

SPIRITUAL TIPS FOR MEDITATORS

PART TWO

By

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CONTENT

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Means and Ends of Meditation

The Art of Meditation

The Middle Ground

Practice Independently

Harmony Within

Calmness and Insight

The Point of Balance

Reconciliation

Dealing with Expectations

Unreliable Thoughts

Meditator's Four Friends

Meditation in Action

Means and Ends of Meditation

Since I would like you to take this opportunity to listen and learn from Luangpor Khamkhian, I will not take much time. I will just speak a little bit to comply with his request. Later, you can request him to share more or answer your questions.

I think what Luangpor Khamkhian said is fundamental to the Buddhist teachings. He stresses mindfulness. It is very important to practice mindfulness, for it is the heart of Buddhist meditation. When speaking about meditation, we have to bear in mind that there are many kinds of meditation, both formal and informal. In fact, meditation is not an exotic method that has to be imported from the East. Meditation is what we have already experienced, what we have already practiced, whether we are aware of it or not. When you see nature, when you look quietly into yourself, when you reflect on your life, that is meditation. When you try to follow your breath with an expectation of calmness, that is meditation. Meditation can be practiced through drawing, painting, or music. So meditation is what we have already experienced to a certain extent. But, to make our meditation beneficial, fruitful, and worthy of our attempts and the time we spend, the shortest way, according to Buddhism, is to cultivate mindfulness. That is, meditation with awareness.

Awareness is the means and end of meditation and nothing else. For some people, meditation is the way to calmness; but for the Buddha, calmness should only be the by-product of meditation. It is the reward that we gain from our practice. Yet, we also want to have total self-awareness. Self-awareness, or knowing oneself, is very important, as Luangpor mentioned earlier. According to the Buddha, to know oneself is to liberate our minds from suffering. We are overcome by grief or sorrow and suffer because we are not aware of ourselves. If we become aware, we can see clearly that we are carried away by greed, by anger, by anxiety. Once we become aware of ourselves, mindfulness is established. Once mindfulness is established, it is not easy for sorrow, anger, ill will, or greed to sneak into our minds. Guarding our minds with mindfulness is the secret of removing suffering.

Normally, we are not aware of this truth, but if you reflect on yourself, you will realize that the best way to clear your mind from suffering is to make your mind neutral, to maintain your mind in the middle. If we let our minds be subject to feelings of being pleased or displeased, like or dislike, rejection or attachment, our minds will never experience calmness or clarity. With mindfulness, calmness and clarity are possible. So with the formal practice of the Buddha, we can learn how to cultivate mindfulness enabling us to be free from being all sorts of fire. The Buddha speaks about fire. There are three kinds of fire that burn us at every moment, every day, every hour, every minute: the fire of greed, the fire of hatred, and the fire of ignorance. The fire of greed or the fire of desire, be it sensual desire or desire for becoming, always burns our mind and that make us feel as though we are lacking.

It is quite strange that the sense of lacking is prevalent in Western societies. Despite the material richness, despite the abundance, people are overwhelmed by the sense of lack. They may have a lot of things in their houses, they may have a lot of money in their bank accounts, they may have success in their careers, but people still feel that they lack something. That is why they try to gain more and more, consciously or unconsciously.

Mindfulness is very effective at stimulating the knowing element in our minds, the conscious element in our minds. It not only helps us to be awake but also brings calmness, which leads to clarity. And once our minds become clear, insight into the nature of mind is possible. That is why mindfulness is very important.

June 8, 1997

The Art of Meditation

You may have noticed the relationship between body and mind during your practice. They affect each other and we should make the best of them for our practice. You may have observed that when you are upset or mentally tense, your breath may become shallow or you may have chest or leg pain. If you understand this relationship, you can learn how to relax your mind by controlling certain parts of your body, for example, breathing deeply can help you relax.

If you want to gain or to attain a desirable of mind, you cannot force the mind directly, but you can condition it by making your body more conducive to this state of mind. The mind is uncontrollable but it can be conditioned indirectly by either the body or external surroundings. For example, if you are in this room, you may feel drowsy, but if you go outside, you are refreshed because of the open air, the open space. The drowsiness disappears. That is the relationship between external surroundings and the mind. Use this knowledge of the relationship to the benefit of your mind.

If you sit up right during sitting meditation, for example, it is easier for the mind to collect, to concentrate, and to be calm, but if you lean against a wall, you may be sleepy. If you feel very tense, lying down will be helpful, but if you feel normal, lying down will make you sleepy. This is the relationship between body and mind. Please learn how to take advantage of this relationship to improve your practice.

During walking meditation, for example, if you feel distracted or your mind becomes busy and wonders without end, walking more slowly can slow your mind. Your mind will be less distracted. The speed of your walk can affect your mind. If you feel tense because of your inward attitude, your mind turns to look inward, stopping the thinking process. In this case walking faster can help to release the tension. The position of your head also affects your mind. As I told you a few days ago, if you lower your head too much, tension tends to arise because your mind is turning inward. But, if you walk and have an indefinite gaze outward, your mind wanders easily and can be easily distracted. So, positioning your head appropriately will moderate your mind.

You have to find the speed that is appropriate for you, not too fast, not too slow. This is an art. Meditation becomes an art because you have to find the balance on your own. If you walk too slowly, your mind becomes tense because it looks inward and concentrate too much on the body and on the thinking process, so you have to speed up. There are two extremes. One is to wander a lot distractedly, and the other extreme is to take it very seriously, to push oneself very hard, trying to stop or to suppress the thought. The one just follows the thoughts; the other wants to stop the thoughts. These are the two extremes. In this practice, we neither stop nor follow the thoughts. But how? This is the point of balance.

I myself have to adapt. When I feel tense in my legs, I walk slowly. If I walk any faster, I cannot get through the seven days retreat. Normally, I do not practice the intensive retreat for the whole week, just for a whole day; the rest of the week I do it indirectly and then I may do something else. But to practice seven days, we have to learn how to do it without being exhausted. It is like marathon walking. If you push yourself very hard at the first kilometer or on the first day, the rest of the days will be disastrous. You have to know how to save your energy so you can go through the whole retreat or marathon.

There is no one standard or formula for everybody. You have to find your own way. If you feel tense, it is better for you to look far to relax. When I first practiced, I look inward so much during the first three weeks that I developed a lot of problems. I could not raise my hands or sleep because I tried to suppress my thoughts. I had to cure myself. To turn my mind outward, I had to look at a specific point during my walking meditation for almost three weeks before I felt better. I think for me to look forward, to look far, is good in that situation, but after that I have never used the method again. Now I just look down on the floor but not too much. Luangpor just said, "Feel relaxed, and just be aware," but I did not know how to apply his teaching to my situation.

I think what Luangpor said about the balance is very important. To be aware is to be on the middle ground between following your thoughts and suppressing them. I like to compare awareness to an egg. If you hold an egg tightly, it will break, but if you do not hold it, it will fall. So, you need to hold the egg firmly but not too tightly. For awareness to be possible, you have to handle gently, as if you are holding an egg. If you force your mind to concentrate, to stop thinking, to achieve something better, or whatever, you are going to crush the egg. But if you feel completely relaxed and do not take it seriously, it is like dropping the egg.

So, in this method of practice, just hold your mind gently. It is how to do this that is the problem. Nobody can tell you. You have to know how to gauge and how to adapt your mind. It is like riding a bicycle; you have to hold your body in balance. If you are stiff, holding the handles of the bicycle very tightly, your whole body becomes tense and you will fall. So, bicycle riding is the art of keeping your body as well as your mind in balance. The same goes for meditating. You have to hold your mind in balance, neither too relaxed nor too tense. How to reach this point is the art of the meditator, and this is the problem. When I first practiced, I found it difficult to reach this point because normally we tend to be at one of the extremes, either forcing ourselves or just letting things loose.

For the practitioner to arrive this point, one needs to have experience with oneself and learn by oneself. If you arrive this way and know what the middle ground is between the two extremes, you will find it easy to practice without tension. You will be able to work the whole day without a problem; at the same time, you will be able to effectively handle undesirable thoughts. Previously, when we had distracted thoughts or a scattered mind, we responded to in one of two ways, either following it or suppressing it. But if we know the middle way, we will find that just acknowledging our mental condition, just noticing the thought that arises, it will disappear or fade away without our having to make an attempt to suppress it.

In order to reach this point, our attitude is very important. If we want to achieve calmness, to develop mindfulness, or to gain something, we tend to suppress our thoughts. We do not want to be distracted so we try by all means to stop distractions, thus bringing ourselves lots of problems, mentally and physically. So, just take it easy. Attitude is very important. To take it easy does not mean that you do not make any effort, but rather, practicing the whole day and making lots of attempts. The point is how to make such attempts without having anything to gain. You came here and you must have been motivated by some expectations. But once you start working, once you start raising your hands, you have to ignore whatever brings you here. If you want something during your practice, that means your mind is in the future not in the present. To practice here is to make our minds present here and now. Mindfulness is the presence of mind. To live your life mindfully means you have to make your mind present in everything you do. When you are watching, your mind is there. When you are walking, your mind is there. When you are taking a bath, your mind is there. That is mindfulness, or the presence of mind.

You may wonder how to practice mindfulness while asleep. It depends on how you cultivate mindfulness when you are awake. If you are mindful most of the day, it will take care of itself during your sleep. You will learn that your dreams can be affected by mindfulness. Even consciousness plays a role in your dreams to a certain extent. They are not totally unconscious. They depend on the mindfulness that you have already developed. So, just take care during your waking hours, because it is the period of the day that we can control.

It took me about a month to find the middle ground, but I am a bad example. Many people spend about a week to find it. For me, I feel that tension is the indicator of whether I am practicing right or wrong. If I am tense, it means I am practicing the wrong way. After one month, I was aware of my thoughts very quickly which was a surprising experience for me. Sometimes, even now after being a monk for more than ten years, I practice and I feel tense, which means I am too serious so I know I have to relax my mind a little bit. I still get tense from time to time, not always at the balanced state, but at least I know how much I have to relax to reach the middle ground. It will be a point you are familiar with. You may get tense but when you feel relaxed to a certain point, you will know that this is the middle ground for you. You have to find it yourself. Nobody can tell you where it is.

There are many indicators for us to be sure whether we have developed enough awareness or not. Sometimes one has a lot of distractions. The mind can become busy, but if you acknowledge the thought very quickly and notice when it occurs, you are aware. Also, to be aware does not mean that you have to be calm. In some situations, the mind is supposed to perform its functions and it is difficult to be calm. As long as you notice that your mind is distracted it is all right. That is why Luangpor said, "Do not try to be undistracted; but once you are distracted, you are aware; once your mind goes out, you are aware." The point is your awareness of your state of mind and knowing it quickly.

For a lot of people, meditation time is only the time when they sit cross-legged and close their eyes. Afterwards, they go to work, and cannot think of meditation. Meditation is limited to the room, in the morning and in the evening. But for us, the meditation zone means trying to make the whole day, or a certain period of the day, a time for meditation even though you do not close your eyes and are still at work. It should start at a portion of the day, and then enlarge its zone. The more you are aware of every moment the more meditation is a part of your daily life. It does not mean that only the time inside a meditation hall is meditation, and the rest is not. It should start from the meditation room and then enlarge to your whole life.

Enlarge the zone in time first and then enlarge it in space as well; try to integrate meditation into your daily activities. Try to use the movement of your body as meditation objects all the time, and try not to stay still. On the car or the bus, rub your fingers. Try to have some parts of your body moving and use the movement of your body. If you can use your breath as meditation object, you have a refined, sensitive mind. Yes, you can do that, too. Luangpor suggests using the blinking of your eyes or the swallowing of your saliva. Breathing is useful because you do it all the time, especially at night when lying in bed. But while typing it may be difficult to be aware of your breath, so just be aware of the typing itself as the object of meditation. When you take a bath, the movement of your body is the object of meditation. So we are never short of an object of meditation except when we are sleeping. That is the benefit of Sati Meditation; you have an object all the time.

We need to have a physical object for meditation all the time, and our body is better. Your mind should be aware of your body's movement. Once a thought arises, your mind goes to the thought, acknowledges it, and then returns. So you have a home. Meditation provides you with a home that is the object of meditation and your mind stays with it. The movement of your body is the present moment. To be mindful is to be present in the present moment, so we try to provide a present moment for the mind, the body's movement. When you become distracted by a thought, that is the present moment too, so the mind should be mindful, but since the thought is undesirable we just let it go and come back to another present moment, your body's movement. It is okay to shift awareness from one type of your body's movement to another frequently if you are skillful. If you are an adept practitioner, it is not difficult to shift. Try not to practice only two postures because if you practice only walking and sitting, you may find it difficult when you want to be aware of additional activities. You will not be adept enough to apply mindfulness to that activity because you have only been using rhythmic meditation and walking meditation all the time. So, you have to be adept, to be skillful, to apply mindfulness to every area of life.

For example, in a normal situation, I would use the rubbing of my fingers as an object but, if I am tired, I can concentrate on my breath because it will turn my attention away from the tiredness of my fingers. It is the same with walking; if I walk or climb up a mountain, at a certain point, I shift my awareness to the breath because my legs feel tired. This is the way to release tension. You can shift from one to another. In Thai, we called it a toy or hobby, we change from our routine to a hobby, and then we change back again. To make meditation more entertaining, we find something strange, something special, something new to play with, and then after we feel we have had enough, we return to the main posture. Please try to apply mindfulness to another postures or activities, not only in daily life but in the retreat, too. When I practiced with Luangpor Teean, sometimes he asked me to clean the floor. He gave me a broom and asked me to be aware when I was doing that job. He wanted me to not stick to the two main postures. During the first few minutes, I felt disturbed, unable to be mindful of the work, because I had limited my activities to only two postures and did not know how to apply mindfulness to that work. But later I knew. In Luangpor's retreat, he also likes people to stay with sitting and walking, but he will provide you with some work to do like cleaning the toilet because he wants us to be skillful in every activity; otherwise you will not be able to apply it to other activities after the retreat.

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The Middle Ground

As you already know, we are training our mind to reach the middle ground that is between the outward oriented mind and the inward oriented mind. Do not try to turn your mind too much outward or too much inward, to follow your thoughts or to stop them. The middle ground also means trying to avoid being lazy due to being too relaxed or being strained due to too much tension.

It also means that we have to avoid the two extremes of indulging in pleasure and indulging in pain. What does it mean by that, indulging in pain or indulging in pleasure? It means that when you recall a good memory or refreshing images you get high, and when you recall unpleasant feelings in the past, a bad memory, you get low. If you are moved like that, that means you are already indulging in pleasure or pain. If you are stuck in the pleasant feeling that means you are indulging in pleasure, which is one extreme. If you get low or become angry because of your thoughts about somebody that you have bad experiences with, you become dragged down by such thoughts or memories, or if you feel upset because of dissatisfaction with your practice, means that you are indulging in pain.

So, to avoid these two extremes means try to keep your mind normal, stable, and unmoved by pleasant or unpleasant feelings, good or bad thoughts, good or bad mental experiences. So, you see that the term *middle ground* means balanced. It has a broad meaning. It means that you do not follow the thought or suppress the thought, turn your mind too much outward or too much inward, be lazy or push yourself too hard, or indulge in pleasure or in pain.

It is the art of meditation to keep our minds in balance, to reach the middle ground. You may feel it is very difficult to attain this state of mind even though you have come closer to it. Sometimes, you have already attained that balance, but you may be dissatisfied with it. You do not realize that you have already arrived at the middle ground, so you push yourself harder and go beyond that point, moving towards another extreme. Sometimes, your mind is too much inward so you try to relax, but you relax so much that you pass the state of balance, wasting a lot of time. Sometimes, you do not think this is the point that you need to attain. You think, "Oh! This is not the state of awareness because so many thoughts are still coming up, so I have to push myself harder." You are not satisfied with that state of mind simply because you have some expectation, so you keep passing the state of balanced mind without realizing that you have already experienced it.

I think expectations are sometimes illusory. They are dangerous because they can deceive us, so we have to be very careful. We have some expectation about awareness, so we have already adjusted our mind to the expected state of awareness. Since we do not feel the calmness that we expected and we feel thoughts still arising, we keep ignoring this state of balanced mind. I am sure that you have already experienced the state of awareness, the state of balanced mind, even though you may not realize it. So try again that you may find it and have confidence in it.

Another point that I would like to mention is that, aside from keeping our mind in balance between the two extremes, we also need another art, the art of reconciling two opposing values. We face conflicts in our daily lives between freedom and discipline, between diligence and concentration. If you are too diligent, your mind becomes distracted, but if you concentrate too much, you tend to be lazy. The point is how to reconcile these two opposing values. Right and duty are another pair of values that we have to reconcile. Individualism and communalism are also two opposing values that we have to reconcile or our lives will suffer.

We also face the same dilemma in meditation practice. It may be even more difficult than what I have already mentioned. One is to take it easy but to try hard. Luangpor always stresses this, "Relax! Take it easy, but try hard." Take it easy but keep trying all day. It is quite contradictory, but you have to reconcile these two or you cannot make progress. Luangpor Teean always said, "Take it easy, but seriously." Luangpor Teean, unlike Luangpor Khamkhan, would give you only a five minute talk. At his interview, which lasted less than five minutes, he kept saying we should take it easy but seriously or take it easy but do it all day. I was quite confused then, but now I understand what he meant. I think this is the kind of training that is very useful for our daily lives because it is the art of working happily and more effectively. To be happy and to be effective is a pair of values that may seem to oppose each other but that can be reconciled.

During the practice, you have to learn not to expect anything, to just work. If there is too much distraction, that is okay. If you suffer, that is okay. If you are frustrated, that is okay. You have to learn this attitude, because if you want to gain something, to attain calmness, to be aware of your thoughts as quickly as possible, you will be inclined to keep turning your mind inward trying to suppress your thoughts. You will keep watching your thoughts all the time and end up ignoring the awareness of your body.

Luangpor always emphasizes that we should grasp our awareness of the body and ignore our thoughts first. But normally, in my experience, I seldom remembered this instruction. I tried to stop my thoughts, to suppress them, because I wanted to win. I did not have much time, so I wanted to attain the result as soon as possible and I got stuck. After three weeks, I could not practice anymore. I could not do the hand postures because once I moved my hands, after only a few minutes, I got a headache and I suffered. With a headache and a lot of pain, I could not sleep. I made a vow to practice with Luangpor Teean for one month, and three weeks had already passed with only one week left. Feeling hopeless, I decided that I would leave the temple after I finished that week. So I just walked without any expectations, just waiting for my time to finish. I just kept walking because I could not do anything else. That week was very good for me because once I did not have any expectations, did not have any hopes, and just walked to waste the time, just trying to ease my tension to turn my mind from inward to outward, I felt that mindfulness suddenly developed a lot because I did not mind anymore.

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Practice Independently

The *truth*, I think, you have to see it. You have to see the truth for yourself. If I tell you, it will not be your truth but an academic or indirect experience. I suggest you not use your intellect to find the truth but direct experience; you must realize it by yourself.

Sati, or *Mindfulness*, is a capacity of mind to recall. When you walk in meditation, you think about your work next month; the body walks but the mind goes somewhere else. Then, you recall that you are supposed to be mindful while walking. That is *Mindfulness*.

When your mind comes back to walk, you feel the sensation of walking and have clear comprehension. That is *Awareness*. It is very important for us to try to experience awareness directly. It is also a capacity of the mind. One can not experience awareness through thought or the intellect for it is beyond the realm of intellect. You have to experience it directly with your feelings. We use a lot of thought, a lot of intellect, but rarely the faculty of feelings or awareness. When you want to touch something, you have to touch it with the hand, not the glove. Intellectualizing awareness is like touching something through gloves; it is not awareness, not a direct touching with your mind.

I would like to recommend you to practice independently. Independent of what? First, be independent of time. When you walk or practice, do not worry about the time. Some practitioners set the time, saying they will walk or sit for one hour. Then they set the clock in front of them. This will make hell out of their practice because they are concerned about the time, whether they have completed the hour or not. Even with thirty minutes left, they still worry. They are anxious about when they will reach the hour. Do not worry about the time or the clock; practice without any references, allowing your mind to get in touch with mindfulness or awareness.

Sometimes you are also concerned about other people. Why does this person walk so quickly? Why does she walk so slowly? If you keep asking and comparing yourself with other people, you will not be sure whether it is good for you to walk slowly or quickly. That is why you should practice independently, unconcerned with other people. You have to find your own way, the suitable speed or suitable pace for yourself. Everybody has his or her own way of practice. Please ignore what the other people do; just be concerned with yourself..

Another thing that may cause you anxiety is the notion of awareness, or the concept of mindfulness. You have some idea about awareness or mindfulness. When your experience does not fit with that notion or idea, you feel unhappy, you feel uncertain, you feel unsure about the practice. Please forget whatever notions you may have about mindfulness or awareness, even words by the master, or the teachers. The master said that awareness is like this, and mindfulness is like that. You become attached to these words. When your experience does not fit with these words or ideas, you feel unhappy. When I first practiced, I was confused. Somebody said you have to be aware like this, but the other master said you have to be aware like that. I was bewildered. Which one is the real awareness? It is difficult to explain what awareness is like. You can not convey awareness by words, but have to know it from your experiences. This is true even of color – when you see this robe, you know exactly what color it is, but to express it out loud people use different words. Somebody says this is yellow, but others claim it is orange. Different people use different expressions even for the same thing. Please ignore these references.

The fourth thing to be independent of is the previous results that you may have obtained. Yesterday, you experienced calmness, you achieved wonderful practice, and then you want your practice right now to be the same. That is another kind of reference that you should avoid. If you have such references or if you are concerned with past results, you may be unhappy. They will never fit with one another. Ignore the results of the past and start again at the present moment. *Practice independently*, independent of previous results. It is already the past; let us ignore it. However good your experience was, be it calmness or tranquility, do not try to repeat it again or you will be disappointed. Why? Because you have some expectation, and expectation makes your mind out of balance. To practice like this, balance is crucial. You have to keep your mind in balance. Desire or expectation tends to push your mind out of balance. Therefore, forget whatever happened to you, even your expectations.

Be careful with expectation! When you expect something, you have preconceived notions about it. If experience does not conform with that idea, you reject the experience. There is a story that is very instructive. An individual on a sinking boat prayed to God for help. Being very devout and sincere, he sincerely believed that God would help those who have faith in Him. During his prayer, a life-boat came by and asked him to join. He said: “No, I believe God will help me, because he never ignores those who have faith in Him.” So, the life-boat left him behind. One hour later, the sea level was already at his chest. A fisher’s boat came. He said: “No! God will help me.” Another hour later, the sea level was already up to his neck. A patrol boat came. He replied again: “No.” So, he drowned and went to heaven because he was a good person. When he met God, he asked: “God, why did you forsake me? I prayed for you even at the time of crisis!” God replied: “You fool! I sent three boats to help you. Why didn’t you take the boat?” The man expected a miracle. In reality, no miracles happen. God’s action is not miracle; He works through ordinary events. So, with expectation, the person tried to reject even the help of God.

Do not be too concerned with expectations or you will reject the experience that you have already achieved. Just work independently of expectation, and try to get in touch with real awareness through direct experience. When you get a result, it will be the true outcome of your practice. Do not bother with miracles or preconceived expectations.

Q: How can you forget everything and not have any expectations or references?

A: It can be done through repetition. In the first hour it may not be easy to forget, but if you practice more and more, you will feel in harmony with the practice, and then this notion will pass away. Nevertheless, you have to do it repeatedly, over and over again. Then, a new kind of habit will develop, the habit of letting go and forgetting expectations.

Q: That is very, very hard!

A: It is possible, if you try to be at the present moment. I found that when I feel in harmony with the practice, I do not care about the rest. To be in harmony with the practice takes time, but it is possible. We call it – To be at the present moment. When you have developed that habit of being at the present moment, you will be less distracted by expectations, by time or schedules, by other people's practice.

Q: Are you suggesting that we totally ignore previous experience on how to get there?

A: I suggest you do that when you start the practice. However, when you finish, you may review and think about which one is the way. During the practice, try to be at the present moment; otherwise, your previous results will distract you from the practice.

Q: When we start the practice again, we will take reference of the previous experience, right? Then, how can you practice independently?

A: A kind of habit will develop within you.

Q: Right, I see what you mean, inherit a habit from the previous practice instead of knowledge.

A: Yes! It has already happened to you, because all of you have been practicing for a long time. You have inherited some habits or some tendencies. That is the most important, more important than something in your mind.

Q: Not to be guided by thought, but by your natural movement or habit.

A: Yes! This is what we call “*Adept*” or “*Skillful*”; you become more skillful. Take swimming for example. Thinking, or recalling the instructions, does not help you much when you are swimming. You have to be at the very present moment. Whatever you do will become a tendency or habit in you. Once you know how to swim, it becomes your second nature. It becomes a part of you. No matter how much time has passed, maybe ten years, you still know how to swim because it has become your nature. I think Mindfulness or practice is like that. Once you know how to adapt your mind to be aware of the present moment, it becomes your nature. You may give up the practice for a while, then come back. In the beginning it is difficult, but after you practice for a few minutes it will come back.

Which I call “*Habit*.” I myself, when I practice, never think much of the results. I think only that this will form a new habit. Once the habit has developed, it is easier to practice. This is how you train children to take a bath or to brush their teeth. At first, they refuse, but you just push them to brush their teeth. It becomes their nature and they will go to the bathroom to brush their teeth on their own. Mindfulness is like that. In the beginning, your mind follows the thoughts and never comes back. Then, you call it back. Second time, it goes again, following the thoughts and comes back. The third time, it comes back quickly, faster, but still takes a long time. Then, you call it back all the time, many times; it returns faster and faster. The unintentional thought will become shorter and shorter. In the beginning, it is like a train of thoughts with twelve cars of thoughts; after practicing for a few days, it becomes ten cars. The train of thoughts becomes shorter, shorter, and shorter. Then, only one car of thoughts, because your mind becomes faster. It is the habit of the mind to come back faster. This is what mindfulness is. You need not to stop the thoughts. Your mind will come back on its own.

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Harmony Within

Meditation practice is to train ourselves to be in harmony with ourselves, or to be in harmony with the present moment. To be in harmony with the present moment has a broad meaning. It means that we have to be content with what we have, with what we are doing, and also with what we are at the present moment. To go deeper than that, it means to be content, accepting the thoughts or emotions that we have at the present moment.

To accept does not mean that you are lost, or follow the thoughts. That is not acceptance. Accepting means keeping our mind normal, not reaching to the thoughts whatever they may be. This is the only way to free our mind from all kinds of thoughts or emotions. Whether they are positive or negative thoughts, pleasant or unpleasant emotions, agreeable or disagreeable feelings, just observe them and learn to come to terms with them.

People, in general, are likely to react to the thoughts or emotions that they have. To be precise, they are not reacting, but attached, or clinging, to the emotions or thoughts that arise, even unpleasant feelings. It may sound strange, but we do cling to unpleasant feelings or emotions. You may have noticed that when we experience anger we never try to let it go. We keep recalling the incident that causes us anger and keep reminding ourselves about the behavior of that person that upset us. We cling to that negative emotion or experience and never try to let go of it. We may want to, but we never try. We just cling to it, grasping the anger, the anxiety or whatever. Thus we cannot sleep at night because we keep thinking about this and that despite the fact that they are unpleasant feelings, emotions, events or experiences. That is why I say “*We cling to it*”. We do not accept it the way it is, but cling to it. That is what the Buddha called “*Indulging in Pain*” or “*Indulging in Suffering*”. In the first sermon of the Buddha, he mentioned two extremes, *indulging in pain* and *indulging in pleasure*. Buddha advised us to avoid these two extremes.

To indulge in pain does not mean that we torture ourselves as the Buddha did when he tried to attain enlightenment through ascetic behavior. He refused food and slept on nails. That is indulging in pain, but all of us never do that. Still, we indulge in another kind of pain, mental pain. When anger arises, we are lost in anger. When anxiety arises, we are caught up in anxiety. We grasp it, grasping anger, clinging to anxiety. This is indulging in pain. We have already fallen into the extremes that the Buddha suggest we avoid.

The same applies to indulging in pleasure. Normally, people think that to indulge in pleasure means indulging in sensual pleasure like a playboy: to have new spouses, to enjoy themselves in the casinos, theaters, night clubs, etc. Yet, you have already experienced indulging in pleasure mentally. When pleasant feelings arise in your mind you cling to them and enjoy them, do you not? We are always caught up in the agreeable emotions and feel content with them. This is indulging in pleasure, another extreme that the Buddha instructed us to avoid.

You may have realized that you have already indulged in those extremes during your practice. That is not the middle way that the Buddha suggest we traverse. The middle way, in this sense, means not losing yourself in either painful or pleasant experience, be it calmness, happiness, suffering, anger, or anxiety. Do not become lost in those feelings or emotions. Just accept them as they are. When pleasant feelings or good thoughts arise in your mind, you tend to follow it, do you not? When you encounter unpleasant feelings you want to suppress them, do you not? But that is not an act of acceptance. To accept means to observe, to see, to recognize, and to let go of it. This is the only way to be free from all kinds of feelings or thoughts.

I would like to urge you to learn how to come to terms with all kinds of thoughts and emotions that arise. You will find that once you accept them, once you observe them, they will gradually pass away. This is the best way to let go of them, the best way to liberate ourselves from them, the best way to get rid of them. Not to stop them, but to observe them, and they will gradually be dissolved. This is the middle way that the Buddha suggests: *to indulge neither in pain nor in pleasure*. Not only in the physical or sensual aspects but also in the more delicate mental aspect. This is the aspect or level that people always fall into without realizing that it is not the middle way the Buddha suggests.

Is it clear to you? Just to elaborate what Luangpor said: “To see, but not to identify with it.” If you identify with it you have already indulged in both pleasure and pain. Just see it as it is, as it really is; do not be overjoyed or upset by pleasant or unpleasant feelings. This will keep our minds stable. That is what we call accepting the way we are in the present moment and being in harmony with the present moment. That’s all for this morning.

Thoughts always trick you or make a fool of you. They need your attention, as a child always asks for his mother's attention. They are very clever and have many tricks to fool you, to draw your attention. Persuading you, the thoughts says: "Come! Come talk with me! Come join me! Come interact with me!"

In the beginning, you may think that you know their tricks, but their tricks are endless. When I practice, I say to the thoughts: "No, I will not interact with you! Whatever thoughts arise I will turn my back on you." Yet, they have many new tricks to make a fool of me. Sometimes they ask: "Hey! Why don't we think about the Dhamma? Investigating Dhamma is good, isn't it?" So I jump into the thoughts, and later realize: "Oh! I fell into your trap again." That's all right. You should try to have strong will. Sometimes you have very beautiful and excellent ideas. You may think about the glorious past, a beautiful moment in the past, or somebody whom you would like to talk with. The thoughts will try to persuade you to interact with them, but you should have strong determination to resist their temptation.

In the beginning, it may be difficult. With the support from mindfulness, with the strength of mindfulness, you will feel it increasingly easier to ignore the call or temptation of the thoughts. Later, you will find that it becomes your natural response because, after a period of practice, the temptations of the thoughts become less enticing and less powerful.

Why do they become less powerful? Because the thoughts become shorter and shorter. In the beginning the thoughts are long, like a train of thoughts. Gradually, the thoughts become shorter, shorter and shorter. The shorter a thought is, the less powerful it is. That is why you will find it increasingly easier to turn your back on them and accept them the way they are. Once a thought arises, do not bother with it. Just see it and say to yourself: "That's the way it is." Whatever the thoughts or feelings arise, be they good or bad, wholesome or unwholesome, just see them without being disturbed or annoyed by them.

Yet, in the beginning, you may feel upset with yourself, because you never realized that bad thoughts or evil ideas could arise in you. Some desire will come up, and you will have never realized that you could have such bad ideas, such evil thoughts. But, it will arise. If you are mindful enough, you will accept it. That's the way it is. Gradually the equanimity arises.

So I suggest you maintain the attitude of acceptance. Whatever ideas, whatever thoughts, whatever emotions occur in your mind, just try to keep them normal and have no preferences – like or dislike, appreciation or aversion. Try to avoid these two extremes, and just accept them the way they are. This is the second mantra I would like to present to you – “That’s the way it is.” The bad thoughts that arise, the evil ideas that arise, are beyond your control. So, just accept them as natural, as normal. That’s the way it is. Thus develop the indiscriminative mind.

The ordinary mind tends to be judgmental. It always judges – this is good, that is bad; this idea is good, that idea is bad; I like this idea, I do not like that idea; I am content with these emotions, I am not content with those emotions. With a discriminating mind you will never experience peacefulness. Your mind will go up and down, up and down, because of such preferences or such judgmental mind.

The way to attain peace is to develop the indiscriminative mind. Have no preferences or judgment, and see everything as it really is. Accept it as the natural process that occurs to your mind. They are just visitors, coming and going. No matter how good or bad the idea is, any kind of idea, just let it come and go, appear and disappear. Do not be bothered with it. Just see it, take note of it, and then come back, returning your attention to the body’s movement.

In brief, try to resist the temptations of the thoughts. They need your attention because that’s the only way they can sustain themselves. Unless you give them your attention, they can not survive. They can exist only with your support. If you do not pay attention to them, they will just pass away. This is the best way to handle the emotions. Do not suppress them, stop thinking, nor force your mind to drop these thoughts. Just say to yourself: “When the thoughts arise, that’s the way it is.”

July 9, 1997

Calmness and Insight

There are two words that Luangpor always mentions, mindfulness and awareness. Both are like twins. They are interchangeable, help each other, and always come together. Mindfulness is that which recalls. For example, you are moving your hands, but you forget that you are doing it because your mind is distracted. Then, you remember that you should be attentive to your hand movement. That capacity to recall is mindfulness. Mindfulness recalls and brings your mind back to the action of your hands.

When your mind is attentive to your hands, or to any activity, you become aware of your body, aware of yourself. This is awareness. Once you are aware of any activity, you know what should be done as far as that activity is concerned. This is clear comprehension, another function of awareness. When you are aware of an object and attentive to it, your mind becomes increasingly collected and composed, thus enhancing concentration.

Awareness also gives rise to and strengthens mindfulness. Sometimes, while you are supposed to be aware of your body's movement, your mind becomes distracted. Awareness of your body's movement sometimes helps your mind to recall that you must be mindful of your body, and that's why it can help to bring your mind back. It awakens mindfulness, bringing back the mind. For example, when you are listening to someone's speech, you rub your fingers. You may be distracted by the environment, by your worries or your concerns about something else. Suddenly, you feel the sensation of your fingers and the sensation helps you to remember that you should be listening to the talk. So, mindfulness becomes function and brings your mind back to the talk, to be attentive to it. This is how awareness helps mindfulness to function, or take place.

Mindfulness, awareness, and concentration are closely related. Mindfulness gives rise to awareness; awareness gives rise to concentration; and vice versa. They help each other, enhancing each other. Don't be confused when Luangpor sometimes mentions mindfulness and a few moments later he mentions awareness, or mindfulness and awareness. They are the same. Technically they are not the same, but in practice they work very closely together. Briefly speaking, mindfulness brings the mind back to the activity or meditation object. Once your mind is with the object, you have awareness, you know and you see clearly.

With the functions of mindfulness and awareness as I mentioned, two things will occur. The first is calmness. It arises because you are not distracted by thoughts or by external stimulation. Your mind does not wander around because your mind is attentive to, or tied to, the meditation object. Thoughts may arise in your mind, but they are short and do not disturb you much. You may feel hot, you may feel cold, but it does not give rise to anger or upset you because mindfulness brings you out of the anger or negative qualities and back to the object of meditation. But, if you do not have an object of meditation, your mind can easily be caught in the anger that is the result of unpleasant feelings. So, mindfulness and awareness help you to let go or be free from the discontentment. That is why calmness and relaxation are possible for the one who has mindfulness.

The second thing that happens when you have mindfulness is wisdom, or clarity of mind. It happens because mindfulness and awareness keep your mind from liking or disliking, from being up or down, from being content or discontent. They keep your mind stable and without bias. If you have preferences, if you are discriminative and like or dislike, you have bias and you cannot see things clearly as they really are. This will not be the case if you have mindfulness. For example, when anger arises, you will not be caught up in it, you will distance yourself from it and see the anger. You do not reject anger, but just see it. You can see how it exists and how it passes away. But, if you get into the anger, you cannot see, and you cannot know the anger. Just as when you are in this Hall, you cannot see what this Hall looks like unless you go outside; only then can you see what the Kuan Yin Hall looks like. You have to be outside so that you can see clearly what or where it is. How can you be outside the anger if you do not have mindfulness? Mindfulness helps you to be outside the thought and see it as really is. That is why Luangpor always emphasizes that: 'You have to see. You should know. You should not be lost in any kind of thoughts, be they good or bad, of pleasure or pain, so that you can see and know. Truth will reveal itself.'

In short, as I mentioned, there are two kinds of results that will take place: calmness and insight, or wisdom. Yet, you should bear in mind that calmness is not the primary aim of this meditation. The primary aim is insight. If you take calmness as the primary objective, it is easy for you to become lost in calmness, and then you can not even see what it is. Just recognize that calmness is like this when it manifests itself and do not be overjoyed with it. Just see that that's the way it is, and then try to maintain your mind to see, to be clear; keep knowing, keep observing. That's all.

This is just to make a brief distinction between mindfulness and awareness, and to highlight their main functions as well as how they work together. Practically, they have more functions than what I have just mentioned.

July 10, 1997

The Point of Balance

As you may be aware, Luangpor tries to suggest that you not watch your mind or watch your body closely. There are some justifications for that. In our daily life we tend to do a few things at the same time. You should allow your mind to be aware of your whole body rather than only a particular part of it. Otherwise, you may make mistakes in your activities.

For example, when I began my practice, one day, I finished my lunch and had to throw the leftovers into the waste basket. Since I did not know how to practice properly, I forced my mind to concentrate only on my feet while I was walking to the waste basket. When I arrived at the basket, I threw the leftovers into the basket and forgot that not only the leftovers but the fork and spoon were also thrown away. Why? Because I concentrated too much on my feet. I did not allow my mind to be aware of my whole body, to be aware of the act of holding the plate with the leftovers and the fork and spoon. If you force your mind to concentrate only on one part of your body, you limit your awareness to that part and forget the rest.

There is another story of a practitioner who wanted to concentrate on every act of her movement in detail. Before she went to the office she had to get dressed. She concentrated on her act of dressing very consciously and very intensely. When she took the shirt, she concentrated on it. While wearing the shirt, she also concentrated on every movement of the wearing. The same applied to putting on her trousers, her socks, and her shoes. When she went to work, it took more than an hour for her to realize that she forgot to zip her trousers.

It's okay if you walk with too much concentration in a walking meditation; it's not much of a problem because you only have one act. Yet in reality, you have many acts at the same time. You walk and you hold something in your hands. When you drive a car, you have to look at the road, and control the steering and the speed with your hands and legs. These require your total awareness. Focusing your mind on only one particular part of your body will cause problems.

I have spoken only of the physical aspect or the aspect of the body activities so far. This principle also applies to the mental aspect. If you force your mind to watch your mind closely, you tend to block your thoughts. When there is no thought, you do not learn how to let go of it. You should allow thoughts to arise so that you learn how to let go of the thoughts or emotions. If you block your mind, the thoughts cannot arise, and then you do not know how to let go of them when they do arise.

It is important for you to keep your mind in balance, to not watch or concentrate too closely nor to let it loose to all distractions. This will enable your mind to be aware of the mind, to be aware of the body, not only of your hands, but the whole of your body and also its surroundings. This is what we should do when we cross the road, especially the road in this country. You have to be aware of the act of walking, and also of the mind. “Am I absent-minded?” If you are absent-minded while crossing the road, it is very dangerous. You also need to be aware of your surrounding of the car that is coming. So, you have to be aware of three aspects: body, mind, and your surroundings. One can achieve this only if he keeps his mind in the point of balance, neither watching too closely the mind nor concentrating merely on the body.

For the beginners, do not be confused with what I said. Be aware of your body first. Do not pay much attention to the mind or to the thoughts because you have to go step by step. You may be aware of your surrounding at the same time, of the noise or whatever; just be aware with mindfulness. Do not be disturbed by the noise or by visitors that come to talk to you. Just see them as they really are, accept them as that’s the way it is. That’s all.

This is what Luangpor Teean instructed Luangpor Khamkhian thirty years ago. Because Luangpor Khamkhian, at that time, was very good at concentrating his mind on the breath only and would cut himself off from his surroundings or any kind of thoughts because he watched closely only the mind. Once, when he was practicing in a closed room with closed windows and a closed door, Luangpor Teean came to interview him. Luangpor Teean did not go into the room but, standing outside the hut, asked: “What are you doing?” Luangpor Khamkhian said: “I am practicing meditation.” So Luangpor Teean asked: “Can you see me?” Luangpor Khamkhian replied: “No, I cannot see you.” Luangpor Teean then asked: “What does it take for you to see me?” Luangpor Khamkhian replied: “I have to open the door first.” So Luangpor Teean asked him to open the door. At once, he opened the door. Standing at the threshold, Luangpor Teean asked: “Now, do you see me?” Luangpor Khamkhian replied: “Yes, now I see you.” “Can you see inside (inside the room)?” Luangpor Khamkhian replied: “Yes, I can see inside.” “So, now you see both outside and inside, do you not?” Luangpor Khamkhian said: “Yes, I can see both.” Luangpor Teean said: “You should practice like this; do not focus your mind only on the inside.” In other words, do not turn inward, but be aware of both the outward and the inward; that is the point of balance.

So, Luangpor Teean suggested Luangpor Khamkhian not block his mind or turn his mind inwardly, but allow his mind to be aware of the outside and of the whole of himself. This is how this practice is different from many other methods. Many methods try to block your mind; you can achieve concentration very easily with those methods. Yet, once you get out of the practice, your mind can easily be disturbed by thoughts because you have not trained yourself in how to deal with them. Since the thoughts have been blocked, you have had no chance to be aware of them and thus learn to let go of them. This is how it is different. I just explained the reason behind Luangpor’s suggestions; why not watch closely so that you can develop total awareness during your practice and apply total awareness during your daily life.

July 10, 1997

Reconciliation

There are two fundamentals of practice. The first is to practice with relaxation. The second is to take it seriously. These two fundamentals are very important for the practice. The point is how you can reconcile them. When I first practiced, I felt it very difficult. I felt confused when Luangpor Teean said, “Be at ease, but take it seriously.” He always stressed these words. Literally, he said, in Thai, “Do it playfully, but seriously.” To do it playfully means that you have to be at ease when you practice and to be at ease at the present moment. To take it seriously means you have to continue your practice all day, all week, all month, and all year. This is what he meant. To take it seriously means you have to continue it, neither giving it up nor stopping it.

I think this is the art of the practice, how to reconcile the two opposing values, the two opposing principles. Both principles are good, but on some level they are contradictory. As you may remember, in the first few days, I talked about the middle way. The middle way is the practice that avoids the two extremes. The two extremes are bad, so we have to avoid them. That is the middle way. Yet, at the same time, there are two principles, two values, that are both good, but in opposition to each other. We have to reconcile them to make them in harmony. These are the arts of the practitioner: One, you have to avoid the two extremes because both are bad and two, you have to harmonize the two values. These two arts are different. Sometimes people are confused, they think the middle way is to mix good and bad, and then divide it in two. That is not the middle way. The middle way is to avoid the two extremes and, at the same time, reconcile the two values, the two principles.

In Buddhism, you will find that this art is very necessary. You have to reconcile faith and wisdom. Those who have too much faith always lack wisdom; those who have wisdom always lack faith, because they always criticize, always doubt, always feel uncertain. So the Buddha taught us to reconcile these two principles; do not miss any of them but combine them in harmony. The same applies to diligence or earnestness and calmness. If you are too diligent, you tend to lack calmness or concentration, but if you develop too much concentration, you tend to be indolent. Again, you have to combine, or reconcile, concentration and diligence.

Now, let us go back to what Luangpor Teean always mentioned, “To practice relaxed, but seriously.” It means that when you practice you should feel that you are taking a rest. When you walk, it is not much different from a morning walk or evening walk in the sense that you do not expect much from such a walk. When you have a morning walk you do not expect much from the walk, do you? That is the attitude that we should apply to the practice. When you take something lightly, you do not worry about it, which enables you to feel joy and be relaxed in doing that work. Since you are not worried with the outcome, your mind can easily get into the balance; since you are not worried about the outcome and also have joy in doing the work, you can do it continually. You are not frightened with the work or become turned off by it.

When children play, they can play all day and all night without being tired because they feel joy and do not expect much from their play. Yet, if you ask them to do their homework, you turn them off because there are a lot of expectations from the teachers, from themselves and from their parents. There are standards against which the outcome has to be compared and this always frightens, or turns off, people. That's why I asked you not to set any standards, any goals, or have any expectations.

Do not set the goal that you will not be distracted in the next ten minutes. You cannot do that; just be concerned with the present moment. If you are worried about the outcome, your mind is already in the future; the outcome is in the realm of the future. If you are concerned only with the cause, the practice, you are already in the present; the cause is what you have to make, and you can only make it in the present moment. If you can have this approach to the walking meditation, or to any kind of meditation, you will find that this approach or attitude is very helpful to your daily life. In daily life, we always have problems with our work; we are very tense and frustrated because we worry so much about the future, the outcome, or the reaction or response of people.

Sometimes we are worried because we want ourselves to reach a goal as soon as possible. When we drive a car, we may feel unhappy because we want our car to reach the destination as early as possible. If you have such thoughts, you cannot drive the car relaxed or with happiness, especially when you are late. You feel upset and frustrated. The desire to reach the destination as soon as possible becomes like a fire that burns your mind. Remind yourself to pay attention to the present moment. It does not help at all if I am worried about being late because it does not make me reach the destination faster or sooner than if I am not worried. The worry itself does not help; it does not change the situation. What you should be concerned about is trying to driving the car properly and as best as you can because this is the only way that you can arrive at the destination without delay. So in real life you have to be at the present moment and not allow the mind to be occupied by expectations or by the future.

The attitude that causes suffering to a lot of people, especially people of today, is the expectation of getting the result or reaching the destination as soon as possible. When I write a book, if I think that it will take one more year or one more month to finish the job, I feel worried, because it's still a long time and I am tired already. Yet, if I bring my mind back to the work that I am doing at the moment, I feel less worried and concentration takes place easily because being at the present moment brings you calmness and concentration and can enable you to continue your work without much problem. I think we have to learn how to do work without pushing or driving us at the same time. Just do whatever has to be done. If you do it continually, it is certain that work will produce results.

My friend, a Zen monk, spoke about his master. Some of you may have heard of him, Shunryu Suzuki. Shunryu Suzuki is the author of *Zen Mind, Beginner's Mind*. He has a center in San Francisco. When he started the temple in San Francisco thirty years ago, he had to do everything with his own hands. One of his big jobs was to prepare the garden. A Zen garden is composed of rocks, a lot of big rocks. Shunryu Suzuki is not a big person. He is just like Luangpor, but thinner. All day, he had to carry the heavy rocks to his garden and arrange them. His young Western disciple wanted to help but after a few hours, he was tired. "Oh! I can no longer do this." He asked Suzuki, his master, "How could you do this all day?" Suzuki said, "I take a rest all day." When he lifted the rock, he just lifted it without much expectation that he had to carry twenty or thirty rocks a day. He did not set a goal, but just lifted the rock without judgment or expectation. His mind was with the rock and with himself, not anywhere else. He felt relaxed which is why he said that he rested all day and could continue. He was serious about his rock garden, but he did it relaxed. It's as Luangpor Teean said, "Practice playfully, but take it seriously."

To be at ease enables you to work longer than when you take it seriously. Sometimes you drive a slow car and you can arrive the destination sooner than those who drive at a fast speed. The same is true when you walk up a mountain; those who do not know how to climb a mountain start climbing fast and end up reaching the top later than those who walk slower. The meditation master or the hill tribe people just walk slowly, relaxed all the time, relaxed every step, and they reach the top before those who are serious or walk hastily.

The practice is the same. Just walk; as you walk, simply walk and take a rest every step. You will find that you are not tired after you walked the whole day or the whole week, because you take a rest with every step. Please apply this to your daily life. Not only in the spiritual aspect. Take Suzuki as an example; even in the material or physical world, you need to apply this art, the art of reconciling the two principles – relaxed but seriously. You will find that in the real world this is really important.

Individualism and responsibility to the community are the two principles you have to reconcile. In this country, they stress only individualism, and you have a lot of crime, a lot of drug addiction, etc., because people have lost the sense of communal responsibility. Individualism and responsibility to the community are both important. Right and duty are two opposite values that you should reconcile. The pursuit of happiness and virtues are both values. You cannot discard either of them. If you pursue happiness while ignoring virtues, you create problems for other people. If you are attached too much to virtues, you have no happiness because you are always afraid that you will offend other people and you make yourself tense. Freedom and order are another example. Freedom is good but order is good too. Yet, if you stress freedom, no order can take place. If you are too much concerned with order or discipline, freedom might be affected.

So you have to reconcile these opposing values. This can be done if you learn this art from the practice. I myself have learnt a lot from the practice. Because this art is very crucial for the practice, if you cannot learn it, it will be very difficult to achieve the practice. Please take this practice as a way to train your mind to have a skillful approach to your life, not only to meditation but to your whole life, to your family, to your work, and also to society as a whole. This is what I would like to offer this morning.

July 11, 1997

Dealing with Expectations

Let me elaborate on expectation's relationship to the practice, just to clarify this morning's talk. When I said that we should not have expectations during the practice, I did not mean that we should suppress or try to stop our expectation. This cannot be done because we come here with expectation, and expectation is inherent in our practice. I just want to say that despite our expectations we should not allow them to bother us during our practice, let ourselves be preoccupied with them, or let them drive our practice. Just realize that, okay, the expectations are there, but there is no more than that.

It should be noted that the progress of spiritual practice is most developed when expectations are at their lowest or we have none at all. For example, after Buddha's death, Ananda tried hard to develop his practice to the level of Arahant, the last level of enlightenment. He had only one day left to finish his practice before the first council was going to start. This was crucial because he was supposed to attend the council, but only the Arahant could attend. There were already four hundred and ninety nine Arahants. The council was waiting for him but he had to meet the requirement of being an Arahant. He had not yet achieved it, and there were only about twenty hours left. So he tried a lot that whole day, but he still could not achieve the final stage of enlightenment. Finally, at night, he was tired and decided to take a rest by a tree. The moment he leant against tree trunk, at the moment when he felt that he wanted to relax, enlightenment took place. At that moment, his expectation was very low, either because he felt hopeless or because he just wanted to relax. I think the experiences of other enlightened beings are just the same. They get enlightenment or receive intuitive insight when their minds are relaxed and in harmony with the present moment. Some of Luangpor Teean's disciples got insight while they were harvesting the crops, obviously with mindfulness.

This law of enlightenment, or law of intuitive insight, also applies to the world of scientists and the world of daily life. You may have heard of the story about Eureka and Archimedes. He tried to find *the law of density* and he could not find it until the moment he got himself into the bathtub. At that moment, he felt relaxed. After working all day, he just wanted to take a good bath. The moment he submerged himself in the bathtub, he realized *the law of displacement*, which is crucial for the calculation of the density of objects. If you want to know the density of this chair, you put it into water, calculate the volume of the water that overflows, or is displaced, the weight of the water and the weight of this chair, and then you know the density of the chair. So, the word Eureka, or the intuitive knowledge of Archimedes, arose when he had no expectation. The same applies to Newton. He found *the law of gravity* when he was going to relax under the apple tree. An apple fell. He realized the law of gravity. At that time, he had just put aside his research, so his expectations were very low at that moment. You see how intuitive knowledge works. It works when expectations are very low and especially when you are very mindful in that present moment.

So, the point is how you can practice without the drive of expectation, the drive of desire. This is a problem because we are usually driven by desire or expectation. In Buddhism there are two kinds of motivation. The first is desire – desire to get or desire to achieve. The second is zeal – you want to do, or you want to practice. There is a difference between the two. Desire is closely related to craving, and zeal is closely related to wisdom. With zeal, you realize that it is good, so you want to do it. *Zeal* is the desire to do, not the desire to get; not the desire to achieve but the desire to do. Buddhism does not say that you should not want. Yes, you should have wants. You should have the want to do, but not the desire to achieve or the desire to get. So, please learn to use *zeal* as the motivation for your practice. You see with your wisdom that meditation practice is good. It is not to satisfy your ego that you do it, but because it is good for yourself and for others. Then, you start practicing.

Yet, for a lot of people, it is difficult to develop zeal because desire always dominates their minds. That is okay. We have to accept the way it is. We have to accept that we have desires and expectations. But again, once we start walking, once we start moving our hands, it is time to turn our attention to our body's movements and leave our expectations and desires behind. Submerge yourself in the present moment, in the act of walking, in the act of moving. When you get the results of the practice, you will have confidence in the practice, and you will see for yourself, "Oh! This practice is good." You develop zeal because you have seen for yourself the results of the practice. This is how zeal is developed. You see it yourself, with your mind: "Oh! This is good." So you develop the inclination to practice and this time you practice without the drive of expectation. You enjoy doing it, so you just do it. Enjoyment is the result of your zeal. If you enjoy something you do it. You do not mind what will happen. I like it. I enjoy it. So, I do it. There is no more than that.

Find out how you can enjoy the practice. The more you enjoy it the more you will practice it relaxed and at ease, and the more you will get results. The more you get results the more you become confident, and then you will just do it. We do not need the drive of expectation or the drive of desire. I think this is the motivation that people lack. We are taught that only desire can drive people to do things. Actually, there is another motivation that can get us to work. Zeal as a Buddhist motivation is very important, not only in meditation but in any kind of work. This is what I would like to offer you for reflection.

In summary, how should we deal with expectations? First, accept them for what they are. Accept that expectations exist in our minds, but do not let them bother our practice or pay much attention to them. Just be at the present moment with the work you are going to do and do not allow yourself to be driven by expectations. Try to develop the other kind of motivation, zeal. With the right motivation, you will find that results arise not in the future, but at the present moment. Normally, people just wait, wait for the future, wait for the results to come. If you have a positive approach, a positive mind, you will see results and the outcome always comes at the present moment. Please be sensitive to the immediate results that always take place but that we always ignore. As Luangpor always says, once you move your hands, you already get the outcome, the awareness. You need not wait for the future. It has already arisen, but you have to be aware of that. That's why we can be happy at the present moment, because we get results at the present moment. We do not need to wait for the future. It is too risky to wait for the future; the future is uncertain. But, the immediate result is guaranteed by our practice. That's all for this afternoon.

July 11, 1997

Unreliable Thoughts

I am sure that you all have a lot of experience with thoughts and emotions. Some of you may be able to see the thoughts themselves. You may realize that these thoughts, emotions, and feelings are quite *unstable*, which is why they are *uncontrollable* and *unreliable*.

But, despite their instability, thoughts and emotions have a lot of power to tempt us, because they need our attention to sustain themselves. Without our attention, thoughts and emotions just fade away. They need your attention; it is the only requirement for their survival. You know, it is as if thought has a life of its own, despite its instability. It is like a virus that tries to manipulate your cells, drawing support from you. If you are not aware of such nature of thoughts and emotions, you can be easily tempted by them, deceived by them. They try to lure you, saying, “Hey! I am you.” My thoughts call me, saying, “I am Phaisan, I am yours, so you should take care of me.”

Sometimes I am tempted to take them to be my belongings, because they are very smart thoughts, very intelligent thoughts. I would like to grasp them, but you have to be careful not to rush and grab them. Do not believe them so quickly because they are unreliable, especially the unintentional ones. We cannot even believe the good thoughts for they can play tricks on us too if we are not mindful enough.

There is a story about a person who enjoyed drinking and tried to give it up but failed. Every time he passed the bar on his way home he could not resist his desire, the temptation, to go inside and have a drink. He tried to resist many times but failed. One day, he was determined that he would not fail himself anymore so he prayed to the Buddha, to the Dhamma, to the Sangha, and to all the other deities after he finished his job in the office. He felt quite strong after he had asked for help from everyone to increase his will power.

When he approached the bar, the temptation arose, but he tried to deny it, “No, this time no.” But on his first step in front of the bar, a thought arose, “Hey! Why don’t I have a last drink!” “No! No! No! I can’t,” he said to himself. On the second step, “Hey! Okay, not a full cup, only half a cup.” “No,” he said, and he proceeded. The bar was not very big, but those few moments seemed to last a very long time. Then, another thought came up, “OK, one quarter.” “Better not,” said a voice in his mind. Suddenly, his friend in the bar called, “Hey! Come! Come!” Again, he refused. But then he thought, “Hey! It will break the friendship if I refuse his offer.” But, he was still determined not to drink. Thoughts of every rationale you can imagine flashed through his mind. Nevertheless, he finally passed the store. “I’ve done it. I am the winner!” He was suffused with a sense of victory. Suddenly, a thought came up, “Hey! Let’s celebrate the victory!” He then turned back to the bar. Thoughts can trick us. They are very rational and can turn even victory into disaster. We should not believe them but try to see them so we do not fall into their trap. So, mindfulness is very important even in daily life.

Every year many old women would come to see Achan Cha, a big master in northeastern Thailand, and ask his permission for them to stay at the temple because they had quarreled with their husbands. Everybody would say, "I will stay here for life. I will not go back to my house anymore. I am fed up with him. No more. I am disenchanted with the household life. Please allow me to stay and practice with you." A few days later, the husbands would come, visit them, and ask them to go home. The women who had been determined to stay in the temple for life would change their minds after a small chat and decide to go home.

Even strong, powerful, and quite determined thoughts can disappear, or wear out, after a few days passed. You may have noticed that you have a lot of good thoughts or ideas during the practice, "I want to do this, I want to do that, after I go home I will do this, I will do that." But if you do not jump into that thought or idea and just see it and ignore it. After a few hours or a few days, you will find that that thought becomes weak and is not as interesting anymore.

When you have a beautiful or great idea, you need to remind yourself, "It is not sure." This is the third mantra I will give you. Do you remember the first two mantras? "Never mind" and "That's the way it is." Now, the third one, "It is not sure," or "Is that so?" If you reach some conclusion about someone, like, "This guy is very bad, this guy is unfaithful to me, this guy is deceiving me, or this guy is very good, he is very generous," you should say the mantra to yourself, "Is that so?" or "That is not sure." If it is a real thought, a real judgment and the right conclusion, it will last. Otherwise, it will waver and weaken.

So try to see thoughts as they really are, *unstable*, *uncontrollable*, and *unreliable*. Unless they are born out of wisdom or mindfulness, they are completely unreliable. This is just the first step of insight into the nature of thoughts. During the practice, you may reach this understanding and later you will see the deeper characteristics of thoughts and emotions.

Luangpor repeats many times, "They are impermanent. They are unsatisfactory. They are not self." Even happiness, pleasant feelings, or the bliss from meditation are ultimately unsatisfactory. After you have been absorbed by joy for a while, you will feel that it is not enough. You want more. If you attained the first absorption, in the first few days, you feel very happy. Later, you find that you want more. You want the second absorption. You want more and more; because your level of happiness has increased. You need more happiness to satisfy your new higher standards and expectations. It will never end. But if you are mindful enough and do not fall into the trap of happiness or pleasant feelings, you will feel content. You will have contentment. You will know what self contentment, modesty, and moderation mean. Moderation is possible only for those who have mindfulness. Otherwise, you just need more and more, and it will never end. This is about *unsatisfactory*.

The last characteristic is *selflessness* or *no-self*, which is very important. You may be able to understand this when you see that the thoughts you have are not really yours. If you are mindful enough, you will see that this is not my thought, this is not my emotion. But without mindfulness, you tend to grasp it, taking it as your own. We are likely to take it to be me, to be mine. This is mine; this belongs to myself. This thought is my thought. If you disagree with my thought, you disagree with me. You take it personally. A lot of problems arise because of such disputes. When your friend disagrees with an idea which you take to be yours, to be yourself, you tend to be angry. Since you feel that he or she is questioning you. But, if you take this idea as just an idea presented by you without attachment to it, it does not matter at all if your friend disagrees with your idea.

With your practice, you keep being aware of the thought, you see it come and go, arise and cease, occur and pass away. If you try to grasp or maintain beautiful feelings or pleasant emotions, they will resist your attempt. You will realize that they are uncontrollable and not yours. They cannot be yours. If you have this insight, you will understand why we cannot and should not believe our thoughts because they just come and go, they have no self. This is what Luangpor tries to instruct you, but you do not need to rush or try to have such insight. If you repeatedly take notice of your thoughts, if you know them and are aware of them, the insight will come by itself.

The nature or the characteristic of thoughts and emotions, or all mental states, will be apparent to you. That's why Luangpor says, "The truth will reveal itself." Our job is to obtain or sustain awareness. So just stay aware and the process will lead you to the truth. That's all for this morning.

July 12, 1997

Meditator's Four Friends

According to the Buddha, there are four very good friends who help each other and also are very helpful to us – *Mindfulness* (Sati), *Awareness* (Sampapicanna), *Concentration* (Samadhi), and *Wisdom* (Panna). If you are skillful, you can use these four friends, or these four virtues, to handle a disturbed mind or distracted thoughts.

You have already been introduced to *mindfulness* and *awareness*, and know how to deal with distracted thoughts, that is to be aware and mindful of these thoughts or emotions. Once these thoughts are recognized by our awareness, they just fade away. It is as if you come face to face with a burglar about to steal something from your house. You see him and he becomes frightened and disappears. Or, it is like a dog. Suppose we visit a friend's house and his dog is barking and going to bite us. If we just call out the name of the dog, it will stop. This is how *mindfulness* and *awareness* work together to keep you from being attacked or hurt by distracted thoughts.

Yet, sometimes the burglar is very big and you are very small. You saw him face to face but he just knocked you down. So if the thoughts are very powerful and your mindfulness is still weak, it is not appropriate for your mindfulness to face such powerful thoughts. It is better for you to turn your back on these thoughts. Just ignore them. This will be helpful for beginners. That's why Luangpor suggests that in the beginning stage you just be aware of your body, and do not pay much attention to your thoughts. Ignore all thoughts, feelings, and emotions and just pay attention to your body.

In some situations, concentration may be necessary for us to handle powerful thoughts or emotions. *Concentration*, in this case, means fixing our mind on something that can turn our attention from distracted thoughts. Normally, object of concentration we prefer is that which is attractive to our mind. For example, if you get angry and want to get rid of the anger, you may find it easy to turn your mind or your attention from anger to music, toys, or whatever gives you pleasure. If you are attentive enough to the object that you have chosen to be attentive to, a few minutes or a few hours later, you will find that the anger has disappeared. Anger, like any emotion or thought, is like fire; it needs fuel. Normally, it is sustained because we ourselves keep adding fuel to the fire so it keeps burning. If we turn our attention to something else, or do not put firewood into the fire, the fire will be extinguished because there is no wood to consume. Yet, in reality, we cannot depend on music or something external to us all the time, because anger can take place anytime, in the subway, or during a conversation. So we need to depend on ourselves, by choosing those we already have as objects for concentration.

That is why the master suggests you use the breath or your body's movement as the object of meditation. When you feel disturbed by thoughts or emotions, you should just turn your mind back to the breath or your body's movement. Gradually, the thoughts or disturbing emotions just disappear. In the beginning, the breath or your body's movement is not powerful enough to attract your mind. It is less attractive than music, sports, etc. Yet, if you practice enough, your mind will become familiar with the breath or your body's movement, and it can be in harmony or as one with them easily.

The fourth friend is *wisdom*. This has a lot of meaning. When you become distracted by your thoughts and do not know how to deal with them, you may try to bargain with them. You may say to yourself, "Okay, I will talk with you later," or "I will think this thought later, but not now." You negotiate with them. To bargain with the thoughts, saying "after this retreat I will recall you again, but not now," is a technique you can use to reduce the thoughts. Normally, only the advanced practitioner can use wisdom to handle the thoughts, because it is a method that requires one to come face to face with one's thoughts and emotions. If your mindfulness is not powerful enough, your thoughts or emotions will just trap you, or trick you, persuading you to fall into them.

In Thailand, masters have a practice of going into the forest alone. We call it *Tudong*. It means to live as an ascetic in the forest or in the cemetery. A lot of things may happen; fear, the beast, tigers, or elephants can attack the practitioner. Many masters find that the fear or threat from the wild animals is good instrument, good condition, or great situation to pressure them to develop concentration because if they turn their attention from the breath to the beast, they will be overwhelmed by fear. Because they are really afraid of the beast, their minds turn inward, developing concentration a lot. So masters use the threatening situation to force their minds to look inwards. This is a skillful and unusual way of developing concentration and mindfulness.

One master, Achan Cha, tried to look into the fear to investigate it. When the powerful fear arose, he investigated the fear and asked himself, "What are you afraid of?" A voice replied, "I am afraid of death." Then he asked himself, "If you don't die today, won't you still die tomorrow?" "Everybody has to die, today or tomorrow," he replied. So, he asked again, "Why should I be afraid? Everybody has to die." This enabled him to face death at that moment with peacefulness. Some masters in that situation just keep asking, "What am I afraid of?" "I am afraid of the tiger." "Which part of the tiger are you afraid of, the tail, the ears, the eyes, the legs, or the claws?" "No, I am not afraid of the tail, nor the ears, nor the eyes, nor the legs, nor the claws." "So, what are you afraid of?" "I don't know." With such penetration by wisdom, fearful emotions just pass away. They do not use rationalization, but an analytical mind to divide the tiger parts, and they do not feel fearful.

But as Luangpor says, if you have insights into body and mind, into the nature of body and mind, into the temporary state of body and mind, such insights will enable you to go through all problems, distraction, and negative emotions very easily. With a flash of insight you can go right through them; you have no need of questions and answers. If you understand that these mental states are impermanent, unsatisfactory, and not self, the thoughts are there but they are not me, they are not mine, you become detached from them and they lose the power to tempt you. This is how wisdom works to solve problems.

This is just a summary of how to use the different means of dealing with the enemies of the mind. We are like warriors; we need to know many kinds of weapons to deal with our enemies. If you only know one weapon, it is not enough to handle different kinds of problems. In fact, a sense of humor can help you too. If you take any given thought too seriously you will get into trouble, but if you make fun of it or have a sense of humor you feel more light hearted. You can laugh at it, as Luangpor always says, "Laugh at your thoughts and tell yourself not to be crazy with them!" That is also helpful. For example when you are disturbed by the noise of building construction, visualize the face of the man who is doing the job. "Oh, what a poor man!" We will have no hostility toward him, but rather pity him. Please learn how to use various techniques, or virtues, for your own benefit, for your own spiritual practice.

Nevertheless, I am not much worried about the problems that we face because when we have problems, we tend to be careful. It is when we are happy that we tend to be careless and drop our guards like the alcoholic man in the story that I told you earlier. He was very careful when he walked past the bar which is why a lot of temptations could not persuade him to drink. But when he passed the store, he became proud, "Oh! I am the victor. I am the winner." At that moment, he became less careful, and the desire to drink tricked him, convincing him to go back to the bar.

Please be careful when you achieve some level of spiritual success, when you have insight, or when you attain the well-developed mindfulness. At that moment, you have to be very careful. There is a story that in China, during a talk like this in a temple, there was an earthquake. All the disciples ran away, but the master stayed still in his place, showing no sign of fear. The next day, after the chanting and the dhamma talk, there was question and answer session. One student asked, "What is mindfulness?" The master replied, "Mindfulness is the ability to be calm in time of danger. For example, did you see me? When there was an earthquake, I could stay still and drink water without showing any signs of fear. Did you see me tremble?" "No!" One student answered, "You did not drink water. You drank soy sauce!"

So, please be very careful with pride and conceit. They are very dangerous. Conceit is the last obstacle that only the Arahant can get rid of. Be careful!

July 12, 1997

Meditation in Action

Meditation enables us to be with ourselves, to see ourselves speaks, sometimes silently, sometimes loudly, sometimes frustratedly, and sometimes happily. You can see how silent or how loud your mind is. We need time to converse with ourselves, to see ourselves, because most of the time our attention is turned to our surroundings, to television, to books, to work, or to our families. We do not have much time to be with ourselves despite the fact that we should be our best friends. The practice of meditation is the way to make yourself your own best friend, as much as it can be.

There is another kind of friend, a bad friend, the friend who seems to agree with us all the time, who spoils us without ever resisting or disagreeing with us. This is not a good friend. A good friend is a friend that keeps reminding you of the proper way of living, who keeps reminding you not to be lost in yourself. Mindfulness works like that. It keeps calling your mind not to be spoiled, not to indulge in your thoughts; be they good thoughts or bad thoughts. Those who have mindfulness will be aware of this.

You can observe for yourself how long you have already spoiled your mind. You let it be distracted all the time; you never try to call it back to its proper place. You just follow it, and support it. When your mind gets angry, you follow the anger; when your mind is frustrated, you let it dwell on its frustration. You never recall your mind. Sometimes you may try, but you never have enough strength to call it back, “Hey! Come back. You are indulging in anger. You are lost in anxiety or suffering. Come back!”

Now, with mindfulness, you will be able to be a good friend to yourself. You will be able to call your mind back to its proper place, to the present moment, to the present activity. We are not going to spoil our minds anymore. We will be able to turn our attention to the place where it can experience non suffering, be beyond suffering. You may call it *happiness*, if you like. But if you have insight, you will know that happiness is also a kind of suffering. Suffering is like the head of the snake; happiness is like the tail of the snake. When you touch the tail of the snake it does not bite you instantly, but later, the snake will turn around and bite you. That is why we should go beyond happiness and suffering, a state that can be achieved with mindfulness. Now, we are able to be our best friend, a noble friend, *Galyanamitta*. *Galyanamitta* means noble friend.

It is like this with weeds too. Weeds are undesirable in some respects, but if you arrange them properly and skillfully, they can live peacefully with the flowers and become part of a beautiful garden. Weeds are not useless all the time; in some situations they are very beneficial. They become herbs or decorative plants in the garden. Learn how to arrange the ugliness or the undesirable qualities in your life properly and skillfully, so they can be transformed from harmful to beneficial properties. Anger can be transformed, anxiety can be transformed, jealousy can be transformed, hatred can be transformed, but these transformations are not possible if you do not know how to come to terms with them.

So this is how we can be our best friend, to not regard ourselves as the enemy. A lot of people hate themselves. They cannot bear themselves because they find a lot of bad things in themselves. That is the kind of relationship that we should avoid, the kind of experience that we should avoid. Use mindfulness or awareness to accept and use these bad things for both the benefit of your spiritual well being and your daily life. I would like to encourage you to continue the practice after the retreat in whatever way you prefer or is suitable to you.

As you know there are two ways of practice, *formal* and *informal*. You should combine these two ways of practice. In fact, informal practice is very useful. It is very powerful for us, especially for lay people but even for monks, because we spend so much time in our lives informally. Just think, in our life times we spend about seven years altogether in the bathroom. Incredible, but it is true, seven years in our bathroom. If you use seven years for the whole practice, that is wonderful. A retreat of seven days is small compared to the seven years in the bathroom. You meditate in the bathroom; whatever you do, whether it be brushing your teeth, taking a bath, urinating, or excreting, can be the act or form for mindfulness. You can breathe with mindfulness when you are on the toilet, or just rub your fingers. You can improve greatly if you are mindful in the bathroom. Do not belittle it. In fact, the time spent in the bathroom is only a small portion of our lives. We spend much more time on the street or in the office.

Please integrate mindfulness into your daily life. Take every opportunity for mindfulness, even try to choose something as a sign to recall your mind back, for example, the traffic light when you cross the road. Most people prefer the green light and do not like the red one, right? When we face a red light we are disturbed. We want to go through; we do not want to stop at the crossing. Please regard the red light as the sign to stop your distracted thoughts, or to call your mind back to the breath or to your hands that are holding the steering wheel. Just rub your fingers or follow your breath mindfully with awareness during the red light.

When you hear the telephone ring, do not rush to it suddenly. Wait for a while. For people in primitive countries, for people in villages, it is quite strange that we are so stimulated or sensitive to telephone rings; we just go instinctively. Why are you so reactive to that? You should be mindful of yourself. You should know when to walk to the telephone gracefully. So, let it ring for a few times, then just walk calmly to it, or use it as a sign to call your mind back first. Do not react to it suddenly or hastily.

So you can choose many events in the chaos of your daily life as instruments for your mindfulness; be they noises, sights, odours, or sounds. This is how we apply informal practice to our daily life.

Nevertheless, I would like to suggest you not forget formal practice either. Spare at least a few minutes of your day every day for formal practice. Every day, either after you wake up or before you go to bed, spare at least ten minutes for the formal practice. You can spend half a day every week or one week every year for formal training. The ten minutes in your daily life, or a half day or one day in your week, or the two weeks in a year, will expand the meditation zone from ten minutes to twenty minutes and then to thirty minutes in daily life.

By meditation zone, I refer to the state of mind. For example, if you practice ten minutes in meditation with awareness, the next ten minutes will be dominated by awareness despite your having already stood up and given up the formal training. The influence of awareness covers the time beyond the formal practice. If you keep doing this, it will keep expanding from ten minutes to twenty minutes to thirty minutes. It expands like the radiance of meditation that keeps expanding if you keep practicing. This is what I call meditation zone in terms of time, in terms of influence, or state of mind.

Eventually, people around you will be affected by your mindfulness, by your awareness. This is how you can transform them by your own natural being. Peace can be experienced by the people around you, as can compassion and loving kindness. If you have loving kindness, it will radiate out from you and people will be affected by it. The same is true of mindfulness. It also radiates and affects the people around you positively.

Please, keep reminding yourself to apply the practice to your daily life in suitable and skillful ways. There is no formula for this, but the point is to take advantage of everything, every moment, every event, every occasion for mindfulness. Even the death of somebody you love, even the harsh words you hear, can be transformed to be positive and beneficial for you and other people. Similar to garbage transformed into flowers and food for us to eat. Food we eat and beautiful flowers are grown out of compost, or garbage. Their roots know how to transform garbage or compost into life, into vitality, into beautiful flowers.

Keep practicing, and your mind will come back more and more quickly. You already have mindfulness and awareness in your mind. Please use them over and over. Unlike the body, where if you use a muscle too much it becomes exhausted, mindfulness is not limited by how much you use it. The more you use it the more powerful it becomes. So do not waste it or spare it. Just use it, and it will always come to your mind. I have a small calendar in my pocket, but I always forget that I have it because I seldom look at it. If I use it often, I will easily be reminded that it is in my pocket. When I need to know the date, I just take it from my pocket. But since I seldom use it, I always forget that I have it there. The same goes for mindfulness, you already have it but you always forget it. The more you use it, the more frequently it comes to your mind. So, please use it as it is, as you already have it. That's all. The good news for you is that this is my last talk for this retreat.

July 13, 1997

