

COME
&
SEE

PHRA AJAAN
FUNN ĀCĀRO

Come & See

Three Dhamma Talks

Phra Ajaan Funn Ācāro

translated from the Thai by

Ṭhānissaro Bhikkhu

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Metta Forest Monastery
Valley Center, CA 92082-1409
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“The Dhamma is ehipassiko: It’s for calling all living beings to come and see. It’s not for calling them to go and see. The Buddha wants us to come and see the Dhamma. And so where do we come to see the Dhamma? Right here at our rūpa-dhamma, or physical phenomena, and our nāma-dhamma, or mental phenomena.”

Phra Ajaan Funn Ācāro:

A Brief Biography

Phra Ajaan Funn Ācāro was born in 1899 in Phannana Nikhom district, Sakon Nakhorn province, in northeastern Thailand. His parents were descendants of government officials, and as a boy Ajaan Funn had his heart set on entering government service. However, as he was continuing his education while living with his eldest sister and brother-in-law, who was already a government official, one of his chores was to take food to former government officials who were now in prison, charged with murder and extortion. This experience convinced him that government service was not for him, and it impressed on him the fleeting and corrupting nature of status and power.

So he returned home and ordained as a novice. He was so intent on strictly practicing the Buddha's teachings that his grandmother prophesized that he would be a monk until his death, inspiring many people from all walks of life with his personal example and the Dhamma he taught. In 1919 he was ordained as a monk in a village monastery near home, and the following year he met Phra Ajaan Mun Bhūridatto, one of the founders of the Wilderness Tradition. Inspired by Ajaan Mun's Dhamma and personal example, he asked to be accepted as one of his students. After staying with Ajaan Mun for a period of time, he went wandering on his own through the forests and hills of Sakon Nakhorn and the neighboring provinces, returning to ask for Ajaan Mun's help whenever he encountered any obstacles in his practice. In 1925, when he was sure that he would be able to give his life to the practice, he reordained in the Dhammayut sect, and then went to live with Ajaan Mun for his first Rains retreat.

For the next 40 years, he wandered throughout northeastern Thailand, facing and overcoming many hardships—wild animals, lack of food, and recurring diseases. Because of his kindness and strength of character, he soon developed a following, both lay and ordained. In 1944, he returned to his home village in Phannana Nikhom district, and stayed in a cemetery near to a neighboring lake. The local villagers set up a small hut and Dhamma hall at the spot, and this was

the beginning of Wat Paa Udomsomporn, the monastery where Ajaan Funn eventually settled in the last decades of his life. However, it wasn't until 1964 that he actually began spending the Rains there. In the meantime, he set up monasteries and hermitages in several secluded spots throughout the northeast.

The 1950's through the 1970's were a period of upheaval in the northeast, due to the Communist insurgency. In response, the Thai government began focusing more attention on the area—which it had neglected for many years—building roads and improving living conditions in general. One of the direct consequences of these changes was that in the early 1970's the Wilderness Tradition became known in central Thailand, even up to the level of the King. Wilderness ajaans—Ajaan Funn prominent among them—were invited to teach in Bangkok, and were soon receiving busload after busload of visitors at their monasteries. Known for his wisdom, kindness, and the power of his concentration, Ajaan Funn developed a nationwide following, at the same time becoming a personal teacher to the King, who set up a railroad courier service to send him tape-recorded Dhamma questions. Ajaan Funn would answer by sending recorded responses via the return train.

The strain of having to receive guests at all hours of the day, however, began taking a toll on Ajaan Funn's health. Even though the King arranged to provide him with the best possible medical care, he passed away quietly of a heart attack at Wat Paa Udomsomporn in January, 1977, at the age of 77 years.

Several of Ajaan Funn's Dhamma talks were recorded. Most of these were given to large groups of people new to the Wilderness Tradition and to meditation in general, and so they are fairly basic. His closest students said that his most profound teachings were reserved for situations in which he was teaching one-on-one. However, the talks do convey a sense of his strength of character, with its distinctive combination of kindness and strictness. Because of their value, both as a record of the teachings of the Wilderness Tradition and as inspiring lessons in the Dhamma, three of them are offered here in translation.

To Be a Person Is to Be a Māra

Wat Tham Khaam
Sakon Nakorn, Thailand

June 15, 1972

When you see all four of these noble truths, that's when you truly become a monk. If you don't see them, then no matter how much else you may know, it's all just book-knowledge. But once you see the four noble truths, you see the Dhamma. You can't keep on living in this world anymore. What would you live for? There'd be nothing at all that you would gain. Think about it. Birth and aging: They're nothing but suffering.

Birth is suffering. When you arise in your mother's womb, it's painful—as I explained last night. When you get old, worn down, and decrepit, it's another heap of suffering. That makes two heaps. Pains and illnesses are a third heap of suffering. And then there's the fourth: death. You suffer to the point where you have to die. You can't live in this world any longer.

People for the most part don't make the effort to contemplate how to escape from these sufferings. They just keep spinning back in, looking for more suffering, looking for status, looking for wealth, looking for something to depend on, looking for a place to live. They build this and that, they build homes, they build mansions: They're just looking for suffering. The Buddha didn't build. He let go—because he had seen through these things, that they lead to enormous sufferings, sufferings beyond measure.

All of our sufferings: He didn't say that suffering lay in lack of status, or in having no home or in having no wealth. These weren't what he identified as suffering. Instead, he said, "*Idaṃ kho pana bhikkhave dukkhaṃ ariya-saccaṃ*: Listen, monks, this is the truth of suffering. *Jātipi dukkhā*: Birth is suffering. *Jarāpi dukkhā*: Aging is suffering. Illness is suffering. *Maraṇampi dukkhaṃ*: Death is suffering." These are all heaps of suffering. These are things we all experience, each and every one of us, without exception. Whether you have high status or no status, whether you're black or white, that's the way it is with this lump, this body. It

can't be otherwise. It tends toward birth, tends toward aging, tends toward illness, tends toward death: It tends toward suffering.

So when illness arises—when we have a pain in the head, or wherever the aches and pains may be—the Dhamma warns us. We say that the head is ours, but how can it be ours? Focus in and examine it carefully until you understand. Why is that happening to your head? Why can't you tell it what to do? Why can't you exert full control over it?

This being the case, it's not really yours. It tends toward illness. When we're born, we assume that we don't already have any illnesses. Doctors tell us that illnesses come from this or that thing outside, but the Buddha's teachings tell us about the illnesses that already fill the body down to every pore.

Why do they say that? *Cakkhu-rogo*: The eye has its illnesses. *Sota-rogo*: The ear has its illnesses. There are diseases in the ear. *Ghāna-rogo*: illnesses in the nose. *Jivhā-rogo*: illnesses in the tongue. *Kāya-rogo*: illnesses in the body. *Mano-rogo*: illnesses in the heart—angina, tightness in the heart, the heart when it's enlarged or its valves leak. Think about it. *Hattha-rogo*: illnesses in the hands. *Pāda-rogo*: illnesses in the feet. They run into this or that, get scrapes, get cut open and bleed. That's an illness. Do you see? *Kesa-rogo*: illnesses in the hair on your head. It falls out or your scalp itches. *Nakha-rogo*: illnesses in the nails. *Danta-rogo*: illnesses in the teeth. They get eaten away with decay; they wiggle and get loose. *Taca-rogo*: illnesses in the skin. Every part of the body has its illnesses and malfunctions. *Maṁsa-rogo*: Muscles have their illnesses. They get sore and sprained. *Nhāru-rogo*: Tendons have their illnesses—what do you say to that? Everything can get ill and malfunction. *Aṭṭhi-rogo*: Bones have their illnesses. *Aṭṭhimiñja-rogo*: Bone marrow has its illnesses.

So think about it. There are illnesses, there's malfunctioning everywhere in the body. You can't find a single part that doesn't have its illnesses—simply that they haven't come out of hiding and acted up. There's illness down to every pore. The Buddha said that the body itself is made of germs.

This is what we get when we come to live in this world. That's why the Buddha taught us to want to get out of the world, why he laid down the principles of generosity, virtue, and meditation, or virtue, concentration, and discernment. He taught the religion so that we could contemplate and see these four noble truths. When we see these four noble truths, we won't be deluded by the world. We'll be able to escape from it.

It's really dismaying when you think about it. No matter where you go in the world, there's nothing you can really gain. We say that we get this or gain that, but these things don't really stay. That's the way they are.

The Buddha taught virtue, concentration, and discernment. When we observe the precepts, we create no animosity or danger. Our thoughts, words, and deeds are composed and in good order. We create no harm, great or small. When there's no harm, great or small, we create no animosity. That frees us from danger and suffering. It's because our hearts at the moment *don't* have virtue that we find ourselves in danger, as we see all around us.

The "heavenly messengers" are constantly warning us. If we sit for a long time, they give their warning. If we stand for a long time, walk for a long time, lie down for a long time, they give their warning. No matter what our posture, they warn us—"pain, pain, pain, pain, pain"—but we don't listen. These are heaps of pain, but we don't listen. When there are aches and pains from sitting long, we change our position. We keep pushing things off for later like this, but if we keep following that strategy, we'll reach the point where it runs out. That's the way it is. If we lie down for a long time, there's pain again. Try lying down for a whole day or a whole night—it's painful, no matter which way you lie down. You turn over on this side, turn over on that, but you keep running into pain everywhere. If you walk for a long time, there's pain again. Stand for a long time, there's pain again. Every posture is painful. That's why the body is called a heap of suffering.

It's neither big nor small, suffering. It isn't in all the different material things. It's just in this body that there's suffering. However big or small, it's just our body—a cubit wide, a fathom long, a span thick. That's our heap of sufferings: neither big nor small. It goes up only as far as the head, down as far as the feet, back to the back, to the right as far as the right arm, left as far as the left arm, up front as far as the chest. That's it, the borders of our suffering. The Buddha taught his Dhamma and Vinaya for right here. He placed the religion right here—hell is right here; the paths and their fruitions are placed right here—so that we can separate things out and make our choice.

We do that by sitting in concentration and contemplating right here. Concentration is a mind established firmly, established constantly, established upright. It doesn't waver in line with the ways of the world (*loka-dhamma*). It's genuine and constant. As for unbinding (*nibbāna*), that's really constant—and, speaking of unbinding, it's not up in the sky. It's to be found right here, too.

So concentration is a mind firmly established. Discernment is all-around knowledge of the affairs of fabrication (*saṅkhāra*). And what is it that fabricates, that gives rise to becoming and birth? To kamma, animosity, and danger? What is it that goes to these things? *We're* the ones who give rise to them. That's what discernment sees. You need all-around knowledge of fabrication for it to count as discernment. The problem is that we're deluded by fabrication. That's why there's so much trouble and suffering as we build up becoming and birth, build up kamma, animosity, and all kinds of dangers.

So when you hear this, *opanayiko*—bring it inwards and ask yourself: Is this what you want, all this death? Is there anyone who really wants it? Nobody at all. We don't want to be sick without any doctors or medicine. And yet we keep nourishing these things that belong to Māra: the Māras of the aggregates, the Māras of defilement, the Māras of mental fabrications, the Māras of death. No matter how much we try to nourish and protect them, they don't lie under anyone's control—for anyone at all. That's the way things are.

This is why we should all contemplate these things, to separate them out and make our choice. We've managed to gain birth, but who is it that takes birth? We'll discover that *we're* the ones who take birth. If we don't take birth, where will these things come from? If we don't take birth, where will aging come from? When there's no aging, where will illness come from? When there's no illness, where will death come from? When there's no death, where will suffering come from?

Sit in concentration so that it's constant. At the moment, it's not yet constant. There's birth and then there's aging, then there's illness. When there's illness, then there's dying. When there's dying, then there's suffering, spinning around in the cycles of wandering-on (*saṃsāra*) without ever coming to an end. How many eons? Countless births. For how many states of becoming have you been worried about this and that? You come into this world alone, but then you get worried about what will happen to this person or that. You tie yourself down. Try to find a way out—so what if it kills you? What's wrong with finding a way out? What are you still attached to? What are you still infatuated with? Try to be more resolute! We come into this world alone and we go alone. So who is it that dies? What leads us back to birth? Be done with it! Develop your goodness. That's better than dying in a heap of suffering. Better than dying in worries—dying in the noose.¹ Try to die *outside* of the noose. That's what's really good. Don't tie yourself down.

It all comes from the mind, fabricating the idea that “This is mine, that’s mine, this property’s mine, this money, these possessions are mine, this clothing is mine, these homes are mine, these children and grandchildren are mine”: nothing but “me” and “mine.”

To move even closer in: “These eyes are mine, these ears are mine, this nose is mine, this tongue is mine, this body is mine, this mind is mine”—but none of it’s true. How could it be yours? How can you depend on any of these things for long? You can’t even take your body with you. If these things really were yours, would you have your eyes go bleary? Would you have your ears go deaf? Your nose. Your body: Would you have it be in pain? Would you have it get too hot or too cold? If it really were yours, you wouldn’t do any of these things. So contemplate this. Don’t be deluded and infatuated. This body is the body of Māra—the Māras of the aggregates.

The Māras of the aggregates aren’t anything else: They’re form, feelings, perceptions, fabrications, consciousness. These are the Māras of the aggregates. Form is your body sitting right here. Feelings are feelings of pleasure or pain. Perceptions are labels and meanings. Fabrications are thoughts you put together. Consciousness is awareness. All of these things are Māras.

The Buddha taught that Māras don’t come down from the sky, that they don’t live in jungles or towns. People are afraid of Māras, but what are they afraid of? And where are these Māras? People just say, “Māra,” but what kind of being is it? Nothing else but people. When we’re in the womb, we’re already Māras. When the Māras come out, they’re people. What do you say to that? Māras are human beings. When a person is in a swollen womb, it’s already a Māra.² When it comes out, it’s a person, isn’t it? To be a person is to be a Māra, a Māra of the aggregates: the aggregate of form, the aggregate of feeling, the aggregate of perception, the aggregate of fabrications, the aggregate of consciousness. They’re all Māras. Contemplate them so that you’re not infatuated with them or deluded by them.

In the *Samvega Gāthā* we chant every morning, we say, *Rūpaṃ aniccaṃ*: Form is inconstant. Think about it. *Vedanā aniccā*: Feelings are inconstant. See them in that way. *Saññā aniccā*: Perceptions and labels are all inconstant. *Sankhārā aniccā*: Fabrications are all inconstant. *Viññāṇaṃ aniccaṃ*: When is consciousness ever constant? First it’s one thing and then it’s another. It can be all kinds of things, consciousness. We have to separate things out. And when we see these things in this way, how can we say that they’re our self?

This takes us to the second round: Whatever's inconstant is not-self, it's *anattā*. *Rūpaṃ anattā, vedanā anattā, saññā anattā, saṅkhārā anattā, viññāṇaṃ anattā*. They're all not-self. We have to focus on contemplating them like this. Why view them as your self? They tend toward illness. Why do they tend toward illness? Why do they tend toward aging? Why do they tend toward death? They're not-self. So focus on seeing them.

When you contemplate them, you'll be able to let go of self-identity views, uncertainty about the body and the world, groping around, saying that this is your child, that's your husband, that's your wife, that's your brother or sister—or groping around saying that virtue is over there, the Dhamma is over there. You can stop groping. You see things clearly and distinctly right inside you.

You may not believe it, but these are the teachings of the Buddha. So why do you keep on being infatuated with the body? Why do you keep on being infatuated with the world? Focus on in! Are you still deluded? The Dhamma warns us so that we'll know and see this. Like me: I'm sick, do you see it? It's becoming hard to get around. There are pains everywhere. Try to know these things.

So to see whether these things are true, sit and meditate to watch them. Get into position. Take what you've heard and apply it inside you, so that you can know and see for yourselves. I've already explained it, so sit and look inside. Look inside. Whether there's pain or not, sit and watch it. It won't have to be long—just 30 minutes. Try putting the thread into the needle. You've listened, so try to know and see it for yourselves. Make it for sure. Is suffering true or not true? Do things really die? What dies?

Focus on meditating. You've already contemplated. Meditate and contemplate. Separate things out within your mind. Get into concentration. Repeat "*Buddho, Dhammo, Saṅgho*," to yourself. Then close your eyes, close your mouth, and focus on watching your mind, watching your body: That's all you've got. When you're born, it's just this body, this mind. That's all.

This body, when it's without consciousness, *Niratthaṃ va kaliṅgaram*: It's like a piece of kindling wood. There's nothing to it—nothing of any substance or essence. But at the moment, there's still consciousness in charge. It can still speak, come and go and do all kinds of things. When it's bereft of consciousness, it's like a log of wood. It can't do anything at all. Its mouth is like the mouth of an oven. Its ears are like ears of corn. They just stay motionless. The eyes are like the eyes of a potato. They're of no use at all. Contemplate this. When there's no

more consciousness, the legs, feet, and hands can't do anything. They feel no pain. When you put them in a cremation fire, they don't react. They don't moan or complain.

So turn and look at consciousness. What level is it on? Watch it to see if it's on the level of sensuality, the level of form, or the level of formlessness. The level of sensuality is where it travels around in sights, sounds, smells, tastes, and tactile sensations. These come in two sorts. When the mind is unskillful, it's on the levels of deprivation. When the mind is clear and bright, it's on the levels of the six sensual heavens. I've already explained these things in the past. No matter what the level, wherever there's birth, aging, illness, and death, then there's suffering and stress.

So focus on the level of form. Don't send the mind anywhere else. When you see that the form of the body has no essence to it, you can let it go. When you let go of form, there's nothing left but formlessness, nothing left but the mind at one: That's the level of the Brahmās. Everything is empty. When you see that that's true, you realize that it, too, has no essence to it. It's inconstant. That's when you can be done with it. When you see that all levels of becoming are inconstant, that's when you can go to unbinding.

The problem lies with our attachments. What are you still holding onto at the moment? You don't have to worry about the past or the future. Focus in on the present moment to see if the mind is experiencing pleasure or pain. Is it dark or is it bright? Watch what's going on. Is it experiencing pleasure or pain? This inner sensitivity is what you can depend on. No one else can create it for you. It has to arise within you.

So keep watching. Whatever sound you hear in the forest won't harm you. I promise. You don't have to worry. Just keep watch on your mind.

Notes

1. This is a play on words, in which the Thai word *huang* (low tone) can mean either “worried” or “noose.”

2. This is another play on words, in which *maan*—a homonym with Māra in Thai—means “dropsy.”

Come & See

Wat Paa Udomsomporn
Sakon Nakorn, Thailand

Asāḷha Pūjā
July 11, 1976

You're sitting around doing nothing. Meditate. I'd like you all to quiet your minds. Quiet for what purpose? To know.

You've come to make merit, so you should acquaint yourselves with merit. Are your minds meritorious yet? Try to know. Where is merit? We want to gain merit, we want to gain happiness, we want to gain prosperity, but where exactly does happiness lie? I want everyone to get into position to meditate.

Coming here, you've come through lots of hardships, lots of difficulties. You've come in search of goodness, in search of merit, in search of what's skillful, in search of happiness and prosperity. So try to understand exactly what happiness is, what prosperity is, what goodness is. Try to acquaint yourselves with these things. Everyone who comes here wants goodness, so what do you do to make it good? Try to know. If you don't know what's good, you can search from dawn to dusk and not find what's good. You can search the whole year 'round and not find what's good, simply because you don't recognize what's good. If you recognize what's good, it's not hard. You can sit right now and find it. So look. Get into position and look.

We depend on the teachings of the Buddha. To begin with, we've done a candle-circumambulation and made an offering to the Triple Gem. "Triple" means three. Which three? The gem of the Buddha, the gem of the Dhamma, the gem of the Saṅgha: These gems are our refuge.

Now, the Buddha isn't a gem. The Dhamma isn't a gem. The Saṅgha isn't a gem. They're *like* gems. Gems are bright and clear, like a clear mirror. The Buddha's heart was clear like a gem. That's how he was able to know all levels of pleasure and pain. Heavens and hells, he saw them all—all levels of goodness

and evil. That's why he was able to set out the religion for all of us, lay and ordained.

Those of us born in these latter days haven't had the opportunity to see the Lord Buddha. We've met only with the Dhamma, the teachings he taught. What he taught wasn't anywhere else far away. In the list of the virtues of the Dhamma, it says that the Dhamma is *ehipassiko*: It's for calling all living beings to come and see. It's not for calling them to go and see. He wants us to *come* and see the Dhamma. And so where do we come to see the Dhamma? Right here at our *rūpa-dhamma*, or physical phenomena, and our *nāma-dhamma*, or mental phenomena.

"Physical phenomena" means our body. We should come and take a good look at it. Why? We want to look into this body that we hold onto as our self—a "being," an "individual," a "man," or a "woman"—so as to contemplate it. We depend on it, we claim it as our self, and so he wants us to look at it. Why? So that we're not deluded by it. He wants us to know this physical phenomenon so that we can abandon our pride, abandon our passion, aversion, and delusion, ignorance, craving, clinging, becomings, and births. If we don't come and look at it, we'll hold onto it as our self. But exactly where is it our self? Come and look.

When the Buddha taught the Five Brethren, he taught them the Discourse on Setting the Wheel of Dhamma in Motion. In that discourse, he said, *Idaṃ kho pana bhikkhave dukkhaṃ ariya-saccaṃ*: "Monks, what is the truth of suffering? These four truths." He told them to become acquainted with these truths:

Jātipi dukkhā: Birth is suffering. We don't come to suffering from anything else. We suffer because of birth. So contemplate it. The Buddha taught the religion so that we can know this. We've already been born, so why do we still suffer? We suffer because of birth.

Jarāpi dukkhā: This is the second suffering. Once there's birth, then aging, decay, and decrepitude come following in the body—and they're suffering. Or as he said, nothing else suffers: It's the heart that suffers. So he has us contemplate the matter. When we contemplate the Dhamma, we see that these things are always there in every person. Whether we have high status or low status, whether we're tall or short, black or white, rich or poor, these things are true in each of us. We can't stop them from happening. Nobody can stop these things from happening—except for the Buddha and the arahants who can stop them from happening in the future. But none of us are yet able to stop them, so we should contemplate them so that we know them.

The third suffering follows: *Byādhīpi dukkhā*. Illness, sickness, colds, coughs, fevers, aches, and pains: We do nothing but complain about them. Stomach aches, earaches, headaches, backaches, pains in the intestines, pains in our legs, pains in the eyes: We complain about these things. There's no one who doesn't suffer from them. That's the way they are, so we should contemplate to see them for what they are.

When illness oppresses us more and more heavily, we can't stay any longer, which is why—*maraṇampi dukkharī*—we die. We suffer to the point of death. Death comes regardless of whether we're high class or low class, black or white, rich or poor. All of us sitting here will have to experience it.

But in Pāli they don't say, "die." They say *cuti*—we move. When we leave here, why do we move? We can't stay. Why can't we stay? Because the four elements are no longer in harmony. We're too hot, too cold, too heavy. These five aggregates are a heavy burden. They get so heavy that we've had enough—we can't open our eyes, lift up our legs, get up and run. They get so heavy that we have to discard them.

So when we discard the body, where will we go? What will we be able to take with us? This is why the Buddha set out the religion, so that we can give rise to goodness and take that as our refuge. This is our practice. This is why he taught generosity, taught virtue, taught meditation. So acquaint yourselves with these things. They're our provisions for the journey. When you develop goodness, no matter who you are, that goodness will protect you and take you to a good destination. So understand this. This is why I said that the Buddha, Dhamma, and Saṅgha are our refuge. Whatever we haven't come to know, we won't be able to do. Whatever we haven't done, we won't be able to depend on. Only the things that we've known and done and practiced will we be able to depend on. That's just the way it is. So try to know and understand these things. This is why the Buddha set out the religion—to support and nourish us. He set out generosity, virtue, and meditation as things we should practice.

This is why we've come to make merit, to develop goodness. We've made donations to overcome the stinginess in our hearts. We've let go of some of our greed, our aversion, our delusion. The reward is that we'll be rid of our poverty—because we've built up our merit. We've performed a generous act. Whether it was a lot or a little, it's now ours. So dedicate your merit. You've made merit, so dedicate it in your heart.

Now that you've done this, do your hearts have a sense of well-being? Do your hearts have a sense of ease? Look. You've already done good. If your mind has a sense of well-being, a sense of ease, cool and at peace, without any suffering, without any disturbance, then you have a *Buddho* heart: a peaceful heart, a happy heart, a heart at *ease*. This provides a sense of well-being and prosperity, now in the present and on into the future.

So I want you to understand: Happiness doesn't lie in anything else. Possessions aren't happy, money isn't happy, the weather isn't happy. Our *heart* is what's happy. Why is that? Because the heart is at peace. We've done something good.

You've come here to do good. So is your goodness already good? Look into the matter. Try to understand. You've done something good. What you haven't done, you can't take as a refuge. So understand this as something to practice, for this is how things are.

When we observe the precepts, we don't observe them anywhere else far away. The Buddha established the religion for us to look after our actions, to look after our speech, to look after our hearts and to keep them in good order. Our actions are in good order; our speech is in good order; our heart is in good order. We haven't done any harm, great or small, in our thoughts, words, or deeds. So whatever level of becoming we take birth in—as long as we haven't gained release from suffering, as long as we're still swimming around in death and rebirth—our actions will make us people in good order, our speech will make us people in good order. We won't have any defects, great or small. This is why the Buddha has us observe the precepts.

And what are the great and small kinds of harm? Killing, stealing, illicit sex, lying, taking intoxicants: These things are harmful. Our country is in turmoil at present because of these five kinds of harm. So be aware of the fact and understand it. When we haven't done any of these five kinds of harm, we'll be happy. Whatever level of becoming we take birth in, we'll be happy—now and into the future. When we haven't done any of the five kinds of harm, we'll be healthy. We won't suffer from poverty. We won't be lacking. We won't be put to hardships.

So listen. And don't just go through the motions of listening. Bring your heart into line with what you hear.

When the Buddha taught the Five Brethren, when he explained these things to them, they reached the paths and their fruitions on hearing the Buddha's

Dhamma. Now, we're five, too. Five what? Two legs, two arms, one head: They equal five. When the Five Brethren heard the Buddha's Dhamma, whatever actions they had done with these five things, they abandoned them all. After that, the Buddha taught them the Discourse on the Not-self Characteristic. He set out form, feeling, perception, fabrications, and consciousness, and then he explained them. What did he explain?

Rūpaṃ aniccaṃ: He asked, "Is form constant or inconstant?"

"Inconstant," they replied.

"And if something is inconstant, is it easeful or stressful?"

"Stressful," they answered.

"And if something is inconstant and stressful, how can you say it's self?"

"No h'etaṃ bhante: No way, lord."

So they let go of form.

So the Buddha asked them about feeling. *Vedanā aniccā:* "Is feeling constant or inconstant?"

"Inconstant," they replied.

"And if something is inconstant, is it easeful or stressful?"

"Stressful," they answered.

"And if something is inconstant and stressful, how can you say it's self?"

"No h'etaṃ bhante: No way, lord."

So they let go of feeling.

Do you know what's meant by "feeling" here? Feelings of pleasure; feelings of pain. The pleasures and pains we feel as we're sitting here—aches here, aches there, feverish here, chilly there: That's feeling. Do you see it? The body can't be still. That's feeling. Try to let go of it. Contemplate it. It's what stress and suffering are—nothing else far away.

The Buddha then asked them about perception. *Saññā aniccā:* "Is perception constant or inconstant?"

"Inconstant," they replied.

"And if something is inconstant, is it easeful or stressful?"

"Stressful," they answered.

"And if something is inconstant and stressful, how can you say it's self?"

"No h'etaṃ bhante: No way, lord."

So they let go of perception.

Then the Buddha asked them about fabrications. *Saṅkhārā aniccā*: “Are fabrications constant or inconstant?”

“Inconstant,” they replied.

“And if something is inconstant, is it easeful or stressful?”

“Stressful,” they answered.

“And if something is inconstant and stressful, how can you say it’s self?”

“*No h’etaṃ bhante*: No way, lord.”

So they let go of fabrications.

Then the Buddha asked them about consciousness. *Viññāṇaṃ aniccaṃ*: “Is consciousness constant or inconstant?”

“Inconstant,” they replied.

“And if something is inconstant, is it easeful or stressful?”

“Stressful,” they answered.

“And if something is inconstant and stressful, how can you say it’s self?”

“*No h’etaṃ bhante*: No way, lord.”

So they let go of consciousness—they let go of everything. Their minds were solid and still, in a state of virtue and concentration. They had abandoned the preoccupations of perception, of defilement, craving, passion, greed, aversion, delusion, ignorance, clinging, becoming, and birth. That’s how they reached the paths and their fruitions. Their minds were at peace—after the Buddha had taught them nothing more than that.

So try to understand these things, these things that we always have with us. Examine your body as it is right now. Examine your mind. What level of becoming are you living in right now? The level of sensuality? The level of form? The level of formlessness? Try to understand where your mind is dwelling. You’ve made merit, so is your mind meritorious yet? Or not? Look into the matter.

What is a meritorious mind like? It’s a good mind, a mind with a sense of well-being, of being at *ease*. Peaceful and undisturbed, untroubled, *Buddho*, a blossoming mind at *ease*, free from difficulties, free from irritation: That’s what merit is. So many people do merit but then complain that they can’t see what kind of thing merit is. But how can it be a thing, merit? People want to know what kind of thing merit is. If it’s a thing, it’s the human body—every human body sitting here, with your black hair and bent necks. Each human body sitting

here is a body of merit: You've done good, you feel happy, you feel at ease. Your heart and mind are blooming. This is what *Buddho* is like—free from difficulties, free from irritation.

When the mind is good, everything else becomes good: our work, our efforts to make a living, our studies, our family, our neighbors, our nation. This is how our nation will become good. When each of us puts his or her mind at peace, there will be no enemies, no dangers, no animosities. That's the way it is when we have *Buddho*, *Dhammo*, and *Saṅgho*.

Buddho is when we're aware. *Dhammo* is when we've done good. *Saṅgho* is when we've practiced well and straightforwardly. When that happens, all evils will dissolve away of their own accord. There will be nothing but brightness and clarity. Isn't that what you want?

Then look and observe. Where do enemies come from? Where do dangers and animosity come from? From nothing else far away. They come from passion, greed, aversion, and delusion. *Rāgagginā*: from the fire of passion. *Dosagginā*: from the fire of aversion. *Mohagginā*: from the fire of delusion. These fires burn at our hearts and create trouble throughout the country. So this is why we do what's good and meritorious—to put out these fires, not to put out anything far away.

For example, when you give a gift, you put out the fire of greed. However much greed you have, you give it all up. You observe the precepts to put out the fire of anger. When you feel anger, you have to bring your precepts to mind. Why should you bring your precepts to mind? You think, "Oh. When I'm angry like this, I'll be reborn ugly, impoverished, deaf, dumb, and crazy." When you think in this way, you can let go of the anger. Wherever anger arises, it can give rise to killings and stabbings, thefts and robberies. So we should all observe the precepts.

When we observe the precepts, getting our thoughts, words, and deeds in good order—when we don't create harm, great or small, with our bodies or minds—then none of these troubling things will happen. Wherever we're reborn, we'll be people in good order, not harming one another. So try to understand this. This is why the Buddha set out the religion here.

We're deluded. *Moha* means delusion. So the Buddha taught us to meditate: *Buddho*, *Dhammo*, *Saṅgho*, then *Buddho*, *Buddho*. Be mindful, and you won't be deluded. When you're not deluded, you won't do evil. You'll be afraid of evil, afraid of doing bad kamma, afraid of the difficulties these things cause. When you aren't deluded, then when you sit, you'll have *Buddho*: awareness. You'll be

alert. When you lie down, you'll be alert. When you walk, you'll be alert. When you stand, you'll be alert. Wherever you go, you'll be alert. While you're sitting right here, right now, you're alert to the fact that your heart is serene. *Buddho*—your heart is at peace, your heart is happy, your heart is at *ease*. Be aware of this.

Whoever you ask will say that our nation is in turmoil. But where is the turmoil? Look right there. Wherever it's in turmoil, solve the problem right there. That's right. Solve it right there. We've all gathered here together—how many of us?—and yet when each person is quiet, there's no problem. Everything is in good order. This is what merit and goodness are like. So understand this. Keep meditating often.

Do you want to meditate now? Do you want to do something more, or have you heard enough Dhamma? Are you tired?

[We're afraid that you're tired, Venerable Father.]

If I'm the one who's tired, then listen to the Dhamma some more. Get into position and listen to the Dhamma—not much, just 15 minutes. From the Dhamma I've taught, are your minds quiet or not? Get into position and sit with a sense of *ease*. Take a survey of yourself.

Sit at your ease, your right leg on top of your left, your right hand on top of your left. Sit up straight. Be at your ease, at your *ease*. You've come here looking for happiness and *ease*, so put your body at ease and listen to the Dhamma. Listen to *rūpa-dhamma* and *nāma-dhamma*.

How do you listen to the Dhamma? When your body's at ease, think about your heart. Tell yourself that the Buddha lies in your heart, the Dhamma lies in your heart, the noble Saṅgha lies in your heart. To think in this way, in the beginning you think of your meditation word. If you've never meditated before, think of that. For those of you who've already meditated, go ahead and be mindful of your heart, look directly at your awareness. For those of you who haven't meditated, think *Buddho, Dhammo, Saṅgho; Buddho, Dhammo, Saṅgho; Buddho, Dhammo, Saṅgho*—three times—and then gather everything into one word, *Buddho, Buddho*. Close your eyes; close your mouth. Don't move your tongue. Just be mindful in your heart.

Why be mindful in your heart? Wherever you're aware of *Buddho*, your awareness, establish mindfulness right there. Look right there. Listen right there. We want to hear what happiness is like. We want to see what happiness is like. So how about knowing yourself right there? Take your measure right there. Is your heart meritorious or the opposite? If it's meritorious, what's that like? Is

your heart good or bad? What's goodness like? When the heart is good, it's good and peaceful—happy, at *ease*. Cool. Not hot and troubled. Not disturbed or in turmoil. *Buddho*: a cheerful heart. At *ease*. *Buddho*: The heart is bright. *Buddho*: The heart is clear—free from stress, free from harmfulness, free from danger, free from animosity, free from everything evil and vile, free from poverty, free from disease. Look at it.

Your mind has quieted down. When it's like this, it isn't doing any bad kamma, so where will bad kamma come from? Your heart is clear and bright, and when the heart is clear and bright, you can see yourself, you can see others, you can see heavens, you can see hells, you can see merit, you can see evil. So look.

What merit is like, I've already explained: The heart is happy. The heart is at *ease*. That's merit. When you die, you'll go to a place that's happy and at ease. So understand this.

What's evil like? You've come to the monastery to listen to the Dhamma, so listen. Evil is when the heart isn't well. The heart's not good: suffering, disturbed, in turmoil. It leads living beings to fall into sufferings and difficulties, now and into the future. None of us wants this, right? When the heart isn't well, then whatever you do won't go well. Your work won't go well, your studies won't go well, your family won't go well, the nation won't go well. And when this happens, it's not because anything else isn't well. It's not because the weather or the environment isn't well. It's because the heart isn't well. So think of *Buddho* to disband that evil. Be aware of this right now.

So. Now that you've listened to this, try looking at your heart. Try listening to your heart. Is it well or not? You'll recognize it right here. Each of you, now that you've listened, look. Is your heart well or not? If you want it to be well, then look at it. I've already explained. If it isn't well, then look at it. If you want it to be well, then *make* it well. No devas, no Brahmas, can make it well for you.

Our nation is in turmoil, so what can we do? If each of us were to quiet the mind like this, the power of our merit would eliminate danger, eliminate animosity, eliminate poverty, eliminate everything lowly and vile. That's the way things work: *Buddhānubhāvena*—through the power of the Buddha, the Dhamma, the Saṅgha. No other power can do it. That's how our nation can live at peace and at ease. When our hearts are at peace and at ease, the nation is at peace and at ease. After all, the human heart is what creates nations, so the human heart can protect nations (*jāti*).³ *Jāti*—birth—comes from the heart. It doesn't come from anywhere else.

For the religion to flourish, it depends on our meditating, sitting in concentration like this. So look inside for your mind to quiet down. When it's quiet, it doesn't do evil, it doesn't do bad kamma. It does only happiness and ease. When the mind isn't quiet, it creates turmoil and trouble. So when you see any of that inside you, quickly correct it, quickly wash it away. When each person is quiet within, everything is quiet and in good order.

Whatever sounds you hear in the forest, I promise that they won't pose a danger. You don't have to worry. We won't sit much longer—just 15 minutes. Wait for the sound of the clock to strike. Sit at your ease. Don't gaze around you. Gaze at your heart. See if your heart is well and good.

As I've already said, goodness doesn't lie in the sky or the weather. It doesn't lie in mountains; it doesn't lie in buildings. Look into yourself to see where goodness lies. Suffering doesn't lie in the weather. It doesn't lie in possessions and money. It lies in the heart, doesn't it? Wherever suffering lies, disband it right there. Wherever things aren't good, correct them right there.

So now listen inside. I won't teach. If I keep teaching, some of you will simply listen to the sound of my voice. *Opanayiko*: Once you've listened, bring it inside you.

Let the body be at ease. After all, you want ease. Make your mind empty. Make it still. Whatever it's stuck on, whatever it's snared by, disentangle it right now. When you die, you can't disentangle things. When the time comes, you can't disentangle things. But right now you can. When the harm of your actions comes to you, you can't stop it. So counteract it now from the start. When the time comes, you'll go running to this or that venerable old monk to show you some compassion. Whoever's in trouble will go running to them, to ask for compassion. The problem is that you don't show any compassion for yourself.

So have some compassion for yourself. Look at yourself. When you're sitting in meditation like this, you can't get devas, Indras, or Brahmās to do your looking for you. So sit and look at yourself. Are you happy or miserable? Good or bad? Try to see for yourself. It's not that the weather's good or the weather's bad. Look. When there's suffering, it's not that the weather's suffering. It's your heart. So look.

If you don't want to suffer, think *Buddho, Buddho*, to quiet the mind down. When the mind is really quiet, there's no suffering. No hardship. No defilement. No evil luck—because this one thing isn't doing anything evil, isn't creating bad kamma, so where would these things come from? Look. When we don't grab,⁴

when we don't do them, when we don't create them, where would they come from? Bad kamma doesn't come from the sky. It comes from our physical actions, our verbal actions, our mental actions. It comes from our thoughts, words, and deeds.

Right now our physical actions are in good order; our verbal actions are in good order. We just have to work on our mental actions—the things we direct the mind to think about. What kinds of actions are we holding in mind? Good or bad, we'll reap the results of those actions, now and into the future. How do we know if our mental actions are good? When the heart is quiet, with a sense of happiness and *ease*, that's good mental action. And how about bad mental action? The heart isn't well. It's squirming and craving. It's suffering. In difficulties. Troubled. That's bad mental action, bringing trouble and pain now and into the future. So listen to your heart. Whatever it's like, know it right here. Good or bad, examine the merit in your heart. You've come to make merit, so examine your heart. Just 15 minutes, that's all. It's not much. You've traveled a great distance and are tired. What other kind of merit can equal this? Giving donations 100 times, 1,000 times, can't equal sitting in concentration just once. Its rewards are great. So keep making merit, doing what's good, creating goodness so that our nation will be happy and at peace, in reliance on the Buddha's teachings.

What did the Buddha teach? He taught our body. He taught our heart to abandon evil. He was afraid we'd be suffering, afraid we'd be in trouble, afraid we'd be destitute, so he taught us to do good through our body, speech, and mind, so that we'd meet with happiness and prosperity.

That's the Dhamma he taught in his first discourse, Setting the Wheel of Dhamma in Motion. In short, the body and mind are the foundation for the Buddha's teachings, the foundation for the paths and their fruitions, the foundation for happiness and prosperity. So now that you've listened to this, *yoniso manasikāra*, use appropriate attention, keep it in mind, and use it to practice, to train yourselves to act in line with the Buddha's teachings, from now to the very end. *Appamādena*: When you're not heedless, you'll meet with happiness and prosperity as I've explained. *Evam*.

So now receive your blessing.

*Yathā vārivahā pūrā
Paripūrenti sāgaram
Evam-eva ito dinnam*

*Petānaṃ upakappati.
Icchitaṃ patthitaṃ tumhaṃ
Khippameva samijjhatu
Sabbe pūrentu saṅkappā
Cando paṇṇaraso yathā
Maṇi jotiraso yathā.*

Just as rivers full of water fill the ocean full,
even so does that here given
benefit the dead (the hungry ghosts).
May whatever you wish or want
quickly come to be,
may all your aspirations be fulfilled,
as the moon on the fifteenth (full moon) day,
or as a radiant, bright gem.

*Sabbe te rogā sabbe te bhayā sabbe te antarāyā sabbe te upaddavā sabbe te
dunnimittā sabbe te avamaṅgalā vinassantu.
Āyu-vaddhako dhana-vaddhako siri-vaddhako yasa-vaddhako bala-
vaddhako vaṇṇa-vaddhako sukha-vaddhako hotu sabbadā.*

May all your diseases, all your fears, all your obstacles, all your
dangers, all your bad visions, all your bad omens be destroyed.
May there always be an increase of long life, wealth, glory, status,
strength, beauty, & happiness.

*Sabbītiyo vivajjantu
Sabba-rogo vinassatu
Mā te bhavatvantarāyo
Sukhī dīgh'āyuko bhava.
Abhivādana-sīlissa
Niccaṃ vuḍḍhāpacāyino
Cattāro dhammā vaddhanti
Āyu vaṇṇo sukhaṃ, balaṃ.*

May all distresses be averted.
May every disease be destroyed.
May there be no dangers for you.
May you be happy & live long.
For one of respectful nature who

constantly honors the worthy,
Four qualities increase:
long life, beauty, happiness, strength.

Notes

3. *Jāti* (pronounced *chaad* in Thai) has several meanings in Thai, including “nation” and “birth.”
4. Another play on words. *Kam*, “grab,” is a homonym with *kamma* in Thai.

Entering for the Rains

Wat Paa Udomsomporn
Sakon Nakorn, Thailand

July 12, 1976

Now I'd like you all to make a vow—with the Buddha, Dhamma, and Saṅgha as your refuge—as to what you plan to do for the Rains retreat.

Be generous, observe the precepts, and meditate without fail. What do you laypeople plan to do? You might try the eight *uposatha* precepts for the entire Rains. For those of you who've never observed the five precepts, see if you can gather all five. Or you can try all eight—every day for the three months. It's not too much for the sake of developing your perfection of truth, developing your goodness. Do this sincerely. Give it a try.

As for the monks, I asked you if you were ready to do the forgiveness ceremony, I asked you to practice, but you kept making mistakes. You have to be able to vouch for yourselves. Your teachers can't vouch for you, the Buddha can't vouch for you, that you're good and capable. When you actually get around to doing it, you can't do it. That's how it is.

We have to practice. If you just know about the practice without being experienced in the practice, it's not good enough. If you're experienced but not skilled, it's not good enough. If you're skilled but not intelligent, it's not good enough. From knowing you have to become experienced. From being experienced, you have to become skilled. From skilled, you have to become intelligent in how to practice. That's when it's up to standard.

If you simply know about these things—knowing about how to ordain, knowing about the precepts, knowing about meditation—but you're not experienced, or if you're experienced but not skilled—skilled in getting the mind to enter concentration or in how to contemplate—then you're not up to standard.

Once you're skilled, you have to be intelligent. Intelligent in what way? As soon as you focus on the body, if you think of it falling apart, you can

immediately see it fall apart. If you think of it disintegrating, you can immediately see it disintegrate. You have that level of strength.

It's like that layperson last night. He was bragging that he had reached arahantship. Uh-huh. He could brag and describe all the steps. I laughed to myself. Everyone else had come to hear me give a Dhamma talk, but he just kept on talking until way late at night. If he were really as good as he claimed, he would have shaved his head and ordained, but he couldn't even go without an evening meal, couldn't even give up his status as a layperson. He was sure that he was an arahant, and he knew everything—inner fabrications, outer fabrications, defilements—he knew them all. But if he really knew the defilements, how come he couldn't abandon them? How come he couldn't ordain? What was he taking to be knowledge?

So understand. We practice developing concentration every day, every day, so that we're acquainted with it, so that we can train our character. Things that we haven't seen or heard in the past, we get to hear. What we've already heard, we get to make more extensive. We get more skilled. In this way, our practice doesn't stay on its old level. It has to develop and progress. Only then will it be good. Our problem is that our practice is now falling back. It's the same for the monks and novices. It's the same for everyone.

In the past, on a night like this, I'd sleep for only a little bit. Daytime would be the same. Sleeping I'd save for some other time. Eating I'd save for some other time. Sometimes I wouldn't eat at all. I wouldn't even think about it. My one concern was for the practice. I wouldn't lie down. I wouldn't give it any thought. My sole concern was for the practice.

Day and night, I'd be intent on doing it: walking meditation, sitting meditation. If it wasn't raining, I wouldn't go into my hut. When I had finished walking meditation, I had made a platform, the size of this sermon seat. That's where I'd sit. When I was tired from walking, I'd sit. Tired from sitting, I'd walk. If I fell asleep, I'd sleep right there. That's what I'd do during the Rains. During the dry season, it'd be the same. I'd pitch my umbrella tent and sleep at the foot of a tree. Once the Rains had ended, I'd live at the foot of a tree as a regular practice.

But nowadays, nobody does walking meditation at night. Nobody puts forth an effort. We're afraid of discomfort, afraid of fatigue, afraid of hunger—which is why no one is skilled. You have to be willing to give your life to the practice.

In the old days, when Phra Ajaan Mun had a hut, he'd tear out the floor and make it a walking meditation path. He'd make a platform like this sermon seat and put his sleeping mat and pillow there. That's where he'd spend the night. When he was tired from walking, he'd stand. Tired from standing, he'd sit. Tired from sitting, he'd walk. He exerted that much effort. That's how he became our teacher. He did this for 16 years, and when he came to know, that's how he was able to teach us all, up to the present day.

Before him, there was no one to teach these things. They said that the Buddha's time was past. They had a lot of merit but hadn't studied much, hadn't meditated much. They'd simply chant the names of the 40 meditation themes, starting with the ten recollections, the ten kasiṇas, the ten contemplations of unattractiveness, the four formless jhānas, the four sublime attitudes (*brahma-vihāra*), the analysis into elements, and the loathsomeness of food. They'd repeat the 40 meditation themes—how many times? They'd take 108 sticks of incense and count until they had reached all 108. That's how they used to meditate. If you wanted to do walking meditation, you had to do that first. But nowadays, we don't do things that way. We can meditate in all our activities, in every posture. That's the way it is.

I want you to understand our practice of virtue. We gain happiness and prosperity because of virtue. Virtue means normalcy in body, normalcy in mind. It's a matter of abandoning harm, refraining from harm, great and small, through our body and mind. We don't do anything evil, don't engage in bad kamma. No matter what level of becoming we go to, we won't be evil.

We've been born into the world and we complain of the suffering. We complain of difficulties, complain of poverty, complain of being in debt. We've studied well, we've gained a good education, but once we've completed our studies and started work, we still find that it's difficult. Why? Because we haven't made merit for many lifetimes. So even though we want status, we don't gain it. Even though we want wealth, even though we want beauty, we don't gain them.

This is why, after the Buddha gained awakening, he set out the religion as a series of daily practices: virtue, concentration, discernment. These are the basic principles of the religion. On the lowest level, there's generosity, virtue, and meditation. The Buddha taught these as daily practices: the lower level of virtue, the medium level of virtue, the refined level of virtue. The lower level is the five precepts. The medium level is the eight or ten precepts. The refined level is the 227 training rules for the monks.

In the 227 training rules, the Buddha taught everything: how to wear your robes, how to eat, how to sit, how to lie down, how to walk, how to stand. He taught everything—even how to chew a mouthful of rice, how to put the rice in your mouth: He even taught that. How so? Make the mouthful rounded, not too big, and don't bite a piece from a handful of rice. Don't throw it into your mouth. As long as the rice hasn't come to your mouth, don't open your mouth. Don't make chomping noises like pigs. Don't make slurping noises. Don't nibble from your handful. Don't lick your lips. Don't lick your hands. He taught down to the details like this—so that your behavior will be gracious.

So we should all look at our virtues and precepts to make sure that they're in good order. When we don't engage in any major or minor faults, then whatever level of becoming we're born into, we'll be faultless people.

And the Buddha taught us to meditate. So get into position. Sit in concentration. If I teach a lot, it becomes too much. Look at the source of the Dhamma, the mind, to see how it is. Wherever it's not good, you'll then be able to correct it. So. Get into position.

We've come to gain some merit on this day of entering the Rains, so I want you to enter, okay? Don't go straying outside. Enter inside. When you make merit on the day of entering the Rains, enter into your body, enter into your mind, into your heart. What does it mean to enter into your body? To see your body. Entering into your mind means seeing your mind. At the moment, you don't yet see your body. You don't yet see your mind. What does it mean not to see? You don't know how your body functions. You assume it to be your self, a being, a person. So enter in and look into it, starting with the hair of the head, hair of the body, nails, teeth, skin, muscles, liver, kidneys, small intestines, large intestines, gorge, feces. Look into it.

Why look into it? So that you won't be deluded. Deluded by what? Deluded by passion, greed, aversion, delusion, ignorance, craving, clinging, becoming, and birth. You won't be deluded once you really see. So look at this body of yours. What does it have that makes you want to be deluded and infatuated, telling yourself that it's you or yours, that it makes you happy or miserable. What's the reason? That's why the Buddha has you look into it until you know and see. Look into what it's like, how it functions. Look to see what's actually there.

Is it really a person? If you see that it's a person, then why do you complain about its aches and pains? Why do you complain about its being tired or hungry? Why do you complain about the suffering and difficulties it puts you through?

Why is there nothing but hardship and irritation around it? Why is it like that? Everyone who comes here has diseases and dangers, this or that symptom—no worse than I am these days. This person has stomachaches, earaches, headaches, pains in the intestines, pains in the back, pains in the shins, pains in the thighs, pains in the eyes. That person says, “Ohh, I’ve lost money, I’m in debt...” So why is it like that? Look to see how it’s come about. People complain—everyone who comes. This person suffers from this; that person suffers from that.

If you want to solve these problems, hurry up and solve them now. Who else can you have solve them for you? You have to solve them yourself. Even the Buddha couldn’t take them away for you. If he could have, he would have taken them away into unbinding with him. He was able only to point out the path of practice—in other words, right now.

So look. Enter and look into your body. What is it like, your body? Enter into it and look. Is it pleasant or painful? What is it like? This is pleasant, but that’s painful. How can it be your self when it’s painful like this?

When you’ve entered in and looked into the body on which you depend, in which you live, then enter in and look into your mind. How is your mind? This mind is what creates states of becoming and birth, creates kamma, creates animosity, creates dangers. This mind is what builds up evil, builds up bad kamma. So look at it. How does it build up evil and build up bad kamma? It’s voracious, frenzied, and restless. It wants that; it wants this. That’s how it is. It sends itself to the left, to the right, out in front, back behind, up, down. It can’t stay established right in the middle. So enter in and look into your mind.

Don’t place your mind anywhere else. Place it with *Buddho*, i.e., awareness itself. Wherever your awareness is located, focus your mind right there in *Buddho*, the awareness. Don’t place it anywhere else. If you focus it over there at this place or that, it’s going to suffer. Don’t place it with your children or grandchildren. Don’t place it with your home or your workplace. Place it right at your mind. Try to see how it’s functioning, what it has. Know and understand. If it starts any becoming or birth, try to see it.

We’ve come to look, to meditate, to separate things out and make choices in the heart. If the heart is quiet and still—if it doesn’t go running out in front, back behind, to the left or to the right, if it doesn’t label and give meanings to this thing or that—then it can be at peace. When it’s at peace, it can gain release from suffering and stress—because it doesn’t grab hold of this thing or that. It can be entirely empty and radiant.

When the mind is quiet and tranquil—*samatha* means tranquility—then when it's quiet, it's clear. When it's clear, it can see what's good, see what's evil, see happiness, see suffering and stress. Whatever's evil, we can let go of it. Whatever's suffering, we can let go of it. That's how it is. Whatever's not good, we let go of it. We've gained our educations, but nothing aside from this is really good. What's wrong when this is good? Tell me.

To summarize things here in the present: Our body is good and quiet—happy and at ease. The heart is at peace—free from suffering and trouble. Unperturbed. *Kāya-lahutā; citta-lahutā. Lahu*, light. The body is light; the mind is light. With this kind of lightness, everything's light. Your work is light. Everything's light. That's how it is.

This is why I have you focus on watching these things so that you can know and see. We want happiness and ease, but nothing else is happiness and ease aside from a mind that's quiet. In the Canon, the Buddha says, *N'atthi santi param sukham*: There is no happiness aside from the quiet mind. So focus on in. No happiness aside from a quiet mind. This quietness is happiness, right here and now. Outside as well as in. If what's inside isn't quiet, how can what's outside be quiet?

Where do things get born? How do we get born in hell, born as common animals, born in suffering, born poor? Where does birth come from? It comes from this mind. What falls into hell, into the realm of hungry ghosts, into birth as a common animal? This mind. Mental happiness and mental ease are born from this mind. They're not born from anything else. What goes to be a deva, an Indra, a Brahmā is this mind. Nothing else.

When this is the case, I want each of you to get your mind, your heart, quiet. So. Each and every one of you, make your heart quiet. I can promise you that whatever sound you may hear won't pose you any danger. You don't have to worry. Make your heart quiet. Make your heart still. Make your heart entirely empty. Don't grasp onto this or that thing as your self. If you grasp, it's suffering. Now's the time to put the thread into the needle, so really focus on doing it.

Look and see. Right here is where you get to recognize what's good and what's not. I've already explained what's good. I've already explained what's not. So now look at your heart to recognize whether it's good or not. Stay right here and look so that you can see how it's getting along, whether it's quiet or not.

Wherever it's caught up, wherever it's snared, quickly untangle it as soon as you know. When death comes, you won't be able to correct it, so hurry up and

correct it now. Wherever it's not good, correct it right there. Wherever it's caught up, untangle it right there. Wherever it's not good, wash it away right there. Sit and watch your own heart.

We've come to train; we've come to practice. It's like a carpenter planing a piece of wood because he wants it to be straight. He planes it and then looks straight along it. When he sees anything off, he planes the wood again right there until it's smooth and straight enough to use. In the same way, wherever your heart isn't straight, correct it right there. That's how it is. So get yourselves to understand the practice. It's like polishing the floor of this hall. Why do we polish it? So that it'll be clean, so that it'll be clear. The more you polish it, the clearer it'll be. And it's the same with your heart.

We human beings: The Dhamma belongs to each person who gives rise to it. *Kusalā dhammā*: When you do it, you gain the results. If you don't do it, you don't gain the results. You want them, but you don't gain them—because you haven't done⁵ the causes. *Kusalā dhammā*: You've done what's skillful. For instance, you've sat in concentration, sat in meditation so that the mind is happy and at ease. That's skillful action. *Kusalā dhammā* brings happiness and prosperity now and into the future. Whatever level of becoming you go to, you'll meet with happiness and ease.

Akusalā dhammā: You've created bad kamma in the past, so you've come to receive suffering and difficulties now and into the future. You meet with things that aren't good. It comes from what you've done—in the same way as when we come here to do good. This is why I have you sit and watch your mind.

Abyākatā dhammā: This refers to those who have abandoned defilement, passion, greed, aversion, delusion, ignorance, craving, clinging, becoming, and birth once and for all; who have entered unbinding, having disbanded suffering and stress in the cycle of wandering-on; who won't come swimming back to dying and taking rebirth ever again. They've entered the "land" of unbinding, where there's no birth, no aging, no illness, no death, no suffering or stress.

What does it mean to abandon defilement? When we're stained with craving—hankering and restless—the mind abandons it all. Passion, delight, and desire for things: It abandons them all. Greed: It abandons it all. Aversion, anger: It abandons it all. Delusion, ignorance: It abandons it all. Becoming and birth: It abandons them all. It enters the "land" of unbinding, having disbanded suffering and stress in the cycles of wandering-on, and won't come swimming back to dying and taking rebirth ever again.

This is why I want you to understand the practice. The Buddha set out the religion because he was afraid that we'd meet with things that aren't good, that we'd be worried and possessive about this, that, or the other thing—but those things don't help us gain release from suffering. So don't let yourself get worried and possessive. Place your heart in the Buddha, in *Buddho*, as your refuge. Be constantly alert—sitting, standing, walking, lying down. Be mindful. *Abyākatā dhammā*: Make your mind *Buddho*. Make your mind serene, happy, and at ease.

Buddho is a mind fully serene. Bright. Clear. One who knows all knowable things, thoroughly and throughout; one who knows birth, aging, illness, and death; one who knows all suffering; one who knows kamma and animosity. This is why we say that the Lord Buddha awakened to all noble dhammas (*ariya-dhamma*).

How was he able to let go? Because the four visions inspired his heart. Which four visions? Birth, aging, illness, and death: That's what he saw that enabled him to abandon his royal treasures without taking any delight in them. That's what happened—nothing else far away. If he had held onto his royal treasures, he wouldn't have been able to escape these four things.

After consideration, he came to the conclusion that there must be something that doesn't take birth, doesn't age, doesn't grow ill, doesn't die. Just as when there's darkness, there's light to relieve it; when there's heat, there's coolness to relieve it. He kept on exploring and contemplating for six years before he was able to achieve the unexcelled right self-awakening that made him a Buddha. His awakening consisted of three things:

Pubbenivāsānussati-ñāṇa: He awakened to his past lives. What he had been born as, he knew it all, knew it thoroughly and throughout, with nothing concealed—whatever level of becoming he had taken birth in. This is why he knew all about living beings, because he had been everything that they were. Whoever had done what, he knew it all. This was the first knowledge.

Cutūpapāta-ñāṇa: the knowledge that allowed him to know how living beings, after falling away from this life, went to live on what level of becoming and birth, what they became: The Buddha knew it all. What they had done, what they had built up, that led them to be born on what level of becoming: He knew it all. He was capable and fearless after he had awakened to this.

Āsavakkhaya-ñāṇa: This was the knowledge that ended becoming and birth—that made him an arahant. It disbanded defilement, passion, greed, aversion,

delusion, ignorance, craving, clinging, becoming, and birth once and for all. He was never to swim around, dying and taking rebirth, ever again.

So I want you to understand that when the Buddha had gained awakening, he knew everything—knowing that in this world there are no empty spaces. Beings are stuffed tight together like rice stuffed into a burlap sack, with no empty spaces at all. So where do we come from? He said that beings are stuffed into this world with no empty spaces. Stuffed full. Do you believe him? The air seems to be empty, with nothing at all, but that's because we have no means for taking the measure of beings. No receptors. If we had a means for taking their measure, we'd have receptors.

For instance, suppose that the ends of our fingers were calibrated to be receptors. If we were to take a radio and set it here, we could turn it on and hear a jumble of sounds in English. But our fingers as they are don't pick up any sounds at all. If you were to put a radio here, you'd have the sounds of Western languages, Chinese languages, all sorts of languages—what do you say to that? That's just the way it is—and yet the air appears empty, with no sounds at all. But if you were to set a radio here, you'd hear the sounds of people singing—the air would be full of all kinds of sounds. That's because there's a receiver calibrated to pick up these things. Where do these sounds come from? From America, from England, from all kinds of places. I've never sat and listened to a radio, but you have, right? That's the way it was with the Buddha.

He was courageous and fearless in setting out the religion—about merit, about evil, about everything—because he knew everything, all knowable things, thoroughly and throughout. Nobody taught these things to him. He awakened to them on his own. That's why he's called *sayambhū*—he was self-awakened.

Do you understand yet? Do you understand? I'm teaching these things for you to listen to. Don't keep on being worried or concerned about this, that, or the other thing. Your worries are a waste of time. They're fruitless. Throw them all away. Don't be worried about this, possessive of that. If you place your heart with this or that, you suffer. If you place it here, it doesn't suffer. So place it with *Buddho*—awareness itself—and it won't suffer. Understand?

The Dhamma belongs to each person who gives rise to it, who does it. This is why the Buddha taught us, but people don't believe in his teachings. Whoever comes wants to engage in lots of conversation. Provincial governors, chief justices, judges: All kinds of people come to see me. Even crazy people come. Victims of black magic come. Every kind of person comes. People without

children who want children. People with lots of children who don't want children. People who try to fashion what they want, but they're no good at fashioning. The Dhamma fashions for us, but we're no good at fashioning our ears, eyes, and noses—because we don't listen to the Dhamma.

We have to practice the Dhamma. *Dhammo have rakkhati dhammacārīṇ*: The Dhamma protects those who practice the Dhamma. Living beings depend on the Dhamma; the Dhamma depends on living beings. Those who don't practice the Dhamma will bring lack of wellness on themselves. Those who practice will bring wellness on themselves. To bring wellness, you sit in concentration and watch, as I've already explained. When your heart is well, when it experiences well-being and ease, then whatever level of becoming and birth you go to, you'll have well-being and ease. If your heart is suffering, in turmoil, hot with trouble, you'll receive that as a result. When you're reborn, your body will be deformed. That's how it happens. This is what's important, which is why you should try to know and understand.

So come and look. Come and practice. If you're intoxicated with your work, intoxicated with money, it won't bring you any real benefits. Whatever you gain, you'll have to discard it all. If you had money by the millions and billions, you'd have to discard it all. If you had money enough to fill this hall, you'd have to discard it all. Children filling the country: You'd have to discard them all. The only thing you'll have left is *kusalā dhammā*, *akusalā dhammā*, that's all. When you do these things, that's what you gain. Aside from that, you don't gain anything. If we do good, we'll gain it. If we don't do it, we won't gain it.

Do you understand? You nuns: Keep practicing. Will any of you do the *dhutaṅga* practice of not lying down tonight? Are you up for the fight?

Note

5. Another play on words. In Thai, *dhammā* is a homonym with *tham maa*, which means “to have done.”

Glossary

Apāya-bhūmi: Realm of deprivation; the four lower states of existence: rebirth in hell, as a hungry shade, as an angry demon, or as a common animal. In Buddhism, none of these states are regarded as eternal conditions.

Arahant: A “worthy one” or “pure one”; a person whose mind is free of defilement and thus not destined for further rebirth. A title for the Buddha and the highest level of his noble disciples.

Ariya-dhamma: Noble qualities: virtue, concentration, discernment, and release.

Bhava: Becoming. A sense of identity within a particular world of experience. The three levels of becoming are on the level of sensuality, form, and formlessness.

Brahmā: An inhabitant of the higher heavenly realms of form or formlessness.

Brahma-vihāra: A mental attitude that, when developed to a level where it can extend without limit to all beings, is conducive to rebirth in one of the Brahmā worlds. There are four altogether: unlimited goodwill (*mettā*), unlimited compassion (*karuṇā*), unlimited empathetic joy (*muditā*), and unlimited equanimity (*upekkhā*).

Deva: Literally, “shining one.” A being on the subtle levels of sensuality, form, or formlessness, living either in terrestrial or heavenly realms.

Dhamma: (1) Event, action; (2) a phenomenon in and of itself; (3) mental quality; (4) doctrine, teaching; (5) nibbāna (although there are passages in the Canon describing nibbāna as the abandoning of all dhammas). Sanskrit form: *Dharma*.

Dhutaṅga: Literally, a “factor for shaking off.” This denotes any of thirteen ascetic practices that monks and other meditators may voluntarily undertake to “shake off” their defilements. Among these practices are: going for alms, eating only one meal a day, living in the wilderness, living at the foot of a tree, and not lying down.

Dukkha: Stress; suffering.

Evam: Thus. A formal ending for a Dhamma talk.

Indra: The chief of a deva-realm.

Jhāna: Mental absorption. A state of strong concentration focused on a single sensation or mental notion. Sanskrit form: *Dhyāna*.

Kamma: (1) Intentional action; (2) the results of intentional actions. Sanskrit form: *Karma*.

Kasiṇa: An object stared at with the purpose of fixing an image of it in one’s consciousness and then manipulating the image to make it fill the totality of one’s awareness.

Khandha: Aggregate; physical and mental phenomena as they are directly experienced; the raw material for a sense of self: *rūpa*—physical form; *vedanā*—feeling-tones of pleasure, pain, or neither pleasure nor pain; *saññā*—perception, mental label; *saṅkhāra*—fabrication, thought construct; and *viññāṇa*—sensory consciousness, the act of taking note of sense data and ideas as they occur. Sanskrit form: *Skandha*.

Loka-dhamma: Worldly phenomena—gain, loss, status, loss of status, praise, criticism, pleasure, and pain.

Māra: The personification of temptation and all forces, within and without, that create obstacles to release from *samsāra*.

Nibbāna: Literally, the “unbinding” of the mind from passion, aversion, and delusion, and from the entire round of death and rebirth. As this term also denotes the extinguishing of a fire, it carries connotations of stilling, cooling, and peace. Sanskrit form: *Nirvāṇa*.

Paa (Thai): Wilderness; forest.

Pāli: The language of the oldest extant Canon of the Buddha's teachings.

Saṃsāra: Transmigration; the process of wandering through repeated states of becoming, with their attendant death and rebirth.

Saṅgha: 1) On the conventional (*sammati*) level, this term denotes the communities of Buddhist monks and nuns. 2) On the ideal (*ariya*) level, it denotes those followers of the Buddha, lay or ordained, who have attained at least stream-entry, the first stage of awakening.

Saṅkhāra: Fabrication (see *Khandha*).

Tham (Thai): Cave.

Upasatha: Observance day, corresponding to the phases of the moon, on which Buddhist laypeople gather to listen to the Dhamma and observe the eight precepts: abstaining from killing; stealing; sexual intercourse; lying; taking intoxicants; eating after noon or before dawn; going to shows, listening to music, ornamenting the body with jewelry, garlands, or scents; and using luxurious seats or beds.

Vinaya: The monastic discipline, whose rules and traditions comprise six volumes in printed text. The Buddha's own term for the religion he taught was, "This Dhamma-Vinaya."

Wat (Thai): Monastery.