized that your duty is to get rid of defilements. Some who are not able to resolve it this way might turn even more distracted. Now you see that your fear did you some good. You realized its disadvantage and turned back to cleanse yourself of it and other defilements. You are on the right path.

**Question 3** I try to get rid of the various sense-objects that happen to arise in my heart. My meditation is improving and I can see the defilements more distinctly.

**Answer 3** That's quite correct. You have seen the disadvantage of distractions and you have tried to lay them down subtly. Now that you have attained calm, you can see your internal defilements more distinctly. The defilements are smears on your heart. The more calm you are, the better you see the smears.

**Question 4** It's true that thoughts are related to suffering. **Truly, thoughts themselves are not sufferings. It's but an attachment to thoughts that is suffering.** At first, I did not realize this. So I kept trying to get rid of my thoughts. I did not realize that **it's an attachment to thoughts that needs to be laid down, not the thoughts themselves, because thoughts naturally arise on their own accord.** Now I have come to that

realization. And I have also realized that wisdom does see the true nature of ignorance, but ignorance sees and understands nothing.

**Answer 4** It's good that you have come to understand the nature of attachments. Suffering arises when one tries to partake of something as part of the self. Actually suffering is a separate entity. It is a condition responsible unto itself. We are only the ones who come to know this condition of suffering. Suffering should not control our heart. Our duty is to get rid of desires which are the causes of suffering. But once suffering arises, we only need to acknowledge it, that's all. Let suffering take care of itself. In this case, you don't even have to bother to get rid of ignorance. Ignorance will disappear eventually. With wisdom you don't need to bother : it will arise eventually.

**Question 5** Sometimes I desired to know which was wisdom and which was ignorance. Why did the heart try to classify things ?

**Answer 5** That's natural. Things were different all right, but you were not able to conceive why they were different. Actually they were separated already. You could not catch the difference because your consciousness was not sharp enough. Your heart was not one-pointed enough. Don't search for the difference while the vision is not clear. Things are different not by the attempt of the heart, but in the heart itself. Things

will become clear by themselves. Whenever we are keen on the practice, we will be able to see clearly which is which, without our search and volition. So it's important that you practise meditation until you attain the state of calm with its fullest energy. The heart at that point is capable of perceiving the Three Common Characteristics of the Five Aggregates. This kind of perception arises as soon as we are keen on the practice.

**Question 6** I wonder whether I can retain the practice along this line after I have gone away from you, sir ?

**Answer 6** Don't think that way. It's not right. You should not question yourself as to your success. All you need to know is that this is the right path. That's why you have come to such a wonderful realization. Whether you will be able to retain this in the future should not be your concern. Be mindful of the present always. This is best for you.

**Samanera Vince Tassello**

**Age 24**

**Vassa Age 1**

*His lay name was Vince Tassello. He came from Australia. He used to practise Yoga with some Yogi in India. He was interested in Buddhism and especially in the Abhidhamma. He was ordained as a novice at Wat Pleng Vipassanā in Dhonburi. Due to the fact that his mother did not consent to his entering monkhood, he had to be satisfied merely with being a novice. After the end of the Vassa season, he might, to follow his mother's wish, have to leave novicehood.*

*As he wished to learn Dhamma at Wat Hin Mark Peng, he was so granted under the recommendation of Somdet Phra Yana Sangvorn. He followed Phra Ācharn Thate's advice and posed to him the following questions :*

**Question 1** Since you said everything is *Anattā* or non-self, who then is the one to act and then gets the consequence of the action ?

**Answer 1** This is a very good question. And it is also an endless problem. One can easily run into quarrels with it. If we say that *Anattā* is nothingness or voidness, the opposition will ask what it is that is nothing. He might say it with a pinch on the nose. The one who believes in *Anattā* would pinch back fast enough, saying the fist is *Anattā* all right; it's not in his will or power to control it.

However, it would be quite all right for one to understand that *Anattā* refers to that which is, but which is not substantial. Everybody knows that there is this and that. But, the point is that it is impossible to count on it. Everything including ourselves are but illusions. Each one plays his own part. Once the game is over, he goes backstage. And that's the end of the game. Other people are born and each one repeats the same game. This is indeed endless.

Now coming back to the question: since everything is *Anattā*, who then acts and thus gets the consequence of the action ? As they have just said, if we translate the word *Anattā*

as non-self and nothingness, then there is not the one who acts, and without the one who acts, who then is the actor who is responsible for such an action? And then what will be the use of talking about *Anattā*? The more one talks in this vein, the more confusing it becomes. Wisdom that arises out of the ego can lead one pretty much astray.

**In Buddhism, the Lord Buddha became enlightened of the nature of *Anattā*. He did not say that *Anattā* meant voidness of the self or nothingness. He said the self consisted of the physical and mental factors constituting the so called five Aggregates. They are there, but the point is that there is nothing substantial in these five Aggregates, that's all. For beginners, the Buddha usually preached that "one is a refuge unto one's own self," or, "it's best that one conquers oneself," for example. However, when talking to someone with a higher mentality, he would analyse the nature of the self or the Five Aggregates. He did this for the first time when he preached to the first five disciples. The main ideas are: the Physical Aggregate which we consider as the self as a matter of fact does not belong to ourselves, because it is not in our power to control it. For example, we cannot prevent it from getting old and deteriorated. He posed the following questions: "How do you consider the Physical Aggregate? Is it permanent?" The five disciples answered, "No, my lord." The Buddha asked, "Does impermanence contribute to happiness or unhappiness?" The five disciples answered, "Unhappiness, my lord." The Buddha then said, "One should consider the true nature of that which is impermanent. The Five Aggregates rise and fall on their own accord. We should not take hold of them as part of ourselves." From this, it is clear that *Anattā* does not refer to that which**

is not. Life is as it is, but it is not substantial. The one who takes hold of it certainly runs into suffering. Once the Buddha taught *Mogharāja* “Consider this world as a state of void.” Even here the Buddha talked about that which existed, that is, the world. But he mentioned voidness in a sense that one should be void of attachment.

In conclusion, I will say it briefly like this. For those who still hold fast to the *Attā* or the self, the Buddha preaches responsibilities and good deeds for the sake of the self. However, if one were to realize that what he is taking hold of is as a matter of fact an illusion of substance, being in itself impermanent and contributing to suffering and so on, then in this case the Buddha would preach the nature of *Anattā*. The Buddha encourages one to use an empirical rationalization. One should prove the point by one’s own experience. You see, most people live on make-up realities. One goes to a movie or a play and gets carried away with the tragedy that is built up, or else gets carried away by laughter. This is the nature of one who is still taking hold of the self. Those who are attached to nothing recognize realities objectively without getting involved, since realities without substance are but illusions.

**Question 2** When everything is *Anattā*, who then is the one to teach and to accept the teachings ?

**Answer 2** The answer was already stated in the above passage.

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**Mae Shee Chuang**

**Age 29**

**Vassa Age 1**

*Her lay name was Tun Chuang, a Chinese from Singapore. Her family was Christian, but she did not profess to any religion. She believed that goodness should beget good by itself; no God should act as the determinant of good or bad happenings. She came to know Phra Don, an English monk who was ordained in Thailand and went to Australia. Mae Shee Chuang's mother invited Phra Don to Singapore, where he gave talks on Buddhist principles. Mae Shee Chuang found them akin to her beliefs.*

*Phra Don suggested that she came to Thailand to study. She took his suggestion and decided to become a nun (mae shee) under the supervision of Phra Ācharn Funn Acāro at Tham Kham, Sakol Nakorn Province. She practised*

*meditation and was able to attain a great deal of calm. She earned praises for her diligence and good effort. She spent seven months in Phra Acharn Funn's monastery. Then she spent the Vassa season of B.E. 2519 in training at Wat Hin Mark Peng. She posed the following questions to Phra Acharn Thate:*

**Question 1** Is it possible that all our defilements will eventually disappear after we have trained ourselves to the state of utmost calm and mindfulness ?

**Answer 1** The state of utmost calm and mindfulness is good. If the heart were not calm, it would not be able to see distractions or mental flurries. To be able to see these is the first step of wisdom. But this degree of wisdom is not yet enough to purify oneself of defilements. It is capable only of calming down the defilements, making them inactive as long as there is nothing to disturb it. What one needs to do next is to train oneself further until one becomes quite keen. At the same time, one should learn to perceive the cause and effect of a particular sense-object as they are actually happening within one's own heart. Once one realizes the disadvantage of the disturbance, one will rid oneself of attachment. Don't think that the attainment of calm will eventually bring about a complete clearance of defilements just like a ripe fruit eventually becomes sweet and falls off a tree.

**Question 2** Will it contribute to purification, if we can retain the state of calm on which we are keen ?

**Answer 2** The state of calm is very useful to meditators. As I have explained, it won't be able to purify one's heart from those defilements. Moreover, calm without consideration can be the source of anxiety and boredom, which are newly arisen defilements.

**Question 3** I once thought that those who have entered monkhood and novicehood were all nice and clean people. I don't understand why there are still so many that are not so good.

**Answer 3** There are innumerable types of monks and novices. It's been this way for a very long time. For those who have good faith, they can be divided into three categories :

1. These are the ones who think that the Buddha's teachings are good, and that only the ordained can devote himself to the practice. They aim at improving themselves as much as they possibly can through their practice.

2. These are the ones who think that the Buddha's teachings are useful to a great number of people and that they are difficult to acquire. Therefore, it would be a pity, if those teachings should disappear, having no one to study and to practise them. This type of persons then decide to enter monkhood in order to carry on the responsibility of teaching and to leave all external possessions.

3. *The third type is exceptionally good in that they are ordained as a result of wisdom. They have come to consider that the world has nothing substantial. It is but an illusion.*

*People suffer because they get carried away by the illusion. One who belongs to this category thinks that it is impossible to become enlightened of the true nature of life, if he still leads the life of layman. So he decides to turn to monkhood.*

Those who enter monkhood with reasons other than stated usually bring disgraces to the Buddhist institution. They have no high aim or specific purpose in such an entrance. So they only change the external coloring, while remaining the same inside. For this, they are not any different from laymen. Therefore, they cause disrespect from the general public and also from Buddhists. As for the third category mentioned, they are not altogether unblemished before coming into monkhood. Those who are already good at heart are not many. Nevertheless, once they that belong to the latter category were to enter monkhood, they would not wear away their time carelessly. They would make efforts in arriving at the truths. They would finally come to an understanding that everything in this world including themselves are but illusions. The one who does not realize this and gets carried away by the illusions will only fall into the pit of sufferings. The one who understands, however, can take off attachments and rise out of the shallow, attaining freedom, each one for his individual entity.

Congratulations to you on your good faith and your optimism about the ordained ones. The optimism was natural at the time you were an outsider, not getting correct information about the actual situation.

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# Part Two

## **CONVERSATIONS WITH LAYMEN**

**There were a number of lay people, both men and women, who came to practise Dhamma under the supervision of Phra Āchārn Thate. The followings are his conversations with them who do not wish to reveal their names.**

## **Ubasika 1**

**(Lay lady who practises Dhamma)**

*The lady in this conversation is in her sixties. She has been practising Dhamma for more than ten years. She has a good faith and a strong determination to continue with the practice without recoiling.*

**PHRA ĀCHARN** A number of monks came here to practise until they attained marvelous experiences and understandings. Many have expressed them to me. Now I would like to ask you, since you have come here to practise, how do you feel? What marvel did you find? Have you found anything of value?

**UBASIKA** What I have seen through my practice is the nature of impermanence, suffering, and selflessness (*Aniccaṃ, Dukkham, Anattā*). I realized these with my own heart because I had physical ailments and I could breathe but with difficulty. So I tried to contemplate suffering as the nature of existence. I was myself an object of genuine suffering, as if I had been embracing a ball of fire. Even though this ball of fire did not make me feel hot, it gnawed me up consistently. Now that I have come to practise, I see suffering distinctly. I feel quite moved with pity and boredom. I wish to rise out of suffering; I don't want to be born again.

**PHRA ĀCHARN** Having come to that consideration, what does your heart feel? Does it reach out to suffering? Does it persist in watching suffering? Or, does it lay down the suffering

that it has experienced? What is going to be your principle in your further practice so as to keep the practice firm and make you all the more keen?

**UBASIKA** I contemplate suffering. After I have seen suffering, I consider suffering as a separate entity. To be able to see suffering and lay it down is happiness. Yet I put happiness apart from myself. I don't become attached to this happiness. This happiness does not last. If we become attached to it, we will suffer for certain. I try to recognize every move of my feeling. Suffering is what we feel all right. But we should not become attached to it. We should know that suffering belongs to the world. We should lay it down. Nevertheless, before laying it down, we should contemplate it. To lay it down altogether without contemplation is ignorance. We must consider it all along, but must not take it as part of ourselves. It's not our true self.

**PHRA ĀCHARN** Good. This is good too. This is what is called *Vipassanā*. *Vipassanā* is not voidness or nothingness. It is the consideration of the five aggregates so that one sees the nature of Impermanence, Suffering, and Selflessness. This is the perception of the Three Common Characteristics, so to speak. After we have perceived ourselves as subject to the Three Common Characteristics, we will maintain it that way. This is genuine *Vipassanā*. Most of the meditators get stuck to the state of calm and happiness and do not wish to consider anything, seeing that such consideration of the Aggregates is

mere disturbance. Some think that within that state of calm and happiness they have attained the state of complete purification. As a matter of fact, not yet. This is not good. It's just a foundation of *Vipassanā*. It's just calm, that's all. Whenever calm has gained its fullest strength, one can come to the point of consideration. Nevertheless, one may consider the nature of the Three Common Characteristics until one gets carried away and becomes unmindful of what one's doing. Now, don't get carried away. Simply recognize what you see as you see. **That is, the heart that sees is not the same as that which is seen by the heart.** Wisdom rises out of the heart. The heart contributes to wisdom. It is capable of doing so under the power of calm. Remember that you must consider things on the basis of the Three Common Characteristics. Once this consideration reaches the point of equilibrium, you will eventually become quiet and indifferent. This is the correct way. Otherwise you might get lost. Remember this well.

**UBASIKA** I have seen it so distinctly. I never thought before that I would be able to see it this clearly. This chunk that we are holding here is a chunk of Dhamma. Without it we would not be able to see suffering. It's really splendid that we have this chunk of Dhamma. I am going to move on with my practice. I'm not going to withdraw.

**PHRA ĀCHARN** This is correct. **We must consider the Five Aggregates.** These are the base for *Vipassanā* wisdom. The Buddha preached *Anatta-Lakkhana* sutta as the second sermon

after the *Dhammacakkappavatanā* sutta to his five disciples. He explained each of the five Aggregates on the basis of the Three Common Characteristics. The five disciples became enlightened accordingly. As for the *Dhammacakkappavatanā* sutta, the Buddha explained the rising of the physical Aggregate, its changing and falling condition. That was suffering. The Buddha pointed out that it was caused by Three Types of Desire. Now, if one trained oneself to the point where one saw the original heart (that is, the state of equilibrium), one would see the cause of the Three Types of Desire. And that is the flashing movement of the heart off the state of equilibrium. This is the cause of the Three Types of Desire. One, who comes to see the disadvantage of suffering and is able to lay its causes down, is said to have walked along the path of Righteousness and attained the state of Extinction of suffering (*Nirodha*). Therefore this physical Aggregate is considered to be the base of *Vipassanā* Wisdom and a genuine chunk of Dhamma.

**UBASIKA** After I have laid it down, there somehow came a problem. There appeared an image, a black chunk, which was like another world which was trying to submit me under control and shatter the perception of Truth that I have got. Once I was able to set the heart apart from this chunk. Suffering was eventually separated from happiness, but I did not accept either of them because that chunk was really big. I thought it was the encroachment of Delusion (*Moha*). I tried to concentrate on it. Consequently it disappeared.

**PHRA ĀCHARN** That's correct. When the heart is refined, it's capable of seeing fine elements. In the beginning, when the

heart was yet unrefined, we were prone to think that there was left no impurity in our heart. But the more refined we are in our training, the more sensitive we become. The least bit of defilement that passes through our heart appears quite big. As I usually explain, one can witness even a tiny dust on a clean, clear glass. The heart that is considerably clean and clear will be able to witness distinctly a small bit of defilement that passes.

**The meditator of Dhamma may progress or degenerate at this point. When the heart attains perfect calm, one is capable of seeing things very clearly and distinctly. Here one might misunderstand that one has reached the end of suffering completely. One might then get carried away by that condition infinitely, After a while that calmness might lost its power. As the heart withdraws from calm, so faith and the feeling of delight withdraw from the heart. Satisfaction and clarity are gone. Consequently there arises doubt in everything, even in the principle of the practice and in the whole teachings of the Buddha, which were once believed as the path toward an extinction of suffering. He then turns to disbelieve the righteousness of the Dhamma. So be careful: Do not get carried away by the happiness and calm and the thoughts that arise without check.**

You must reflect in order to see the true nature of that condition. If there's no book, you should turn to consult the one who knows. Don't rely only on yourself, or you would turn to disadvantage. There are some who have degenerated that way, and eventually refuse to perform any further merits. This is

because those meditators have not been able to recognize the actual principle as to what is the cause and what consequence, what contributes to the advantage and disadvantage. They see only the one-sided picture of progress; they see only knowledge and wisdom and calm and happiness. Therefore they get carried away with them. Once these conditions disappear, they would feel sorrowful, wishing for them to come back. However, they refuse to go through the practice toward the same stage of calmness, which is the basis of achievement. The more they become anxious, the more confused and disturbed they become infinitely.

The defilements that belong to those practising Dhamma are very peculiar. They are as fine as the heart. If one is not wisely cautious, one will certainly end up being defeated.

A teacher compares the meditators of Dhamma to a soldier. A good soldier needs a good stratagem as to when to push forward and when to withdraw. Whenever the soldiers are ready, with good morale, and enough armament and food, the army may charge. However, at the time when armament is lessened, not enough for the purpose of attacking, the army should withdraw and stay back within the city. It should try to protect the city by guarding the gate, the pit and the wall, not letting the enemy in.

So this is the same with the meditators of Dhamma. Whenever they have wisdom and are able to perceive things distinctly, they may go on to consider the various sense-objects, but whenever the consideration becomes unclear (due to calmness weakening), don't get carried away. Otherwise you would be considering merely through thoughts and imaginations (the Ideation

Aggregate), the fact which would make you unable to get rid of your defilements. It's as when you don't have enough armament. You'd better withdraw and keep yourself on guard within the city. That is, you should now practise only for the purpose of attaining calm.

What else have you got in your mind ?

**UBASIKA** Yes, I've still got a problem in consideration. The external Aggregates are all right, but the problem is with the internal Aggregates. When I was considering the internal Aggregates, I got an idea that as the external Aggregates were cooking things up, the internal Aggregates would be doing the same. But when wisdom arose, I tried to keep watch of the external Aggregates so that they did not wander into distractions. But even then I was confronted with distractions. Of course, I would not be defeated. I tried to fight them off. No matter what, I will try to fight them off to the end. I will not withdraw.

**PHRA ĀCHARN** I have explained so many times about the Aggregates, internal and external. The external Aggregates are no problem for meditators. If the heart has attained calm, or specifically, when the heart has reached the point of Absorption (*Bhavanā*) or *Appanā-Samādhi*, it will eventually lay down all external sense-objects whether it be a figure, a sound, a smell, a taste, or a touch. The heart will not be concerned with anything of that sort; it will exist apart by itself. In this condition, it may be cooking things up also. Sometimes one may

still see figures of this and that, get to know this and that. One is still conscious; one may turn to contemplation and become carried away. One can experience suffering and happiness. The Aggregates there are still functioning in full. These are called the internal Aggregates. One usually gets carried away by the internal Aggregates, thinking that in being able to see things through these Aggregates he has attained perfect wisdom. In this manner, he will usually become attached to the internal Aggregates. It's the internal Aggregates that lead one to rebirths.

Another comparison: it is as if we are dreaming when we fall asleep. We leave this physical body and then wander around. We get to see a number of things. In this manner, we have a complete self, which is called the internal Aggregates. It's these internal Aggregates that we have to clean once more. In cleaning the internal Aggregates, we cannot do so right then. It's impossible. That's the nature of the Aggregates. It's that way. We have to get out of it. The *Citta* has to withdraw from the internal Aggregates to dwell within the external Aggregates. Here we consider the external Aggregates: the physical, the feelings, the ideation, the volitional activities, and the consciousness, so that we perceive their actual nature in conjunction with the Three Common Characteristics. Once we see these Three Common Characteristics, we will be rid of attachments. In this manner, the internal Aggregates will proceed according to their own condition. It has to be this way when we consider the external Aggregates. But in the end, when we are dying, it will be difficult to get into the internal Aggregates. That is, we will have to go through sufferings, having all kinds of painful feelings, that is, within the

external Aggregates. This is to say that we have to really go through a struggle when in the face of death. We have to struggle with the external Aggregates. Whenever these external Aggregates cease to be, that is, having nothing to struggle with, our consciousness will return to the internal Aggregates. Once in the internal Aggregates, we will not have to go through the same experiences, because we have gone through enough struggle until we are able to lay down all attachments. In order to get out of suffering and be reborn no more, we have to struggle with the external Aggregates. This is it.

*According to the life history of the Buddha, right before the Buddha's death, he passed through the first degree of Absorption up to the stage of extinction of suffering (Nirodha-Samāpatti). After that he withdrew back to the first degree of Absorption. Then he proceeded upwards again to the fourth degree. Having left this fourth stage, he ceased to be, in between the Sensuous Plane of Existence (Kāmāvacarabhūmi) and the Plane of Form (Rūpāvacarabhūmi). This means that the Buddha left the existence not within any sphere or plane. This is to say that the Buddha entered Nibbāna outside the Aggregates. One knows, one is enlightened while one still has the Aggregates, but without any attachment to them. If one sees only the internal Aggregates without the external Aggregates, one cannot become enlightened. At the same time, if one sees the external Aggregates without seeing the internal Aggregates, one will not be able to see things as they are. We*

*train ourselves in meditation in order to fight the external Aggregates. When the heart is fully charged with strength, it is calm and is able to conquer the external Aggregates. There is left only the internal Aggregates. When one dies, it's only the external Aggregates that die. If one is bound to the next sphere, it's the internal Aggregates that lead one to rebirth. Therefore, the internal Aggregates only function as a strengthener of the heart. They stand side by side the external Aggregates and fight one another at the time of death.*

**UBASIKA**            A consideration of the external Aggregates made me feel that the internal Aggregates, after considerable training, should be under our control. This is because we have tried to get rid of many things. Yet the external Aggregates keep cooking things up. This makes us reach out. When I got to feel pain and could not stand it, I was forced to become distracted and think this and that. I tried to stop it, but I couldn't. Yet I would not give in. The Aggregates had to go on that way; that's natural.

**PHRA ĀCHARN**    Right. As we have learned from the Buddha's biography, the Buddha underwent the practice of austerities. But no matter how painful was his bodily pain, he was not disturbed by it. This is not usual. The pain was there, but it did not disturb him. Why, even at the time he was yet unenlightened? One thing was that he was determined to stand above it. He was determined to become enlightened. This made him become

unattached to such pain. So pain was not able to get a hold of him. This is the same with us. If we should determine to succeed, we would put our best effort. No matter how tired we were, we would not mind. This means we would not let our feeling get a control of ourselves. Now if we had wisdom to consider things in the light of the Three Common Characteristics, that is, impermanence, suffering, and selflessness, we would not become attached to them, neither would we take them as part of our "self." We would be able to see things as they actually are. In this way, would certainly be comfortable. Even if the feeling of suffering were to occur, the heart that had enough strength and courage would help to bring about calm readily. Then there would be nothing left: the feeling of suffering would disappear completely.

What was it you contemplated that made you perceive the nature of suffering so wonderfully? What was it that made you resolve to give up things, or, intend to give up things, so that you came to work on meditation until you obtained such a clear perception. What was generally the cause?

**UBASIKA**           The reason was that I lost one of my relatives. The relative of mine had married a new wife. He was a man of some means and many wanted to inherit his property. So after he had passed away, his wife had to leave the house, or else she would have to be forced to leave by her stepsons and stepdaughters. I felt so pitiful. I came to realize that one went through suffering this way. The woman did not realize that she would ever come to this because she had never attended

to Dhamma. She knew nothing. So all she did was to get desperate and cry. This is because she had nothing as a refuge for her heart. When I saw this, I felt grave. I felt that sooner or later I would probably go through this kind of suffering. As long as I was still subject to rebirths, I would some day have to go through this. The more I considered the more I saw the disadvantage of this existing form. As long as I still possessed the *Saṅkhāra* or this existing form, suffering would be bound to occur. This was going to happen to anybody at all. I would be just like that. It was good that I saw the suffering of others which made me stop and consider, "Oh, this existence is subject to impermanence, suffering, and selflessness." So I vowed to proceed with meditation, never to falter back to the worldly.

**PHRA ĀCHARN** Good. This is very good. My teacher used to speak a lot of the fact that **Everything in this world contributes to the learning experience.** Whether they be living or non-living things, they can always teach Dhamma. The one who is cruel and selfish, still in the worldly, can easily forget the goodness done to them by others. Those who are refined from various defilements become aggrieved upon seeing such a happening. Eventually he becomes bored with rebirths, perceiving them as an immense danger. So he will always seek a way to get out of it. The Teacher says axiomatically that *a man in a high stall can clearly see another in the lower plane.* Now that you have seen this, don't you give way to imprudence. You must go on considering this condition until you are keen. Later it might not appear that way, because our heart is not permanent. You should

consider this condition until you become so keen and you would then be able to count on progress. Don't become satisfied just with what you have witnessed. It's true that what you have seen is good. Your way of considering things and your clear vision are righteous and good. You should try to maintain that degree of insight and use it as a basis for developing further insight. In considering things, it's necessary to perceive the inside before the outside. That is, you should have a clear perception of your "self" first. It's necessary that you work up further so that you become keen and firm in your practice.

**UBASIKA** At present I am considering the subject of *Kamma*. I am searching for the causes of rebirths. What were the things we did in the past? I'm not getting discouraged in the least because if I did not consider it this way, I would not know why I was born. Once I realize the cause, I may then proceed to get rid of the cause of rebirth.

**PHRA ĀCHARN** Right. It has to be that way. I usually explain that if we have no experience, we will not understand. Formerly we thought that sufferings was happiness, that it was good enough to be born into this world of make-believe. Therefore, we became engrossed in the joy of youthful nature. Or, engrossed may we be in wealth and personal possessions. This is to say, we are enticed by suffering, thinking that it is good. Now that we face the facts of life, things that we see turn out to be negative. What we usually consider to be happiness and good turn out to be ill. Now that we see ill, we wish to search for

their causes. Why do we have to be this way? The answer is because we were born. And the reason why we were born was because we were led by illusions. We may search further as to the nature of illusion and we will find that illusion is actually misconduct. No matter how small is the misconduct, we will see that it is dangerous. We will see its disadvantage so much so that we will not dare to perform it. It is the same as a person partaking of poison glazed with sugar. He will suffer almost to death, but once he be cured by a doctor, he will not wish to partake of that again in his whole life. Or else, it is the same as a person getting lost in a forest and facing all kinds of wild animals that endanger his life. Once he is out of the forest, he dare not go into it again.

## **Ubasika 2**

**( Lay lady who practises Dhamma )**

*This is a lady in her forties. She earned her degree in medicine from a university. She believes that aside from the physical body, the heart also needs to be cured and cleaned. The training of the heart is valuable to life and is the way in which one gets rid of sufferings.*

*Therefore, she uses her academic knowledge to help people in their physical illness, while practising the Buddha's Dhamma to remedy her own heart.*

**PHRA ĀCHARN** Now that I have conversed considerably with the monks on their practices. I would like to ask you lay meditators as to your practices and experiences.

**UBASIKA** The practice of meditation is useful immensely. I don't know how to describe it. It helps us from the time we open our eyes until the time we go to bed. We can use Dhamma all the time. Now there are some who do not know that they are using Dhamma. Should they know Dhamma, they would realize that Dhamma can be very helpful. It is really an indispensable thing in their daily life. It is the most useful thing. I think that they are even more useful than food and medicine. In the beginning I did not understand much of anything, but after some time I can see the changes that have occurred within myself. I have changed a great deal. I know more of life and understand more of Dhamma. In the beginning I was far away from teachers. So when I had problems, I did not know what to do. Mostly I had to solve them myself. I made use of books. The most important one to me was the *Book of Recitations*. There were many things in there that made me think. Some were clear, but some were not.

**PHRA ĀCHARN** The fact that you see its usefulness, of course, makes you appreciative and willing to proceed with the practice. How is your practice going? How do you feel about it? What is your principle?

**UBASIKA** I'm lucky that I have learned to appreciate Dhamma and have found marvelous things about it. Quite marvelous, but I don't know how to express this to my friends and relatives, so that they can turn to Dhamma, too. I am quite confident that Dhamma really protects the one who practises it. Let anybody deny this, but I will not believe him because I have realized it with my own very self. One thing I would have to ask him is whether or not he has ever practised Dhamma. If he says yes and says he makes no sense out of it, I will ask him to go back and practise it all over again, because this is not anything that one can try just once and succeed. Also, one may not succeed each and every time one practises. I have gone through many failings. Sometimes I succeeded at the time I least expected. I have seen the marvelous. Once I succeed, I can say that I have experienced the real thing. I do not wish to tie myself to the fake stuff. The heart lays it down automatically. The heart is confident only with the truth. As I have said, sir, Dhamma is more important than medicine, more important than food, because Dhamma makes one happy, fulfilled, strong. I don't know how to express it. That is, even if I'm not allowed to eat all day, I can get along. Even if I'm not allowed to sleep all night, I can get along, all without getting hungry or drowsy. It can live by itself.

**PHRA ĀCHARN** Now, what did you do in order to arrive at such an experience? Did you just think it up? Or did you work it up? And in what way?

**UBASIKA** At first I didn't know how to explain it. Many people asked me just as you did. Now let me think back. It's probably because I did not have much opportunity to practise Dhamma. Each year I could take leave from my work only once or twice, only seven days at the most. Therefore, before I got here, I would be fully determined to practise. My determination was strong because I knew I did not have as much time as other people. More than that, this WAT here was so completely different from home, like heaven and hell, shall we say. This was a peaceful atmosphere. I must confess that the yellow robe of meditation monks constituted fifty percent of the reason that drew me here. The fact that I could come here to pay homage calmed me down fifty percent already. Home life was like an oven. Being here was calm indeed, having both the teacher I respected, and friends, colleagues in the practice, who were equal in *Sīla* conduct. Things were so much different. This made me happy. I thought I would work up strenuously.

**PHRA ĀCHARN** This means calmness was the basis of your practice, right? When you left home, all you had in mind was calm, so calm was the basis of your practice.

**UBASIKA** That's right, sir. All I wished for when I came was calm. I did not wish for miracles. Whenever I felt I could no longer stand Bangkok, I had to come. I would not care, even

if someone were to kill me. Whenever I could not stand it, I had to come, otherwise I might have gone out of my mind. All I asked for was to have just a period of calm in order that I would have more mental strength to fight with things there. Here I can cut myself from all burdens. I am completely changed. When I enter the WAT, I become just a different person. I am able to get rid of everything.

**PHRA ĀCHARN** Does this mean that calm rises before knowledge ?

**UBASIKA** Yes, sir. Calm rises before knowledge. Actually in the beginning my mind wandered. As for myself, I tried to get rid of mental distractions by holding on to a particular mental object. Usually I recited a verse that I liked. Sometimes especially in the beginning I recited the thirty-two members of the body. I got angry with myself for getting sleepy, So I got up and walked. I never practised by walking before; I didn't know how they managed it. Then I looked at monks and novices. They walked in the usual manner. So I did and I repeated to myself the thirty-two members of the body. I didn't remember them correctly. Now this very first time I saw this very distinctly: I saw this physical body composed only of the four elements, the four elements truly. And everything else in the world was made up of the four elements. There was not difference. One minor difference might be that living animals had consciousness. Nevertheless, there was no difference among the living animals. We, dogs, birds, monkeys, that we had seen, were not any different.

We were all equal. Then I thought of those ghosts. They were terrible, yet they were the same as we. Our body was coarser, that's all. Their body was fine. We could be friends. After that my fear of ghosts has reduced a great deal.

**PHRA ĀCHARN** It was unusual that knowledge should spring up that way, when you were calm. It's a wonder that knowledge arose in calmness. It's marvelous.

**UBASIKA** This is, as I have mentioned, marvelous. I can't express this marvel. At that time I did not vow that I would observe the eight precepts. But somehow after that, when I got back to Bangkok, I thought I would not eat any more dinner. When I came to the Wat, I observed the eight precepts, but when I got home, I quit. That to me was irregular. I thought I should choose one way or the other. I asked myself whether I would eat two meals or three meals a day. If three meals, I would be entrapped still. It's such a common thing. I would be better, if I were to take only two meals. So I decided to take two meals. I told myself I would never eat dinner any more. At the time I was at the WAT, I did not even think that I would be able to quit eating dinner.

**PHRA ĀCHARN** It's good that you talked about the practice so that you saw the body just as the four elements. That's right, once you come to see everything as the elements, there is nothing peculiar. Animals, men, the self, we, they are all elements.

To be able to lay down *Asmi-māna* (self-conceit) is the basis toward further wisdom and insight. If you could wipe away the “He” — — — the “We”, there would be left only designation of the elements. To consider things just as the elements makes one comfortable, without hindrance. In the course of your practice, did you find anything else that was more marvelous? Or, did you see things just as the elements, that’s all? I would like to know this point.

**UBASIKA** Yes, I did find something else. That is, some time after that, while I was meditating on walking, I felt a sudden illumination of light. I both knew and saw, as you have explained, that the physical and mental Aggregates rose and fell every second. Then I also saw the *Citta* (heart) mixing with those Aggregates until they became one and all. They were like two big trees in the forest. When the branches touched one another, they became intertwined and became a big chunk of flesh. All became a big chunk. Oh! That was just what the Buddha said: It was all suffering. Suffering in our daily life was another kind of suffering. The kind I meant was quite terrible; it’s a cool suffering. It’s terrible because it made us exhausted. Yet we bore with it in our exhaustion. It rose and fell all the time. How could we not get exhausted? This kind of suffering was so terrible, more so than the suffering in our daily life. They were different, but this kind is the most fearful.

When I saw that, I asked myself, “What am I going to do?” Then knowledge rose: there rose an answer — — — I don’t know how to explain it — — — I have to use this word. Anyway

I knew from the answer, "I should pull myself out. Now, from now on, I would not go along with you any more. I don't know for how long I have been going along with you: at least for the past forty years --- from the time I was born. This is enough. Let us part. I am not going with you any more. I can't stand it, rising and falling and hanging together, all these Five Aggregates, jumping together, all these Five Aggregates. I don't want this any more, no more. I wish to be comfortable. Let you rise and fall on your own."

In the meantime, I still went after them. Even though I had realized the truth of that nature and was afraid of them, I was still going to take hold of them. So I asked myself what I should do next. The answer arose, saying that only mindfulness (*Sati*) would be able to separate consciousness from the rising and falling of the Five Aggregates. Therefore, there was the one and only task left, and that was to MAINTAIN MINDFULNESS AT ALL TIMES. At that time, I came to have a clear perception that this very world was but a conglomeration of the Five Aggregates. This was the world truly. Before this time, I used to read about this statement from books, but I could not understand. The world was this body of two metres long and eight inches wide (*yao waa naa kueb*). Oh, that was very true. The world was just this very body. Then I began to understand the meaning of the word "Super-mundane" (*Lokuttara*). That is, it had to be separated. It had to go one way, and the self the other. There was the Super-mundane.

**PHRA ĀCHARN** That was because in the beginning we considered this body just as the elements, not as our “self” or their “self”. It was just the elements. We separated the *Citta* from the Aggregates, that is, becoming not attached to them. When we do not become attached to the Aggregates, we are clear as to the condition of attachment and non-attachment. Whenever we become attached, we get all mixed up. This mixed-up condition is a pile of sufferings. When we understand that that is a pile of sufferings, we perceive its disadvantage and danger. And when we are separated from it, we have mindfulness as our guardian, protecting the *Citta* from wandering off. But, if it were to sneak out and wander off, it would be prone to become attached to things. The Aggregates that are mundane are full of attachments. It’s been like this for the longest time. And sufferings are born from attachments. But, once we are separated from attachments, we become comfortable and enlightened.

*Our duty is to be mindful of our behaviour. We are prone to be hit by various sense-objects because the physical and the mental are still functioning together. As long as we still have to be dependent on this physical body, we have to experience hits and blows.* One who sees the disadvantage of the Aggregates adopts that unattached attitude. When we are able to become unattached to the Aggregates, we are above them. Or, if you wish to say that we are above the world, this is all right, too. *The word Lokuttara means above the Aggregates, that’s all.* This condition is not within the Aggregates, so we call it *Lokuttara Dhamma*. At the same time, this particular nature is not ours.

So if anybody considers it “his” Lokuttara Dhamma, he is being attached to it again. So, if anybody thinks that he has attained the Lokuttara Dhamma, he is as a matter of fact deteriorating. If he is not deteriorating, he will be in the process of considering, which means he is not thinking of anything. There is a separation all along. So if we think highly of ourselves that we have attained the Lokuttara Dhamma, arrived at the Lokuttara Dhamma, we’d better know that we are deteriorating from it.

**UBASIKA**            When I got to that point I didn’t think that I had reached Lokuttara. I just thought, “The word *Lokuttara* means like this.” Two days after that, whenever I saw people, I saw them as the risings and fallings of the Five Aggregates. And when I looked at the *Citta* of these people, I also saw it in the manner of rising and falling. When they spoke to me, I spoke to them. At the time I did not look at their faces. It was like that the whole time, until they left. Once I thought, “What was I saying just now? Did they understand what I said? I myself did not remember what I was speaking even. I had to ask the person who sat beside me, “What did I say just now?” That person said they came to ask me this and that and I did answer them all right: there appeared nothing wrong. As for myself, the things that I had just said disappeared completely. The heart just witnessed only the rising and falling in the midst of calm. I had fear and boredom for many days.

**PHRA ĀCHARN**    When the heart is strong enough, mindfulness and wisdom will occur perfectly together. There is no desire to

clean nor to get rid of anything, but it's cleaning and getting rid of things automatically. This kind of experience is difficult to get. If we are desirous of maintaining it, we are actually at the point of losing it: we have deteriorated. So we must be careful.

**UBASIKA** From that time on, I experienced many marvels. And I obtained knowledge from them. This became the basis of my practice. From that time on, it was easy for me to get down to concentration. After recitations, I meditated on walking. After walking back and forth once, the heart became quiet by itself. And I could see things as when wide awake. One thing was that I had to maintain mindfulness successively, this by repeating the words *Buddho, Dhammo, Saṅgho*. After just a little while, I felt light and comfortable. I saw the rising and falling. But, sometimes my heart swerved off. Then I realized that it's getting weak and hazy. It's like being covered with fog. I then tried to brighten it up like a box of water. I tried to work against the current. There I realized that the heart being covered with delusion was like this. Delusion was soft, enticing. I felt as if I had been walking in the fog. When opening my eyes, it's as if there had been no eyes. When delusion covered, it's as if we had had no eyes, all blinded. I don't know how to tell you.

**PHRA ĀCHARN** When mindfulness is already present, there is no need to repeat or recite the word "Buddho." No need to. When you have been fully alert like that, it's not necessary to

repeat things in your mind because you are getting into the wisdom stage, no more in the Samatha stage. When you have obtained enough strength through the *Samatha*, you come to the *Vipassanā* stage in which you develop wisdom and insight where you see the rising and falling of things. Some people who do not understand the process usually fall back to the Samatha stage once more. This is not right. Having gone through the Samatha and become fully charged with mental power, one should go on to develop wisdom. Only when you are getting hazy in perception that you should go back to recite the word “Buddho,” that is, recharging your mental power through the Samatha practice. Don’t get carried away by ideation and various volitional activities, or you will get lost and become deprived of wisdom. Now, while you are concentrating on a particular sense-object like that, the *Citta* will be brightened by itself. The fact that it is still hazy means that we are getting lost and delusion is taking hold of us. *We get lost because we pick up the considering phase and proceed one-sidedly. We do not base it on calm.* So the more we consider, the hazier it becomes. Here mindfulness is getting weak. We forget this principle. We do not base our practice of consideration on this principle. This is where we suffer deterioration. Having deprived ourselves of calm, we will get lost in considering. Our perception will become blurred and unaccountable.

#### **UBASIKA**

There were some occasions, sir, in which I tried to go against distraction. It was like playing a tug-of-war, sir. I tried to concentrate on a particular object. Finally the haziness

disappeared. It was brightened again. And I felt light, and cool and comfortable. I understood it right there the meaning of the word Buddha, the Enlightened One. The practice of wakefulness (*Jāgariyanuyoga*), the Wakeful One, was like that. Formerly when I read from books, I thought it just meant being not sleepy, but it did have another meaning by itself.

**PHRA ĀCHARN** When you turned to concentrate on the haziness, you were going back to the first principle that was calmness. *You were focusing on one point and you worked toward calmness without desiring it. This is the major principle, a “must” for all meditators.* So you should practise until you are keen on it. If not, one would certainly meet with a failure.

**UBASIKA** I think it's easier to leave the practice altogether than to fight against the haziness because it is like fighting with life. In an actual fighting or in a tug-of-war, we give in when we have got no more strength left. I almost lost all my energy when I became the winner.

**PHRA ĀCHARN** If you were to finish everything that needs to be done, you would get bored with it and leave it naturally. The same as in the tug-of-war game, when you have put all your effort, you will be tired and lay it down even before you are conscious of it. Therefore, *when you encounter haziness, you should leave it and turn back to work toward calm.* It's good enough, if you are keen on this.

**UBASIKA** Yes, sir. I had to fight with haziness. When I won, I felt proud. I felt, "Now I'm not going to be afraid any more." When I faced it again the next time, I felt I could manage to fight it away. But, that was not always the case. Sometimes I was defeated, and sometimes I won. Mostly I was defeated. Sometimes I walked in meditation without any intention or desire. Then I considered the body with its thirty-two members. I liked to consider the thirty-two members. Somehow I came to see that this body was worthless. It's like garbage they had disposed of, full of worms. Just worthless. Why do we have to pamper it so with good food and fine clothes? Even the feet that tread on this earth, we have to get them good leather shoes in this style or that. When the shoemaker can't make them to suit our taste, we will get angry for the longest time. We will feel unhappy for many days. Oh, this is sheer madness! Having thought that way, I laughed at myself. At the same time, I could not help feeling ashamed of myself: all my teachers were probably laughing at me for my ignorance. They probably thought I was pitiful.

**PHRA ĀCHARN** That's correct: our body is like a piece of garbage that has been disposed of. **This very body is composed of dirty things. It lives by them and partakes of them.** Each part is not really of any good: each is in itself a piece of suffering. It contains suffering all the time. There is nothing that should call for satisfaction and pleasure. We are all enticed to fondle the dirt and the pile of suffering as if they were something wonderful. We give them fine clothes in order to cover up the

dirt. We eat only to get rid of suffering in order that we can live on. The illusioned ones are proud of their beauty, wish for honour and happiness, thinking that no one is better than they.

**UBASIKA** I think of one piece of recitation which says that we are wrapped by the skin. It's like a piece of beautiful gift-wrap, wrapping things up so that they don't look ugly.

**PHRA ĀCHARN** This way of considering helps one to become unattached. When one is not attached, one feels light and at ease. The wise ones lead their life this way. Anyone who comes to consider life this way will be able to lessen sufferings by and by.

I would like to know the major principle which has led you to become confident that meditation practice is the way toward an extinction of suffering.

**UBASIKA** In the beginning, I used the body as an object of concentration. Sometimes I concentrated on the *Citta*, sometimes the Dhamma. But, sometimes as I was having an uneasy feeling, I concentrated on the feeling. Anyway, I made use of the Four Principles of Mindfulness.

**PHRA ĀCHARN** That's correct. Just use them so that you become keen.

**UBASIKA** Yes, sir. But, sometimes I obtained an enlightening knowledge by myself. I asked myself questions, for example,

how am I to retain firmness? It was then clear to me that I should concentrate on the body, the feeling, the heart, and the Dhamma (Truth). These Four Principles rose in my knowledge. I used these principles without being conscious of it.

**PHRA ĀCHARN** So far as these Four Principles are concerned, we don't need to follow each one in succession. We can choose to concentrate on any one of them at any time, depending upon how distinct which one is. When you understand one, you can understand the rest.

**UBASIKA** There was one incident I would like to relate to you, sir. One time I got angry with one person. So, I went to meditate in walking in order to get rid of the anger. No matter how I tried, I could not do it. Then it dawned on me that I used to teach myself that everything that rose and existed would eventually fall. So I thought this anger would have to go away some time. I walked back and forth, back and forth, repeating to myself: rising, existing, and falling, rising, existing, and falling. And of course, it was not very long at all when the feeling of anger disappeared. I felt so light, joyful, brightened. That was the first time I experienced an impermanence. Things rose, existed, and fell. It was impossible for them to stay forever. At that time I did not know how to concentrate on the body yet.

**PHRA ĀCHARN** Did you notice how you set your heart at the time to make your perception so clear? Or, did you consider the problem without any principle?

**UBASIKA** Before getting down to meditation, I usually made up my mind beforehand that this day I would concentrate on the body. Mostly I concentrated on the body and I tended to start out with the thirty-two members of the body, sir. After I had finished one round, I started it all over again, but I didn't count how many rounds because I would usually get angry with myself for getting drowsy and distracted. I was mad at myself. So I would tell myself to walk without rest, to recite without rest. I said if I could not attain calm, I would not sit down, even if I were to die. So I walked and walked. I didn't wish for anything. I only wanted to punish myself. I kept repeating to myself and somehow my perception turned out distinctly. I don't know.

**PHRA ĀCHARN** This means that you made a strong resolution in your heart. So you said that if you did not attain calm, you would not give in, you would rather die. That was a resolution that was in itself a one-pointed sense-object. So the heart became one in focus. This "give-in-to-death" device is usually very effective. Actually death is a very important sense-object to concentrate on. In the breathing exercise, we concentrate on the breathing, certainly, but it is like concentrating on death also because without it we will cease to be. Now, as for that part of meditation, did you find anything else that seemed strange to you?

**UBASIKA** Yes, sometimes. There were some occasions in which my perception was clear, not for the recitation I was supposed to concentrate, but for something else. Both my

perception and my knowledge were very distinct. I don't know how to explain this to you, sir, but they were all outstanding to me, those knowledge and perception. And I had a perfect confidence, no more doubt, sir.

**PHRA ĀCHARN** These words, knowledge and perception, are really difficult to explain for other people. Yet they can be understandable to those who have undergone a considerable practice of meditation. For these people, they can readily understand the manner, the taste of such experiences. The heart at that moment is clean and clear; it is joyful, delighted, and serene all at the same time. Here all things are the same. For example, if we see something belonging to the four elements, we will see all other things in the same light. If we see one thing subject to the Three Common Characteristics, then will we see all other things in the same vein. That's why there is no more doubt. Now, what you experienced was realized only to yourself. It's difficult to make it understandable to others.

**UBASIKA** Yes, sir. All things in the world are the same: they are all subject to the Three Common Characteristics.

**PHRA ĀCHARN** In developing insight, we cannot get away from considering the Three Common Characteristics. Both those who are in the course toward perfection and those who have reached perfection consider things in the light of the Three Common

**Characteristics.** They walk or have walked along the same *Way* and differ only in the degree of accomplishment. This agrees with one traditional saying: Three groups of people drink from the same well, walk along the same path, but do not trample on the same footprints. That is, we may be walking along the course of the Three Common Characteristics, but we may acquire varying degrees of insight. We do not trample on the same footprints.

**UBASIKA** Yes, sir. Maybe it's because of the difference in time and occasion. As for myself, I started out differently from other people. And I don't know why, but anyway I usually started out contemplating on one object and then quit. When I started the next session, I would not pick up the same object. It was bland.

**PHRA ĀCHARN** Most feel that way. It's the matter of quality of perception. The clarity of the first time is not the same as that of the second time. The first reason may be that there is a difference in the degree of calmness. The second reason may be that there is a difference in the strength of will power. At one time you might have contemplated with a great deal of conviction, but at the other time you had no conviction at all. The results are not the same. If we do not consider the practices sharply, we will not be able to detect the differences. It depends on our subtlety and intelligence. If we are not intelligent, we will let them slip by without considering. It also has to do with keenness.

**UBASIKA**            There is another thing I notice, sir. It's a hindrance which I could not resolve. If I picked up the same thing to contemplate in the following session, old ideations usually came back. My heart became attached to these images. So I could not get a deep insight. I could not get anything. All I did was to go back to old ideations.

**PHRA ĀCHARN**    That's it. The old and the new happenings are different. In the beginning, we did not intend that those ideations should occur. They occurred by themselves. At that time you were full of mindfulness and concentration. And then there came the ripe moment, like trees: in the fall season, they shed off their leaves, but in the spring leaves and fruits came on again. The point is, we did not have to make a volition. They came out on their own accord. Now, for your following sessions, you had in your memory the taste of calm and happiness of your former session. You wished for them to occur again. So your heart turned impure, unbrightened. That's why you could not arrive at the similar state of achievement. This is to say, it's impossible to contemplate on the same thing and acquire the same taste.

**UBASIKA**            Yes, sir. I have another question. These days whenever I sneaked out to find a quiet place where I could be by myself, I usually took along a Dhamma book. I read it whenever I felt like it. I read bits and parts, and sometimes I took short notes. Some parts were very much to my liking and they were very clear to my understanding. For example,

I read about the daily life, that in our daily life we had to be careful not to let go of ourselves according to various defilements, desires, and attachments. When I read this, I saw images within myself. People might think I was mad with imagination, but they were very clear, sir. I saw risings of ideation, fallings of ideation. The heart had its risings and fallings and was kindled by imaginations. I got carried away by them for a very long time before I came back to myself. At that time, I felt something, a touch of something that I used to tell you before, a touch of something deep, deep down, sir. I realized such tasty sense-objects and I got carried away. I obtained a great deal of pleasure out of this experience. Was that Ideation (*Saññā*), sir?

**PHRA ĀCHARN** The fact, that you found a quiet place to read and recite pieces of Dhamma, is a kind of meditation practice. Then you came to read about the daily life in order that you would not be distracted away. This was a subtle device to bring your heart to focus. That's why you saw mental images. These images may be called *Ideation* because you were still in that stage of Ideation. But, at the time of their appearance, the images did not occur because of Ideation. The heart became focused first, then Ideation occurred. That was why they were distinct on their own doing.

You said, while you were watching Ideation rising and falling, the heart was also cooking risings and fallings. This part was not the doing of Ideation. It was the doing of *Volitional Activities* (*Saṅkhāra*). This is what I meant when I said, Ideation, Volitional Activities, the internal Aggregates brought one

to rebirths. This is because one takes relish in the touch of various sense-objects. The matter of the internal Aggregates is difficult to communicate. Anyone who has not experienced them will not be able to understand.

**UBASIKA** Long time ago, while I was contemplating, I had a mental image about the cause of suffering especially. Ideation and Volitional Activities rose and fell just like that all the time. I saw the disadvantage and suffering of attachment to Ideation and Volitional Activities. I was terribly afraid of this matter. Not very long after that while I was reading, I saw that kind of image again, but it did not last as long as at the time I was in meditation. I don't know whether that was the old ideation I had formerly.

**PHRA ĀCHARN** Knowledge that arose unexpectedly from the practice of meditation and the knowledge that occur afterwards, either as results of reading or meditation, bring about different tastes and relishes. Whatever occur, if you are able to learn from it the disadvantage and suffering of attachment, it's quite all right. The important thing is, you should practise until you become keen.

**UBASIKA** It's more difficult to maintain that kind of insight and images than to acquire concentration. Besides developing mindfulness, would you suggest any further device to help maintaining them ?

**PHRA ĀCHARN** Those knowledge and images were the outcome of concentration. Concentration was the cause; knowledge and images were the consequences. When concentration is firm, knowledge and images arise on their own accord. It's like trees. The trees that have been well tended by gardeners, will bear flowers and fruits according to the season. No one gives them an order. If it's not the right season, you can't possibly order them to bear fruits and flowers. All you need to do is to develop steadfastly your mindfulness. You should not pay attention to the knowledge and images that occurred formerly, for you might become subject to desire, which easily destroys your concentration. Then you will be able to achieve nothing. We are still in the course of training; we are still subject to heedlessness. The ones who have reached perfection have no more heedlessness. Their mindfulness is perfect automatically.

**UBASIKA** Yes, sir.

**PHRA ĀCHARN** Their mindfulness is automatic and is accountable.

**UBASIKA** You talked of heedlessness. I remember one occasion when I achieved concentration, sir. I obtained bright understanding of something else before it became clear to me the Buddha's meaning of heedlessness. The Buddha teaches us "not to be heedless in the least." I had not known before that heedlessness had that meaning. What we mean these days seems to have a different meaning from what he meant then. And the

phrase “in the least” has such an infinite value. I don’t know how to express it.

**PHRA ĀCHARN** There are different degrees of meaning in the Buddha’s teachings, from the coarse to the very refined. We use the word “heedless” (*Pamāda*) also for those who become distracted during the period of meditation. Once you have acquired a clear knowledge and the heart has become so calm and bright, if you happen to swerve out of it, this is also heedlessness.

**UBASIKA** Yes, sir. When we swerve out, we are finished. Talking about swerving out, sir, I had another thing I would like to tell you. That same day, before that, that is, that day, there was a strange happening; an army of big ants, I don’t know from where, marched all over my body. I tried to wipe them out lightly with my hands, but I could not get rid of them, sir. I thought of what I was going to do. And I began to question myself as to what I had done: Did I stain any of the precepts today? I reflected on the things I had done from the early morning upto, yes, upto the evening, right before I came to sit down. I remembered I walked past the *Sāla* (hall of activities). It came to my mind that I stopped there to pick up joss sticks. I asked the Buddha image for ten joss sticks, sir. I intended to use some for paying homage to the Buddha and some to chase away mosquitoes. When this came to my mind, I thought it was probably this that had stained my moral conduct. I thought of the precepts. I don’t know how it happened, but anyway my perception was suddenly lightened. I began to understand what

it meant by purification of the moral conduct. Oh, the heart had to be solitary and free, not attached to anybody. This is the meaning of purification of the moral conduct. The highest degree of moral conduct will certainly put us, who are holding just the ordinary kind of moral conduct, to shame. I thought I was good enough, but I was not any good at all. I couldn't even say that I was partially stained. All these arose to my knowledge on their own accord. This has made me realize that when our consciousness swerves out of its place and is being blended with a covetousness-to-have, it is truly a destruction to our moral conduct. Whether we covet a thing as small as a grain of sand or as big as a mansion, as low as a half a coin or as high as a million baht, the destructions caused by them are equal. They are all under the cover of covetousness.

**PHRA ĀCHARN** That is, you swerved out of your principle. Usually your basic principle was to follow the eight precepts. There are many kinds of meaning associated to the precepts (*Sīla*). One meaning is "stone," something that is not movable and constant. One meaning is excellence. One meaning is firmness and stability. *Sīla* means coolness. Precepts are matters of great delicacy. Here we are talking about the precepts in connection with meditation, or the precepts in the Eightfold Path. Within this Path, precepts, meditation, and wisdom are one.

**UBASIKA** Formerly I understood nothing of the word "Great Precept" (*Adhi-sīla*). And when I understood it, I just did it automatically.

**PHRA ĀCHARN** This is the same with other things, not just the precepts. There are some things we have learned beforehand and some things not. Nevertheless, all of them will appear most clearly to us at the moment of meditation. The kind of knowledge that occurs in concentration takes place especially in one's mentality. It rids one of doubts. It has such a wide scope and delicate details.

**UBASIKA** Yes, sir. I had never known that before. But, when you explained it to me, I knew it was right. At that time I thought, if our mindfulness had not been strong enough, that kind of knowledge would not have occurred.

**PHRA ĀCHARN** Of course, it had to be that way. Now that you came to desire even such little things as joss sticks, your heart felt a leaning all right. That was enough to account for an impurity in your conduct. You wanted the joss sticks to chase away mosquitoes. Here you were dissatisfied with mosquitoes. It's a kind of ill will. That was not a small matter. It's mixed with a revengeful feeling, quite a long story.

**UBASIKA** I think that was fear. I feared that there were going to be mosquitoes, so I took those joss sticks to prevent mosquitoes from coming.

**PHRA ĀCHARN** In order to fight with the mosquitoes. That's it. In order to fight with enemies. Enemies mean dangers, that we do not like.

**UBASIKA** Yes, it's affiliated with a revengeful feeling.

**PHRA ĀCHARN** Right. It's affiliated with a revengeful feeling.

**UBASIKA** I am considering the principle object of my contemplation. Should I contemplate the precepts, or the heart, or the Dhamma?

**PHRA ĀCHARN** To contemplate our precepts is the same as to contemplate the Dhamma. The precepts are also within the body of Dhamma. When a monk explains Dhamma, he is also explaining the precepts, whether they be the five precepts or the eight precepts. They are the same thing. When we contemplate the precepts, the purity or impurity of our moral conduct, we are investigating our heart, because we have to consider its volition.

**UBASIKA** At that time, I did not think of the heart, I thought of the precepts. So I did not realize that they rose from the heart. When I understood, I got the answer in itself.

**PHRA ĀCHARN** That was the answer that was just indeed. That's Dhamma.

**UBASIKA** That was an example of my experience. I had known nothing of the "Great Precept," but it dawned on me on its own accord.

**PHRA ĀCHARN** On its own accord, right, There were some monks who had never studied Buddhism in theory. Yet they acquired knowledge through meditation. This knowledge agrees in all details with the knowledge in theory. The interesting thing is that some who have studied the theory can't explain what they have studied. Once I was asked by a monk who has obtained the ninth level (highest level) in Pali studies. His question was, what was the meaning of *Ābādhāya* in the *Anatta-Lakhaṇa Sutta*. He said he could understand the *Ābādhāya* (illness) of the physical body, but he could not understand how feeling Ideation, Volitional Activities and Formations, and Consciousness could suffer from illness. So I explained to him that illness meant there was something wrong. So, if there's anything wrong with the Feeling, Ideation, Volitional Activities and Formation, and Consciousness, we could say they were ill. That was the question of one who had obtained the highest certificate in Pali. You see, this is the difference between the student of theory and the student of practice. The student of theory learns through words. The best he can do is to analyse words, interpret books. But, the one who practises gets to the truth itself. He knows automatically by himself. His weakness may be that he does not know how to express his knowledge in the accepted terms. In this case, if he has some knowledge of the theory, he will be able to communicate in proper terminology

**UBASIKA** In practice, it's impossible to forget the knowledge and the taste of Dhamma that we have gained.

**PHRA ĀCHARN** Impossible to forget because that knowledge arise so distinctly within our heart. And that is also the way in which we purify our heart. It's not like the way we acquire book knowledge. In this process of education, we have to send our attention out to memorize words in such and such a book, on such and such a page, on such and such a line. The more you stuff them in your head, the hazier you become. It makes you weary. This is to say, you take in, but you do not clean up as you would in the process of meditation.

**UBASIKA** Pretty messy and mixed up, sir. I had just one more thing happened to me that night, after that experience about the precepts. Well, it also had something to do with the precepts. That is, it also became clear to me that this very body of mine had actually been stolen from others. I mistakingly claimed it as mine. Actually it's not mine. It was clear to me that the father and mother built this body, but I did not know from where I came. When I came, I grasped it and claimed that it's mine. I fell in love with it. And the father and mother were so very kind: they brought it up and took good care of it, letting it get what it wished.

**PHRA ĀCHARN** That's because they considered it's theirs. How could they go away without caring for it? The advantage of attachment to the self is here. If they had made use of the theory of selflessness then, it would have been the end.

**UBASIKA** They were especially kind. Now that I come to think of their loving-kindness, I'm all in tears. I feel so grateful.

Actually I did love my father and my mother very much, but now I get so particularly moved. I am sorry that there is no more opportunity for me to return their kindness. I am sorry and I wish that children today should realize the goodness of their parents so that they'll be grateful to them.

**PHRA ĀCHARN** The difference is like earth and sky. When we were children, we were like them. This is natural. If our heart is not at peace, we won't be able to understand anything so deeply, something like gratefulness to one's parents, for example. They had been good to you for a very long time, but you did not appreciate it. Not until you came to practise meditation that you realized it. Don't blame the children. They are inexperienced. Even grown-ups, they are still in the dark.

**Ubasok**

**(Lay gentleman who practises Dhamma)**

*This is a medical doctor in his sixties. He realizes that happiness that rises out of calm, thus making the heart light and comfortable, is beyond compare. He has spent a considerable period of time studying and practising Dhamma.*

**PHRA ĀCHARN** In what field did you begin your profession?  
What was your major subject of study?

**UBASOK** I completed my degree in medicine in B.E. 2480. At first I was not really interested in Buddhism. Later, in B.E. 2490 I happened to think, "For what did I study medicine?" I felt that if I died, I would not have anything to take along. It's as if I had studied just so that I could earn money for my family and myself. All right, I had some medical knowledge to help cure people of their illness. But really, that was a small act of charity, not much. I helped teach medical students, some, but I felt it was not much of a substance to life. I thought to myself, "Was I born only for the sake of earning money? Isn't there anything else more substantial? At that time I could not find an answer.

**PHRA ĀCHARN** What was the principal Dhamma that first inspired you to the study of Buddhism?

**UBASOK** Actually I always had preference for quietude. And my mother used to praise me for my ability to keep words.

When I was in school, I just thought that Buddhism was concerned with morality, that it only taught people to behave properly. So I thought a WAT or a temple was simply a university of moral conduct. I thought this was upto B.E. 2490, ten years after my graduation from university. After that I happened to come across a good example which inspired me to a serious study of Buddhism. That is, an old school friend of mine one day asked me to go to a Burmese temple with him, on Thanon Tok Road. He said there was a good *ācharn*, who taught meditation. If I had gone there, I would certainly have got something out of it. I did not want to refuse, so I went along with him. When we got there, the *ācharn* taught us to meditate. By the way, his name was Jian.

**PHRA ĀCHARN** Was he Burmese?

**UBASOK** He was Thai, sir.

**PHRA ĀCHARN** What did you get out of that period of meditation?

**UBASOK** He did not speak much. When we got there, he told us to sit and meditate. Before that he told us to pay homage to the Triple Gem. Then he gave a short explanation in order to lead us to calmness. He told us to contemplate on our breathing, to take notice of the point where the breathing touched the body. In the beginning, he told us to be conscious just of the breathing in and out. Later he suggested that we followed the breathing-in to the end and that we followed it out. Later he told us to change the base of our consciousness, by contemplating on one particular spot, the spot at which the breath-

ing touched the body. We were supposed to contemplate deeper and deeper.

I followed his suggestions until I felt lightened, calm and without any hindrance. It's as if there had been nothing at the forehead. There was nothing at all, like being out of this world, all blue, full of light, nice and cool, so much so that I felt overjoyed. I thought, "This kind of happiness I never experienced before in my whole life." I was taken by surprise. Then it was time to quit. The teacher said, "Today, even if you have gained only five or ten *Satangs* [one-twentieth or one-tenth], it was the real thing".

After this I began to be interested in the practice of Dhamma. I saw that it was a new and strange experience which I had never had before. **The happiness that rose out of calm was such a comfort. The heart was cool and light.** I began to read books in Buddhism. And I also became ordained that year at Wat Benjamabopitr.

I turned to the practice of meditation. Sometimes I was successful, sometimes not. Really it was quite some time before I was successful. It's very difficult, sir. I thought to myself, "The Buddha must have taught a way to maintain meditation practice even in our daily activities, so that our heart could become comfortable at all times. And this should be so that we didn't have to bother to sit down to meditate separately. So whenever I met any teacher, I would inquire after a method which helps blending meditation with our daily life.

**PHRA ĀCHARN**      What method are you following now?

**UBASOK** I've come to realize that there are two levels of concentration. That is, in our daily life, we have concentration on our work, whether it be on reading or writing. But, this kind of concentration cannot deepen our heart. So the heart can be calm only at the preliminary level.

If I wanted the heart to penetrate deeper and to become more sensitive, I would have to sit down to meditate and to contemplate on the breathing or on the recitation of the word "Buddho." In this way, the heart would be able to penetrate to the deepest possible.

**PHRA ĀCHARN** What is your method today?

**UBASOK** Today I use the breathing exercise. Sometimes I recite the word "Buddho" together with it. The reason is, I think that to recite the word "Buddho" makes it easier to contemplate on the breathing. The latter by itself makes me feel lost and so makes it difficult for me to achieve concentration. For the "Buddho" recitation, I can do it either while sitting in the car or walking. I can recite "Buddho" all the time. It's easier to catch. But, in order to deepen my perception or to make it more sensitive, I have to use the breathing exercise.

**PHRA ĀCHARN** That's right. The breathing exercise is delicate. Most people like it. The Buddha had used it before he became enlightened. So we like to follow his footsteps. But, since we have not enough wisdom, we are not precise.

As for the “Buddho” recitation, it is the basic practice. It is easier to follow whether we are standing, walking, sitting, lying down, or carrying on any kind of activities. This is true. Anyway, whatever method you should be using, death-contemplation exercise, breathing exercise, or what not, you would usually recall the “Buddho” recitation. Most people do like that.

Now, while you are concentrating on the word “Buddho,” did you encounter any marvelous experience?

**UBASOK** While I was reciting the word “Buddho,” I came to think that this way only brought me happiness. It made me contemplate on the physical and mental objects all right, but there should be something more to it. I thought of the meaning of the word. **“Buddho” Means one who knows, One who is awake, One is enlightened.** So I asked myself, “What does he know?” I answered myself, “He knows Sufferings, Causes of Sufferings, Extinction of Sufferings, and the Way toward the Extinction of Sufferings. Then I tried to make it clear as to the **character of sufferings. They consist of attachments and desires.**

Then I considered how I came to be trapped by desires and attachments. I thought of your words, which go like this: **Whenever we come into contact with various sense-objects, we should be particularly mindful. Do not waver, there won't be any positive or negative feeling. When there is neither the positive nor negative feeling, there is no desire.** So I tried to consider myself along this line.

And, what is it---to be awake? I answered myself: **To be awake is to be mindful, to know. When we know, we won't be illusioned.** If we should lack this "know," we would be under illusion. I try to use "Buddho" as the principal theme of my concentration. I try to make it stick to myself, and my heart feels joyful. When the heart becomes focused and serene, there are only light, brightness, and happiness.

**PHRA ĀCHARN** I used to say that the practices of different individuals have different lights. Some people recite "Buddho" without reflecting or investigating. They may become fully concentrated and be completely taken by quietude. Some recite "Buddho" and encounter questions: what is the meaning of the word, and so on? Some recite "Buddho:" once he has achieved one-pointedness, he comes across astonishing sets of knowledge. For some, they may get lost in the recitation. Having discovered that they have gone astray, they have to go back to the recitation and start it all over again. In this case, the heart is yet insensitive.

**Actually if the heart lays down the word "Buddho" on its own accord, it is considered fine and sensitive. At this stage, we should use it to investigate further as to the character of the heart itself. Here if we could not yet understand, we might go back to start reciting "Buddho" all over again. The heart that has already been refined would turn coarse once more. This is the difference.**

The lights and shades of intelligence are each individual's personal property. It's good that you take into consideration the meaning of the word "Buddho," trying to find the process of cause and effect within the heart. What you have explained is correct and is what you should follow in the practice. You may have distractions at times, yet the principle as you have mentioned is good.

Do you encounter anything else in your practice that was a hindrance to you?

**UBASOK** Not much of a hindrance, sir. I used the device that you had suggested. That is, whatever comes hitting the eyes, ears, nose, body, or heart, should never make one waver. One should guard oneself with mindfulness. Be careful not to allow any emotion to spring up.

Then I came to think that the defilements were hiding within the heart; I mean the old defilements that were hiding. I wondered how to wipe and clean them. I told myself that I had to use wisdom to catch them. I had to consider the body and had to be able to catch everything that was happening to it. I had to consider all the Five Aggregates: the Body, Feeling, Ideation, Volitional Activities, and Consciousness. I had to consider them as they really were. They were impermanent, changing, and deteriorating until they became completely dissolved. The very body was composed just of the elements, the four elements: soil, water, air and fire. I have been considering myself along this line, sir, in order to loosen, leave, lay down, and let go of the defilements.

**PHRA ĀCHARN** A meditator gets a clear understanding of Dhamma this way. There might have been many things we were not clear before, but once we turn to practice, we can obtain insight and be rid of all doubts and uncertainties.

In the matter of consideration, we should know this principle. **Whatever takes place, when it hits our senses, the contact occurs at our heart. When it hits the heart, it exists in our feeling, ideation, volitional activities, and consciousness. To say it simply, the five aggregates are the base for attachments. We suffer just because we are attached to the five aggregates. If we had not been attached, we would not suffer.**

I usually explain that we come into contact with things through the five Aggregates, that is, the body, feeling, ideation, volitional activities and consciousness. These Aggregates may also be referred to as the eyes, ears, nose, tongue, body, and consciousness, or simply as the physical and the mental. This is to say, the five Aggregates and the six senses are the same.

**Theoretically speaking we may use different sets of terms, but in practice they are the same.**

The eyes, ears, nose, tongue, and body are called *Rūpa* (the physical). When they meet with a sense-object from outside, they trigger off Feelings, Ideations, and Volitional Activities. One feeling may either be happy or unhappy. This is part of the Aggregate all right. Then if we remember or recognize it, it is an Ideation, which is also part of the Aggregates. The five Aggregates, therefore, are the same as the six Senses. Attachments take place right here. Now, before we are able to perceive the danger of suffering, we must be calm. In calm, we do not

see happiness. That is, we will lay down all that we come in contact. If, however, upon contact, we happen to feel satisfied or not satisfied, we will truly go through suffering. Then, if we consider this condition in calmness, we will be able to see the Three Common Characteristics, impermanence, suffering, and selflessness. Nothing is ours.

Or, you may consider things as composed only of the elements. Eyes, ears, nose are the elements. The body, the sound, the smell, the taste are the elements. When there is a contact between the eyes and a body, that's the eye-consciousness element. *When we see things as elements, we will be able to lay down attachments. That is, we will not lump them up as a person: as an I, he, she, they, and so on. Even if we should be hit by any sense-object, we would not feel heated or wavered. Thus, there is no suffering for us.*

There are a variety of ways to analyse life. Some analyse it on the basis of the Five Aggregates, some on the basis of the Six Senses. In practice, they refer to the same thing.

The principle of the Buddha's teachings is that all volitionally conditioned forms and activities are sufferings. But, why can't we get rid of them? Because we have not enough wisdom.

**We are confident that the Buddha's teachings are truthful doctrine. They are principles which can lead one out of sufferings. So I must say that there is an end to the study of Buddhism. That is, there is a clearly outstanding principle, existing both within and without. Our heart presents itself distinctly to our heart. Even if we**

were to explain this to other people, we would use the same principle. This is to say that a suffering ends here, and all we need to do is to find a subtle way to get rid of it.

A study of Buddhism differs from studies of other disciplines, say, agriculture and forestry. In studying the latter, one has to vary his explanations in accordance with the geographical settings. The subjects are not constant. Here you may use this principle, but there you have to switch to another principle. But, in Buddhism you may not get away from the Four Elements, the Five Aggregates, the Six Senses. There is no change. This is to say, there is an end.

Is there anything else?

**UBASOK** Just a little bit, sir. A monk once gave a talk at the hospital. I did not attend the session myself, but I learned about it from a student's note. The monk had something to say about **Pabhassara - citta**. I understand that it refers to the heart that is calm, one-pointed and momentarily without defilements. It is lightened, bright, but not perfectly pure. He said, this kind of understanding was wrong. He said, we all had **Pabhassara - citta** from our childhood. Defilements came afterwards. I think, if our heart had been pure from the beginning, we would not have been born.

**PHRA ĀCHARN** Many people have questions about this. The Pali statement goes like this: **Cittam pabhassaram āgantukehi kilesehi: our heart is lightened and pure: defilements are new-comers.** The Teacher said that.

Usually when we have nothing in the heart, we are comfortable, joyful. Say, if we hold our breath in for a moment, at that moment there is nothing else. There is just the “one who knows.” That’s it. That’s what I would call “**Pabhassara**” heart.

Whenever we get carried away by anger, for example, we say our heart is covered with defilements. This is what we mean by saying that defilements are new-comers.

You said, if our heart had already been **pabhassara**, we would not have gone through rebirth. No, that heart was not pure. **The heart can be pure only through the cleaning of wisdom, knowledge, and intelligence. That is to say, through perception of cause and effect.** A comparison is this. A piece of diamond before cutting is light and clean all right. But, if it passed through the process of cutting, it would become even more lightened. You asked whether the heart at birth was pure. That’s not pure. *PABHASSARA-CITTA is the genuine state of the heart.* It’s better to use the word “heart” than “Citta.” It’s easier to understand.

If our heart is not calm, we won’t be able to perceive the neutral or sheer consciousness state of the heart. It will be difficult to understand. If you can’t keep the heart under control, how can you have enough intelligence to catch its genuine state? It will be very good, if you can find a way to keep the heart under control and to be able to make use of it in your daily life.

Now I'll speak of *Vipassanā* meditation. Most people say we have to develop *Samatha* meditation before we can go on to *Vipassanā*. **Actually vipassanā and samatha are related. This is, for example, in the case in which we have considered and arrived at a conclusion that things are impermanent, suffering, and selfless. Sometimes we may not intend to contemplate anything, but by and by we may be touched by a question, "why...why does it happen? Why does it dissolve? Well, things are impermanent: they rise...and fall. this is to say, they rise on their own accord; they exist on their own accord. Here is vipassanā all right. Consequently, we learn to lay things down. We won't become attached. Our heart will be focused on calm. Actually it has been calm already, having been hit by nothing. But, even when it is hit by a sense-object, it will be inclined to lay it down more readily, which helps to confirm the state of calmness better than before. Then, *Vipassanā* rises from this condition.**

Prince Siddhattha, before leaving for asceticism, saw the old, the sick, and the dead, which are called "ambassadors of the gods." He felt grave, but he did not know how to express his feeling. Neither did he know who to express it to. He kept thinking about it by himself. When he found an opportunity, he left for asceticism. **To see non-substance in life is vipassanā, but it is vipassana in the light sense, unable yet to grasp any principle of cause and effect.**

When the Buddha followed the life of asceticism, he tried a number of austere practices for six years. But, it was to no avail. So he turned to meditate on the breathing in which he attained calm. He took calm as his major principle. Once he

caught this as his major principle, he turned to consider firmly the nature of the self. Thereafter, he became enlightened.

A Bodhisatta, for example, *Pīra Mahā Janak*, when he saw a woman working on the spinning wheel, he noticed the jingling sound of her two bracelets. He became impressed by a fundamental truth about *the nature of pairing objects*. When he walked into the garden, he saw a mango tree by the gate. It's bearing fruits, all ripe. He said, "Why didn't anybody eat these mangoes?" He told his attendant to bring them to him. After he had eaten them, he said they were delicious. After that he walked on inside. His followers consequently turned to the tree. Some took down the mangoes gently; some hit them with pieces of wood; some threw stones at them. The leaves and the branches were broken and fell down in confusion.

When he came out of the garden, he noticed the condition of that tree. He asked for the reason and his attendant gave him the answer. He felt grave and thought, "This mango tree is a danger unto itself. It must be the same with me who is in this sovereign state." This is to say that wisdom occurred to him.

*Samatha and Vipassanā may take place interchangeably.* Some say that we have to develop *Samatha* to the full before we turn to develop *Vipassanā*. Once I heard a nun saying, "I have worked enough on *Samatha*. Now I am working on *Vipassanā*." I asked her how she worked on *Vipassanā*. She said, "I observed the rising and falling. I don't want calm because I don't get anything from it." So I asked her, "Did you see the rising and

falling distinctly enough?" She said that it was distinct and that things were really this way. She saw it. There were only some occasions in which her perception was not very clear. Here textbooks say that after one has developed Samatha to the full, one must leave Samatha and turn to work on *Vipassanā*. They must be separated.

**UBASOK**                    If we rely on books, we have to separate them.

**PHRA ĀCHARN**        Yes, if we rely on books, we will understand it that way.

**With bad advisors forever left behind,  
From paths of evil he departs for eternity,  
Soon to see the Buddha of Limitless Light  
And perfect Samantabhadra's Supreme Vows.**

**The supreme and endless blessings  
of Samantabhadra's deeds,  
I now universally transfer.  
May every living being, drowning and adrift,  
Soon return to the Pure Land of  
Limitless Light!**

**~The Vows of Samantabhadra~**

**I vow that when my life approaches its end,  
All obstructions will be swept away;  
I will see Amitabha Buddha,  
And be born in His Western Pure Land of  
Ultimate Bliss and Peace.**

**When reborn in the Western Pure Land,  
I will perfect and completely fulfill  
Without exception these Great Vows,  
To delight and benefit all beings.**

**~The Vows of Samantabhadra  
Avatamsaka Sutra~**

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May the merit and virtue  
accrued from this work  
adorn Amitabha Buddha's Pure Land,  
repay the four great kindnesses above,  
and relieve the suffering of  
those on the three paths below.

May those who see or hear of these efforts  
generate Bodhi-mind,  
spend their lives devoted to the Buddha Dharma,  
and finally be reborn together in  
the Land of Ultimate Bliss.  
Homage to Amita Buddha!

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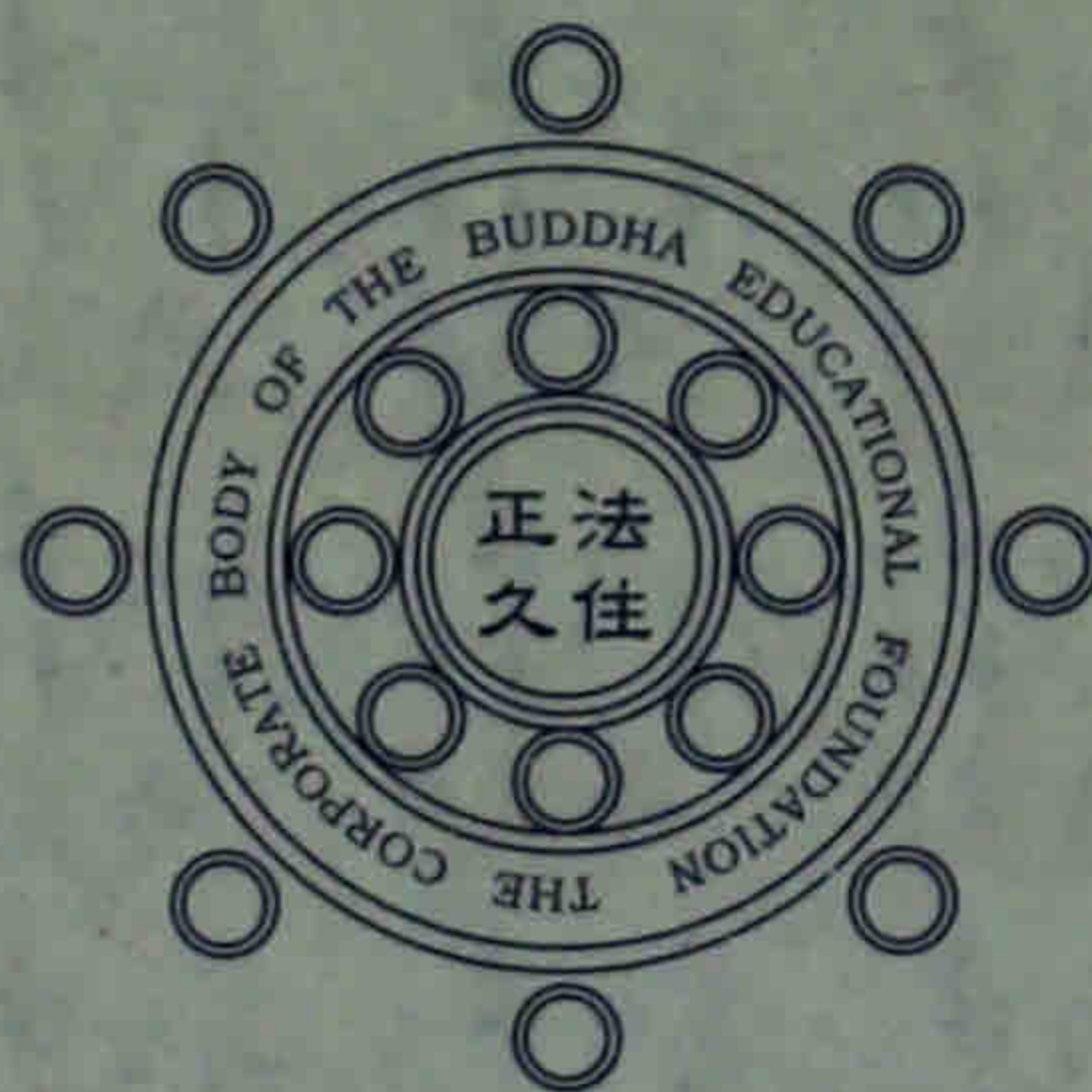
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