



*The
Intelligent
Heart*

The Intelligent Heart

FIVE DHAMMA TALKS

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translated from the Thai by

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The Intelligent Heart

When you watch your heart and really examine it, you'll find that all problems lie with the heart. This is why the Buddha gave so much importance to the heart. If there were no heart, there would be no problems. Nothing on its own has any issues. The heart is what gives meaning to this or that, grasps at this or grasps at that, likes this or likes that, doesn't like this or doesn't like that. It goes around stirring up all kinds of trouble.

Even your own body: If the heart weren't involved with it, it would be inconstant in line with its own nature without knowing that it's inconstant. *We're* the ones who make an issue over it. When it's born, it doesn't know that it's being born. When it ages, it doesn't know that it's aging. When it's ill, it doesn't know that it's ill. When it dies, it doesn't know that it's dying. It's not responsible; it doesn't propose anything at all. *We're* the ones who make contact with it and give rise to feelings. Then the mind keeps on liking some things and not liking others, and then likes something else and hates something else. Whatever's opposed to what we like, we hate it, complain about it, get upset, and start squirming around—both over what we like and what we don't like. But we end up with nothing. Even when we get what we like, we end up with nothing. Instead of escaping from hatred, we don't escape at all. We can't rid ourselves of the things we don't like. This is the problem of the cycle, the problem of how we spin around—the problem that arises for every living being, no matter whether we're human beings or common animals, no matter who we are in the world.

The Lord Buddha was the only one who was able to see all the way through this problem, which was why he was able to solve it

and get past it. He didn't lay blame on anyone else; he didn't complain about anything. He boiled everything down clearly to the fact that the mind gets involved with things because it doesn't know the truth in line with the way it really is. When it doesn't know and yet gets involved, suffering is bound to result—and it's something that really exists. The cause of suffering is something that really exists. It's always there in the world, with every living being who's born.

When the Buddha clearly saw suffering and the cause that gives rise to suffering, he looked for a way to solve the problem. He realized that it had to be solved at the cause: the mind that's deluded. So he developed intelligence in the area of the heart and mind, to see if the things the heart and mind are infatuated with are really worth that infatuation. Exactly how wonderful are they really? This heart and mind that likes things: The Buddha saw right through it.

He saw that the liking comes solely from our side. The things we like don't respond to us in any way. They're not aware of us. The things that make contact with the body—cold, hot, soft, hard—act simply in line with their nature as it's always been. Lights and colors have always been the way they are. Whether we like them or not, whether we get involved with them or not, they're just the way they are.

When this is the way things are, we should train ourselves in line with the Buddha's teachings. We should get our minds to follow the Buddha's way. Whatever the Buddha said to do, we should follow his instructions. This is because the development of the mind is subtle work, work that requires mindfulness—the ability to keep things in mind—and right effort. It requires a mind that's firmly intent. It requires discernment, the means by which we see things down through to their solid foundation: the truth. The Dhamma

ends at the truth. Once you know the truth to be the truth, no problems can arise.

All the problems in the world, from that past into the present, come from the fact that the heart isn't intelligent. It hasn't gotten down to the nature of the truth. That's why it falls for its fabrications that arise, stay for a moment, and then keep changing into something else. We run after fabrications, glad when they arise. And then when they disappear, we go looking for more—because we like them. We're attached to them because we satisfy ourselves with them, thinking that they give us enough happiness—but then we're always hungry, craving for more. We've never had enough. When will we be able to stop if we keep on running after our desires and gratifications? What real satisfaction have we gained from these objects when they keep falling away and ending?

What doesn't fall away, what doesn't end, is the truth—the truth of objects and of things that aren't objects. The truth is always our guarantee.

If there weren't true things as our guarantee, fake things wouldn't have anywhere to arise. This is why true things and fake things come in pairs. They're not far apart. The important thing is that your heart be intelligent, so that it can know thoroughly the fake things that give rise to the suffering that shakes up the heart, that we don't want. These things are called fake because they deceive us, making us think that we've gained happiness, that we've gained something good, that we've found something we can depend on—but ultimately we can't depend on these things in any way at all.

So we have to examine the things within ourselves, or that are near to ourselves—the aggregates of the body—to see that they don't really satisfy our hopes, even though we've cared for the body and nourished it and always desired it. If even the tiniest thing gets stuck on it—the least little bit of dirt—we hurry to wash it off. And

even then, it doesn't stay clean. When it's hungry the least little bit, we hurry to find something for it to eat. And even then, it keeps getting hungry. When it's the least little bit tired, we're afraid that we're going to wear it out, afraid that it's going to get sick with this or that disease. We keep solving its problems so that it'll escape from these dangers—everybody all over the world does this—but the problems never come to an end.

This inability to come to an end—spinning around all the time—is called *vaṭṭa*: the cycle. The heart keeps spinning around because there's something forcing it to. And that's because it doesn't know the truth. If we study and practice the Dhamma so that we come to know the truth, that's when it can reach the point of enough. We'll be able to stop. The heart will immediately have a sense of enough. It won't have to search for anything more. It'll let go of things, seeing them simply as the affairs of objects, affairs of external things—issues of contact, feeling, craving, clinging, becoming, birth, aging, illness, and death, in line with the laws of what's normal in the world.

Which is why, in the Five Reflections, the Buddha has already told us in no uncertain terms that once the body's born, it's normal for it to age *because* it's born. When pains and illness arise, they're normal because the body is aging because it's born. Things that are born and age have to grow ill. When the time comes for it to die, we have to see death as normal. Whether we die or anybody else dies, once any of us is born, that's the way it has to be. That's the way it's always been. So why do we let ourselves get infatuated and deluded about it?

The Buddha has shown us how to know, how to become intelligent, so we should bring our mind up to an intelligent level. Don't let the sufferings of the body overcome it. Don't let it be happy or sad about the affairs of birth, aging, illness, and death. Get

it to know the truth in this way. Once the mind knows the truth, it'll have a sense of fullness, a sense of enough. It won't have to be hungry. It won't have to be shaken by these things. When they happen, we'll be willing to let them happen. We won't have to try to get in the way.

After all, these things aren't the mind, so don't let them overcome the mind. Don't let the mind get deluded into being willing to change as these things change. Once the mind knows, it can know solidly. It can know its own normal nature. It can know in a way that isn't involved with anything at all. If we train it enough, it'll reach the point where its knowing is enough. The discernment that advises it to be intelligent will be enough. It'll be sufficient in and of itself. It won't have to get involved and darken itself with all this dust and dirt.

So we should all make a practice of watching the mind—and in particular, the fabrications of the mind as it moves around in search of things. Whatever it's in search of, we follow its tracks. Eventually, the mind will become intelligent in the things that it finds within itself—because it knows, it remembers, it doesn't fall for them. The reason it hasn't been intelligent is because it deludes itself into thinking that it's gained something new. But once we see that these things are old things coming back again, over and over again, we can discard them—because the mind is disenchanting.

Like the Buddha and his noble disciples: *They see everything as old.* Suffering is nothing new. Happiness is nothing new. The sights, sounds, smells, tastes, and tactile sensations that we like and dislike are nothing new. Liking is something we've already done before. Hating is something we've already done before. Greed is something we've already done before. Anger is something we've already done before. Delusion is something we've already done before. There's nothing new about them. If we were to get deluded again, angry

again, it's just the same old thing. If we like or hate again, it's just the same old thing. We just keep spinning around in sensory contacts.

When we see this clearly with a quiet mind, a mind that's bright with right concentration, the heart will have to become disenchanted. It'll have to feel a sense of enough. The more clearly it sees things, the stronger the sense of enough. No more hunger will arise within it. This is your evidence for the truth of the Dhamma taught by the Buddha and all his noble disciples.

For example, the Buddha exclaimed that he had had enough: enough of birth, enough of aging, enough of illness, enough of death, enough of liking and disliking. That's because he had experienced these things countless times. There was nothing new about them. Time to stop playing along with them.

So try to meet with this spot, make it appear clearly right here. It's called *nirodha*, cessation. Make it clear. It'll be clear right here when you make contact with it—when the mind lets go, when it's had enough, when it doesn't have any more desire, because it's full. It doesn't want anything more because it doesn't see any benefit to things: They no longer provide happiness, they serve no purpose, they just create needless disturbance.

Try to make this clear in the mind. That way, we'll be able to sit at our ease, walk at our ease, lie down at our ease, stand at our ease, eat at our ease. Even though we still have to look after the aggregates, we've had enough in terms of the aggregates. We look after them until they fall apart in line with their normal nature. The mind itself will clearly be at normalcy. The body will have to age in this way. There's no getting around it. It'll have to be ill in this way. There's no getting around it. It'll have to die in this way—that's its normal nature—so the mind lets it follow its normal nature, without being shaken by it.

This is what's meant by "enough." It lies right here. It's not so deep or far away that we can't see it or know it. It's not that we have to behave like blind people, groping around for it. The Buddha's teachings have told us clearly. We've heard them, we've understood them, enough to have some knowledge. We don't have to grope around. Just really look, in line with what we've heard and we know. We're sure to see for ourselves, clearly inside ourselves. We ourselves can be our own evidence.

Kamma

Sit in a way that's pleasant. There's pleasure that can arise from sitting, and there's pain that can arise from sitting. There's pleasure that can arise from lying down, and there's pain that can arise from lying down. Why the difference? People can sit just like other people, but some people sit with pain and others sit with pleasure. What's the cause? It comes from the fact that the goodness they've done isn't the same.

Some people like doing good. Some people like doing evil: When they see the opportunity for evil, they're happy. They do it with a sense of fun and enjoyment—but the victims of their actions suffer hardships. They get sad, miserable, resentful, vengeful. People do evil because they don't understand what they're doing. They think that there's no such thing as evil, that the kamma of their actions won't come back to them. But actually, our Lord Buddha gained awakening to just this issue: the issue of good and evil, the issue of kamma. He saw clearly with the discernment of his awakening that bad kamma really exists. If people do bad things, they're bound to reap the results. The results of their actions don't fade into nothingness. They'll follow those people who did the actions so that bad things happen to them.

This is why people are born with bodies like other people—they have eyes and ears like other people, they live in the same world—but they're not the same. Some people have lots of troubles; other people have lots of brightness in their lives. Some people have few illnesses; others have many illnesses. Even though they don't want the illnesses, they're bound to have them. Some people have lots of wealth. Some people have only a little wealth—even though they

want wealth. They work hard, racing against the clock, but they don't gain anything. Some people work the same number of hours, but rewards are not the same.

It depends on their actions—the goodness and evil they've done is different, and so they produce different results. Or as the Buddha said, “Action is what differentiates beings in terms of baseness and excellence.” Good actions direct people to live in good groups in good places where they prosper and experience pleasure. As for people who do actions that are evil and bad, when they leave this body their actions direct them to live in bad groups where they encounter difficulties and suffering. This is something that really happens. It's not that these things don't exist in the world.

We're the same in that we're living beings, but our bodies aren't the same. The pleasures we experience aren't the same. The mistreatment we're subjected to isn't the same. It's because of the goodness and evil we've done. Even though we're born as human beings like other human beings, the people who've liked to do good things have a complexion different from those who don't. People who've liked to do evil have a different complexion, different level of intelligence, different habits, different manners.

The reason why some people like to do evil is because they haven't associated with wise people, such as the Buddha. Or they haven't listened to the Dhamma of wise people. They don't know the Dhamma of wise people. This is why they don't understand the causes of the pleasures and pains that arise in their own lives. They think that life comes from doing what you want, so they aren't selective in what they do. They aren't selective in what they look for. They don't care if their actions cause loss or trouble for others. That's because they haven't listened to the Dhamma.

The Buddha felt a lot of pity for people like this, because it's hard to help them—because they won't accept help. They're like

overturned pots. No matter how much water you pour on them, no matter how much rain falls on them, it all flows away. It's the same with people whose minds are overturned: They don't accept any instruction as to what's right and wrong. They don't want to know about good and evil. They think that good and evil don't exist, that they're annihilated at death.

If their kamma were actually annihilated at death, it would be okay—but that's not the way it is. And even before they die, they're already suffering. It's not the case that people who do evil will meet with suffering only after death. Other people don't like associating with them or being their friends, because people who do evil don't leave other people at peace. They themselves don't have any peace or happiness. Even while they're still in this life, even while they're still human beings, they already suffer. No one wants to associate with them; good people can't trust them. Wherever they go, good people don't want to associate with them. And when good people don't want to associate with you, how can you be happy?

We human beings find happiness in living with one another, with people who respect us, friends who respect us, with good parents in good families. If we get good friends and good teachers who give us the opportunity to study good things, we get an even greater opportunity to do good. We ourselves become more admirable and upstanding. We live with goodness in our lives. When we look back on a life in which we've done good, our hearts become bright over the fact that we have goodness, that we've been doing goodness all along. When we think of this, the heart has a sense of well-being and fullness—in spite of the fact that all things are inconstant, that they fall away even when we've done good.

But if people don't do what's good and skillful, and things fall away in that kind of life, if they try to think of their goodness to give themselves a sense of ease and refreshment, there's nothing good to

look back on—because it's not there in the heart. They haven't set their hearts on doing good: on being generous, observing the precepts, or meditating. When these things aren't in their hearts, how can they look back on them? When they meet with troubles and problems, all they can look back on are the bad things they've done—and that simply adds to the problems. It's like a burning fire to which you add more fuel. You're simply giving it more energy to spread all over the place.

As for those of us who have done good—what's called *pubbe katapuññatā*, having done good in the past—when we think back in the present moment, it gives us a sense of well-being, and that increases our sense of inner goodness. When we think of the gifts we've given, we feel cheerful. When we think of our precepts, and the fact that we haven't oppressed anyone, human or animal, the mind is bright. We have friends. Even common animals can be friends with us, they can be happy with us, because we don't oppress them. They can enjoy themselves with us. But as for people who've made themselves enemies: Not to mention common animals, even their fellow human beings won't want to associate with them. They won't want to get near, because such people are treacherous. No matter whose house they try to go to, no one will welcome them—because they're a threat to the household.

This is the way things really are. Evil really exists. Goodness really exists. The good results of goodness really exist. They really bring you peace and happiness. And the goodness isn't good only while you're doing it. It becomes a habit that gets stored away in the heart, gets inscribed in the heart. It can't easily be erased once it's written into the heart.

Even after you die, that heart and mind remain. The goodness of the heart follows you as a treasure of the heart. Whatever state of

becoming the heart goes to, its goodness looks after it, so that you'll prosper in that location.

But it's the same with evil. Once it's inscribed in the heart, it's hard to erase. It follows the person who has done it, to provide for that person so that that person will experience results in line with the action. There have been many, many examples of this.

This is why we all should be happy in doing good, and we should try to think back often on the good we've done, the times we've been generous, so that the mind will have something solid to hold onto as a refuge for the heart. Think back on your virtue as a refuge. Keep watch over your virtue as something solid for the heart and mind to hold onto. And try to meditate, looking carefully after your heart, so that you'll have a good foundation in skillfulness. Your life will serve a purpose. It won't pass by with nothing to show for it. It won't be empty of purpose.

Wise people praise those who do good, because those who have done good will go to a good destination.

Now that you've heard this, try to remember it and set your heart on practicing in line with it.

And now receive the blessing.

Unwavering Conviction

Get yourself ready to meditate. Sit in a composed way and examine your mind, using your mindfulness and discernment perceptively. Setting the mind in the right direction is something very important. If the mind isn't set in the right direction, its thoughts and opinions won't be right. It's like a tree leaning to one side. When it falls down, it'll fall in the direction that it's been leaning.

When the mind has been set in a direction that isn't good, it'll think of things that aren't good. But a mind that has been set in a good direction will tend to think in a good direction. When the mind is set on being peaceful, when it's set on meditating, it tends toward peace. It tends toward seclusion. This is what gives rise to concentration, to mindfulness and discernment, and ultimately to the knowledge of release, step by step. All of this comes from setting the mind in the right direction.

This is why setting the mind in the right direction is so important. You need to apply appropriate attention—*yoniso manasikāra*—to develop skillful strategies in dealing with the mind. Don't simply go through the motions as you've done in the past. Stir the heart to be responsible for what it's doing. Take on the responsibility of being intent and glad, convinced in what you're doing. Make an effort. Don't give up. Don't let the meditation become so routine that you don't pay attention, or that you're simply doing it because it's on the schedule. You always have to try to energize the mind so that it'll keep making progress, so that it's always fully prepared: prepared to be mindful, prepared to get into concentration, prepared to grow still.

We should always think about the rewards of stillness. We should keep in mind the good things that come from meditation so as to give energy to the heart. At the same time, keep in mind the things that come from letting the mind slip off without any awareness, under the power of infatuation, under the power of delusion: a waste of time that brings no benefits. Think of the benefits that come from being alert to what you're doing, responsible for what you're doing—responsible to the point where you can depend on yourself and have no doubts about what you're doing.

And why would you have no doubts? Because your mindfulness and alertness are right there with the movements of your thoughts. And when you examine them, you see that you do only the things that should be done, that serve a purpose.

So as we're practicing here in the present, we should see it as an extremely important activity. It's nothing minor at all. When we meditate, we have to give importance to ourselves, to the fact that we're doing it. Don't just go through the motions. After all, it's a practice that the Lord Buddha—out of his knowledge and kindness and goodwill for us—set out as a practice for us to follow, and that people have been following ever since. It serves a really important purpose.

We're able to see for ourselves, to know for ourselves, when something serves a good purpose. An example is when we train our mindfulness. Once our mindfulness is trained, it's really valuable, really beneficial. We can use it to good purpose in all kinds of activities, whether in the work of the mind or in our work outside. This is why it's said to be a quality with many benefits.

Which means that any activity that develops mindfulness is a beneficial activity. Any activity that develops mindfulness so that it's right and firmly established is an activity that's beneficial in

giving the mind knowledge and intelligence, that gives us hope in achieving our aims.

“Achieving our aims” means achieving what we want: i.e., happiness. It doesn’t mean achieving what we don’t want: i.e., suffering, things that are defiling, that give rise to animosity and danger.

So these are important benefits. Those of us who have been practicing should make an effort to keep giving rise to a sense of gladness and contentment every time we meditate. We should keep seeing the benefits of what we’re doing.

Now, the work we’re doing here is subtle and delicate work. It’s not coarse work like work outside. So we have to adjust our mood to be in tune with subtle work. Your mindfulness has to be subtle. Your awareness, as it watches over the work, has to be subtle. To try simply to keep your awareness continuous and set on one thing is not beyond your ability. Even though in the beginning you don’t see any results, you have to trust the principles of the skill taught by the Buddha. If you keep on practicing without flagging, your intelligence with regard to the mind will have to keep increasing, and you’ll come to see and understand on your own.

In the beginning, you have to rely on your conviction in the Dhamma taught by the Buddha. This is the way it is with any skill. For instance, if you study to be a doctor: As long as you haven’t yet put your knowledge into practice, you can’t be sure of what results you’re going to get. But you study and you believe the principles you’re being taught. Once you’ve believed the principles and learned them, then when you put them into practice and get good results, you believe from what you yourself have done. It’s all clear to you, and you have no doubts about what you’ve done, because you’ve seen the good results. If you hadn’t believed anything at all,

your studies wouldn't have been solid and you wouldn't have stuck with it—because of your doubts and uncertainty.

It's the same with the practice of the Dhamma. We have to believe in the principles of the Buddha's Dhamma: what's called *svākkhāto bhagavatā dhammo*—the Dhamma well-expounded by the Blessed One. What makes the Dhamma well-expounded is that people of every level are able to understand it, to put it to use, and to practice in line with it. It's not that only some individuals or some groups can receive the results in line with their practice. All kinds of people who follow it after listening to it can come to understand on their own. They don't have to be deluded into believing what they're told. They use their own mindfulness and discernment to contemplate and see clearly within themselves. This is why the Dhamma is said to be well-expounded. There have been many, many people who have put it into practice and seen results they can believe for themselves.

We, too, are among those who have made an effort and set our hearts on the practice because we want genuine results. If we practice with a sense of contentment, a sense of inspiration, without flagging, we too can come to know and see. It's not beyond our capabilities to contemplate correctly in line with the standards that the Buddha set out.

So we should be happy and content in our practice. If we didn't practice, we wouldn't get this kind of knowledge and understanding. When we practice and gain knowledge and understanding in the strategies for avoiding things that aren't good—things that will give rise to animosity and dangers—we develop our own discernment into how we used to behave because we didn't know what was really going on. But now that we know the principles of the truth and we try to abandon things that aren't good, step by step, we can stop doing the things we used to do. We see clearly, we do things that are

good, and in this way we gather up goodness and strategies in our mind that we can use in our daily lives. This makes the mind bright and clear in our practice.

Even though the body may encounter difficulties and weariness, our heart is strong. It can win out over that weariness and keep on practicing constantly. Ordinarily, if there were no mindfulness or discernment to keep on teaching and directing our mind, it wouldn't be able to do this. It'd be dragged and pulled by other things into other issues. But here we can cut through those things. The ways into which the mind could be pulled are many, and there are no obstacles standing in the way—if we were to go.

But here we're not going, because our mind knows how to choose between what's appropriate and what's not, and it can lay down strict standards so that we have few burdens and don't go searching for things that will disturb it. We take on only the burdens that are necessary for life, for the survival of the body and the mind. Whatever's excessive, we try to cut away, cut away, step by step. This is when we see that our mind is intelligent. It knows how to choose. This is when we say that the mind is skillful: We can choose to practice all the time.

As for the results, we know them for ourselves. Even though no one may be explaining things for us, we can bring the mind to stillness as we practice, as we exercise restraint over it and can bring it to peace. When we can absolutely cut away outside burdens, we'll see even more results. If the mind enters concentration and comes to stillness as we intend it to, we try to establish mindfulness to keep in mind only the present. For the time being, we cut away past and future. We meditate to let go, and the mind enters a secluded state of genuine stillness, unconcerned for the time being with anything at all outside. That's when we'll see clearly into our own mind.

If we often train the mind to be still and often gain a sense of seclusion to the point where the mind has the strength to develop conviction and concentration so that they're really solid, anything that comes to disturb it—such as external pains—can't influence the mind that's been well trained. This we can see clearly.

Our teachers who have been well trained have their minds on a high level where they can win out over painful feelings and external diseases. They can keep their minds happy and cheerful as if nothing were happening. Even when the time of death comes, it's the same thing: When disease reaches the point of death, they can go with ease. They don't get delirious; they don't get confused. They die as if they were simply falling asleep—very different from people who haven't trained themselves. People who haven't trained themselves suffer and grieve. In some cases their tears flow. Possessive about this, worried about that, they suffer. If they're not careful, their clinging to those things will give rise to states of becoming right in those things. If their merit and skillfulness are lacking, and they're full of unskillfulness, they'll take birth in those things. There have been many examples of this.

For example, there was once a miserly rich person who believed that being generous and giving alms was only for poor people who wanted to gain wealth. Because he was already wealthy, he told himself that he didn't have to give alms because he already had lots of wealth. So he never gave alms or practiced generosity in any way at all, because he felt that what he already had was enough. He didn't desire any merit because he already had every kind of pleasure and possession. He wasn't interested in being generous, observing the precepts, or meditating in any way at all. He simply did what he felt like doing. He ate and played around and used his wealth for himself.

So finally, when he died, he had nothing to fall back on. He couldn't call to mind anything at all. He could call to mind the pleasures he had had in eating and being heedless, but they couldn't help him. All he could think of was his wealth, and so he got possessive of his wealth. His mind, when it left the body, couldn't take birth as a human being again, because the qualities that would qualify him to be a human being weren't present in his mind. There was nothing to support the mind to gain a human body, so he had to take birth in a coarse body. His unskillfulness made him into a common animal—a dog who stayed around the place the rich man's treasure had been buried.

When the Buddha passed by on his almsround, the dog barked at him, and the Buddha called it by the rich person's name. The son of the rich person, who heard this, was offended. How could his father have been reborn as a dog? He went to complain to the Buddha, but the Buddha said, "What I said was the truth. If you don't believe me, get some good food for the dog to eat. Once it's eaten, whisper into its ear, 'Tell me where the treasure is buried,' and then dig down wherever it lies down." So the rich man's son followed the Buddha's instructions right then and there, and the dog went to lie down in its place. When the son dug down there, he found the treasure, and so had to admit that his father had been reborn as a dog.

It's not the case that once you've been wealthy you'll always be wealthy. If the mind falls to a low level, like the rich person who did evil, you can become poor. You can even become a beggar. This can happen even in this lifetime—you don't have to wait until the next lifetime. As for people who develop their goodness, they can become rich, they can become happy—and these results can come in the present life. You don't have to die before you'll see that kind of future.

So we shouldn't have any doubts about good and evil, about good practice and bad practice. Once you can develop conviction to the point of *acala-saddhā*, unwavering conviction, your conviction will be firm to the point where it doesn't deteriorate. Why? Because you've reached the point where your discernment doesn't deteriorate in the heart and mind. When you've clearly seen goodness and evil in your heart, how could your discernment deteriorate? It's like seeing fire. There's nobody who would want to get deluded into lying down in a fire. Or like seeing urine and excrement: There's nobody who would want to lie down in urine and excrement. We'd do it only if we didn't see it clearly, if we were absent-minded and stepped into it by mistake. But if you see it clearly, nobody would want to do it.

When the heart and mind are fully developed, when mindfulness is fully developed, when discernment is fully developed, we won't be absent-minded. Then, what we see as wrong is really wrong. What we see as right is really right. What we see as skillful is really skillful. What we see as evil is really evil. What we see as good is really good. What we see as dark is really dark. What we see as bright is really bright. For that reason, we can't give up on doing good, even though life is about to end. We have to keep on doing good even though we can't get up from our bed. We lie there meditating without giving up, all the way to the last breath. That's what it means to be a person who practices. That's the kind of person who has the firm conviction called *acala-saddhā*: someone who has seen with his or her own discernment, someone who has genuine respect for the well-expounded Dhamma of the Buddha.

When you reach this point, your goodness can be your refuge as it adorns your mind at all times. Both in the present life and when you leave this life, you keep on creating goodness and it keeps on adorning you. This is the truth. The Buddha never said anything

that was nonsense or deceptive. That's because he already had had enough, so why would he deceive anyone? He had had enough. He had had enough in terms of a following, enough in terms of wealth, enough in terms of attachment: So what would he deceive anybody for? He did nothing but let go. People who can deceive are people who are still hungry, who still desire, who haven't yet had enough. That's the kind of person who can try to deceive others. But that's not the case with the Buddha or his noble disciples. They were fully developed, fully complete in terms of mindfulness and discernment, so what would they get infatuated with? How would they benefit from deceiving the world? They're worthy of respect and homage, worthy to be taken as a refuge.

We all are extremely fortunate. We should make ourselves happy and glad that we have the opportunity to practice, to train ourselves. This is something that seems easy, but it's really hard. If it were really easy: Exactly how many people have been able to do it? But at the same time, if it were really hard, why is it that *we* can do it? This is why there's the old saying, "Good people find it easy to do good. People who aren't good find it hard to do good." This is really true. People who aren't good find it easy to do things that aren't good, but hard to do things that are.

So we should examine what kind of people we are. We can do good easily and don't see any obstacles in the way of doing good. This means that we have the characteristics of good people, the characteristics of goodness. We have good qualities in our hearts. Now, this isn't something to go bragging about. If you're good but then go bragging to other people, putting them down, you're creating defilements in yourself. That's because goodness isn't something to show off when other people look down on you. If you go bragging, then instead of being good you become the sort of person who's not good.

So think about your goodness only to yourself, as a way of giving yourself encouragement. Simply do what's good, and don't go putting other people down. Don't despise other people who can't do what you can do. If you do despise them, it's not right. It's a form of conceit and it gives rise to animosity and dangers. You have to be wise to these things. Your mindfulness and discernment have to see things rightly.

When we understand the conditions that give us the strength to practice, we have to use appropriate attention—*yoniso manasikāra*—the strategies that help us to keep following the practice. Not only in the monastery—wherever you go, make sure that your mind is skillful. That way, you'll be able to increase your skillfulness at all times. When you drive, keep the practice in mind. It's not the case that you can't keep it in mind. When you do your work, do it with right mindfulness established rightly.

When you do this, you'll have a sense of seclusion in your work, a sense of pleasure in your work, a sense of ease being alone, when you're working alone, instead of feeling lonely—even though other people might not understand. This sort of seclusion is very beneficial. It allows us to do our work in full measure without anything getting in the way. When you're alone at your desk and there's no need to get involved with other people, you can have even more opportunities to develop skillfulness inside.

So we should all set our hearts on training ourselves to get better and better. When we set our hearts on this, we'll meet with the happiness and prosperity I've described.

That's enough for now, so I'll stop here.

To the Deathless

Why does the mind find it hard to grow still? Why is it not very still? The normal nature of the mind is that it has to think, to think about objects. The mind always has its objects. So when we try to get the mind not to think, to have nothing inside, it's hard. It's not easy at all. It's like getting the wind not to blow. If it doesn't blow, it's not called "wind." It's called "air." The wind has to blow back and forth. In the same way, the mind has to think of objects, to stay with objects. But intelligent people get their minds to think about things that are beneficial, to hold onto things that are beneficial.

We want stillness, but we hold onto themes that stand in the way of stillness. We don't stay with themes that give rise to stillness. If you want happiness, you should hold onto themes that give rise to happiness. If you hold onto themes that don't give rise to stillness, the mind won't be still. It'll fabricate thoughts that go somewhere else.

It's for this reason that the mind needs something good to hold onto, something it can depend on. The problem is that the mind is really deft at thinking. If you're absent-minded, it'll run wild, both by day and by night.

This mind, if it didn't think, couldn't be put to any use. It would be like the earth, which doesn't think. It just stays there as earth, with no discernment. Water, too, doesn't think. It just stays there as water. It doesn't have any discernment at all. Wind doesn't think, doesn't have any discernment. Fire doesn't have any discernment.

But the mind *does* have discernment. It can be trained because it thinks, because it thinks about objects. With regard to thinking, the

Buddha doesn't have us sit there doing nothing. When you meditate, have the mind think of *buddho*: awake. Have the mind stay in *buddho*. Tie the mind down to *buddho* so that it'll have something firm to hold onto. We think of the Buddha's title—*buddho*—because the Buddha was fully developed in every way. He had every virtue. He's the refuge for all beings in the world. The three levels of the cosmos all pay homage to him. There are many virtues of the Buddha contained in the word *buddho*, and so we bring those virtues into our heart and mind. After all, the Buddha's heart and mind were pure, clear, and clean. Thinking *buddho* can make our mind bright as well. The Buddha had fully mastered concentration, so we think *buddho* to get our mind, too, in firm concentration.

The Buddha was complete in all skillful qualities: all eight factors of the noble eightfold path, including mastery of the four noble truths. He fully comprehended all four of the truths.

Suffering, as a noble truth, he understood before anyone else in the world. The cause of suffering he understood before anyone else in the world. The duty with regard to suffering is to comprehend it, and he comprehended it before anyone else in the world. The cause of suffering is to be abandoned, and he abandoned it before anyone else in the world.

That's why the Buddha was complete. You're free to take any aspect of his virtues to repeat and put into practice, and it'll make your heart and mind still and at ease. The Buddha was someone who had genuine ease, genuine happiness. We, too, can fashion our heart to be at ease. We can fashion it to be happy. *Buddho*: awake. We can fashion our heart and mind to be awake and blossoming. Don't let it fall asleep. Don't let it get blurry. Don't let it be heedless.

Make it awake and alert to the fact that you're here with the body with its four properties: earth, water, wind, and fire. Whatever there is to these properties, the Buddha knew it all. We should try to be

alert to them like he was, to see how much we can really hold onto them, how much we can really depend on them. In what ways do these four properties aid in our stillness and happiness? When you really look at them, you'll see that the four properties don't bring us the happiness of stillness. First they hurt here, then they itch there, then they're hungry, then they're too hot, then they're too cold, then they're this or that—all the time. You'll see this if you examine them.

This is why the Buddha taught that we can't always depend on them. Don't hold onto them, assuming that you've really gained them. They're not really ours. We really don't own them. We assume that we dwell in the solidity of the body, the earth property, but what is there to the earth property? We already know. We recite the parts every day, so examine them. If you're not yet ready to let go of them, contemplate them until you see clearly that they really are the way the Buddha described them: *Atthi imasmim kāye*—"There is in this body..." And in this body there aren't just properties. There's also aging, illness, and ultimately death.

Why should we contemplate to know the body in this way? Because we want to escape from suffering. Because our attachment to these things makes us suffer. If we don't know them, if we don't see them, we can't escape from them. This is why we have to meditate, focusing on them. We focus our mindfulness and discernment on them, watching them until they're clear to the mind. That way, we won't be deluded into making wrong assumptions. We'll be able to develop right mindfulness with regard to the four noble truths—what's called the establishing of mindfulness (*satipaṭṭhāna*), the practice to escape from suffering. We'll be able to fully develop right view, seeing right in line with how the Buddha taught.

As we practice, our mind will really see things in that way and won't deviate from it, even the least little bit. We'll know that that's the way things really are. It'll appear clearly from within the mind. And at that point, whatever the Buddha says to abandon, we can easily abandon. It won't be hard, because we've see for ourselves. Even if the Buddha *didn't* say to abandon these things, we'd still have to abandon them. If anyone were to force us to hold onto them, we wouldn't want to hold onto them—because we've seen their true nature. Why would we hold onto them? It wouldn't serve any purpose. Once the mind really sees, it lets go. It's at peace—bright and clean—because it's seen and seen clearly. When it sees suffering and stress, it has to let go. It's like stepping on a fire: You lift up your foot immediately. You can't let it stay there, because you know that it's hot.

The reason we hold onto things is because we're deluded and misunderstand things. But once we know the truth, the mind tries to let go at all times. It doesn't want to burden itself. That way, we can sit at our ease, walk at our ease—we can go anywhere at our ease once we've seen the truth in line with the Buddha's teachings.

That truth is inside us. It's not so far away that we can't see it. It's here. We're aware of it, but we haven't developed the mind enough. We need to strengthen our conviction, because our conviction isn't solid. Our discernment to comprehend these things is very meager. For the most part, we use our discernment to think about other things.

If we focus fully on this, if we know this fully at all times, the mind will have to grow still. It'll have to let go. It'll have to know and see in line with the truth. It'll be able to gain release. "Release" means that we're released from suffering and stress. We're released from these aggregates. *To escape from suffering means that we escape from these aggregates, such as the body.*

So look to see clearly what we each have right with us. See the body simply as “form”: not a being, not a self, not a person, not you or anyone else. If you see it as your self, you’ll be afraid to look at it. See it simply as form. Or focus on seeing the whole body as a puppet, covered with skin, held together with bones, muscles, and tendons, all made out of the earth property, with the water property mixed in, with the fire property to warm it, and the wind property to blow around inside.

This puppet that we’ve assumed into being by the craftsman—skillful and unskillful fabrications, *puññābhisankhāra* and *apuññābhisankhāra*: We take it apart to see what it’s made of, to see what’s in there. We look at it in this way until we feel a sense of well-being in the heart: the well-being that comes from seeing. There’s a sense of fullness in the heart because we know and see. This is said to be the pleasure garden of the noble ones, a deathlessness that we can feed on.

Whoever contemplates the body contemplates the deathless. To be content to contemplate the body is to be content with the deathless. To see the body in line with its truth is the deathless. The deathless can be found in this thing that dies.

So understand this, and set your heart on meditating.

Birth Is Suffering

When we meditate and examine the mind, we see that we want happiness. All of us born into the world, even common animals, want happiness. Why do we want happiness? What purpose does it serve? What can we do with it? This is something we should pick up to contemplate. The fact that everyone wants happiness, as soon as they're born, the fact that we search for happiness, the fact that we desire to gain happiness, shows that everyone is born with pain and suffering. It's the same as when we look for coolness because the weather is hot. All of us—people and animals—struggle to find happiness because we have pain and suffering.

If there weren't suffering, we wouldn't have to struggle to find anything. We could sit at our ease, lie down at our ease, and walk at our ease. But the fact is that we suffer as soon as we're born. There's nobody who survives birth and then lies there happy and peaceful as soon as they come out. They struggle. They cry. This is clear to see.

Part of the Dhamma that the Buddha awakened to is the truth that birth is suffering. In Pāli, it's *jātipi dukkhā*. But we don't see it clearly, which is why we don't accept the truth. That's because we lack concentration and discernment. We lack the kind of contemplation and examination that can solve this problem correctly.

Once pain and suffering arise, we try to solve the problem by gathering material things. We see that life depends on food, so we stock up on food. We stock up on all four of the basic requisites. We think that when we get enough clothing, we'll be happy, that when

we get enough food we'll be happy, that when we get enough medicine we'll be happy. But now we have food—and how much happiness have we gotten from food? Think about it. We have homes and shelters to lie down in, but how much happiness have we gotten from them? How long can you lie down? We have enough clothing to protect the body—or even more, to dress it up fancy. But how much happiness do these things really bring? How lasting is it? To what extent can we hold onto it? We have medicine everywhere, all over the nation, but to what extent can it really cure our diseases? How much has it cost us? Even though we have food to eat all the time, we're still hungry all the time. There's never enough. There's no one who will be full until the day they die. No matter how many medicines we have, people still have aches, pains, and diseases—everywhere.

Contemplate this until it's clear to you. When you listen to this, look inside your heart. Don't simply hear the sound of my voice. When I speak about birth, each of us has already been born. We all eat. We're all hungry. We all look for clothing. We all have homes and shelters. We all have doctors and medicine. We think that we have enough for our lives, enough to be happy, but even then there's still pain and suffering, both in the body and in the mind. So far, I've been talking about the body and its food for you to contemplate.

Today, I'd like us all to meditate on the Buddha's teaching that birth is suffering. We try to wipe out suffering, but how much have we been able to wipe it out? The world at large: How far has it been able to wipe it out? For a long time now, people have been searching, but what the Buddha said goes against the views of the world: Once there's birth, the body has to age, just as we chant every day. There's aging all the time, illness all the time. If there's too much heat, it hurts. Too much cold, it hurts. Too much hunger, it hurts. There are dangers to life on all sides. If we sit too much, it

hurts. If we lie down too much, it hurts. If we walk too much, it hurts. This is the truth. I'm not making this up.

If we want to know the truth, we have to uncover it. Don't cover it up. *Covering up the truth is one of the tricks of the defilements.* They don't want us to know. They want us to fall for the effluents in our hearts and minds that keep us from being intelligent, from seeing the truth. We try to find the way out but they cover it up.

It's good that the Buddha first opened the door to the noble truths. He opened the door for us to look, to see. We're really fortunate. There's no one else who teaches like this, no institution that opens its doors to teach like this, no institution that tells us that birth is suffering. There's only the Buddha. The Buddha revealed this truth, so we should try to prove whether it's true, to test this principle of the truth, this principle of the Buddha's teaching, to see clearly whether it's true or not.

If we focus on this, if we meditate on this, we can see that "birth" refers to our body. The hair of the head, hair of the body, nails, teeth, and skin are all "birth." When we focus on this, we'll see in more detail that we're born every day; we die every day. You'll see this from the meditation. Birth doesn't mean only coming out of the womb. These things are born every day. The things of the past, what we consumed in the past, can't come back and help us now—not like the Dhamma. This is one point.

We should focus on this. The Buddha taught us to understand birth: *jātipi dukkhā*. Birth is suffering. When we know this, what purpose does it serve? It gets rid of ignorance, mental effluents (*āsava*), the causes of suffering. Where are the causes of suffering? Right where we don't think, where we're not yet intelligent, where we haven't been properly trained. *Kāmāsava*, the effluent of sensuality: We don't know the truth of sensuality. *Bhavāsava*, the effluent of becoming: We don't know the truth of becoming.

Avijjāsava, the effluent of ignorance: We don't know the truth of our aggregates right here in the present. We're deluded into nourishing other things; we try to wipe out suffering in other ways. The world has been trying to wipe out suffering for a long time now, but no one is full, no one has enough. I don't see that anyone has been able to wipe out suffering anywhere at all.

We have educational institutions all over the world for wiping out suffering, but they've actually increased suffering. The more they try to wipe out suffering, the more pollution there is in the world, creating even more dangers to the lives of human beings. The earth is poisonous. The water is poisonous. The air is poisonous. Is this the progress of the world? Looking for danger and poison like this? With all the new diseases that are menacing to life: Is this the discernment of the world as it progresses?

Let's look instead at the discernment of the Buddha's awakening, what he announced to the world: Birth is suffering. The Buddha was able to gain release from suffering because he first knew suffering. If he hadn't known the truth, he wouldn't have been able to gain release. How could he have gained release? So he first started with a principle that happens to everyone: Once you're born, you have to age. This happens to everyone. When you age, there's pain and illness. When there's pain and illness, there's death.

The Buddha then investigated what it is that takes birth, ages, gets ill, and dies. He found that the body is composed of four properties: earth, water, fire, and wind. The earth becomes things like hair of the head, hair of the body, nails, teeth, skin, and muscles. As for the water property, there's bile, phlegm, pus, mucus, urine, saliva. These are examples of the water property in the body. The wind property includes the in-and-out breath. The fire property is what gives the warmth inside and out that enables us to survive. If

there were no warmth, we couldn't survive at all. If there were no wind property or water property, we couldn't survive at all.

This is why we have to keep drinking water all the time. And why we need food from the earth property—such as vegetables—to nourish the properties of the body. What elements are there in the earth property? Iron, copper: Whatever they're like outside, that's how they are in the body. The Buddha discovered these things more than 2,000 years ago. But in discovering them, he did it for the sake of gaining release from suffering. He didn't try to construct things the way the world does. The world already has aging, but it goes searching for things that age—which is the same thing as searching for suffering.

What is it that ages? What is it that deteriorates? Life: Life is always deteriorating. The body: The body is always deteriorating. If we get a house, the house deteriorates. If we get a car, the car deteriorates. If we get clothing, the clothing deteriorates. If we marry and get a husband or a wife, we're getting things that age, that grow ill. Is there anyone who doesn't age and grow ill? And once we get these things, we have to be separated from them: more suffering.

So the Buddha was able to contemplate in this way. What is it about aging things that ages? He contemplated hair of the head: "Is the hair me? So why do I have to age like hair? The skin deteriorates until it dies. But why do I have to die?" These things are elements, properties. And when you take them apart, you see that they're *anattā*: not-self. Scientists have investigated these things, starting with large chunks—earth or rock—and as they divide them into smaller and smaller bits, they get down to atoms. When they get more refined than that, it's just energy. There's no life there. It's not self. That's *anattā*.

The Buddha found that there's no mind in there, no soul. It's empty. And he taught this a long time ago. It's not that we're just teaching it now. He taught this more than 2,000 years ago. He had no instruments to know these things, aside from the instruments of virtue, concentration, and discernment—in other words, the noble eightfold path. This is the path to wipe out suffering. If you want to search, search for this path. If you want to develop something, develop this path. This is the path leading to what doesn't age, doesn't grow ill, doesn't die. You can depend on it, always hold it in mind. It's never worn away.

So we should all take this to contemplate. Contemplate *jātipi dukkhā*, birth is suffering. Try to contemplate this in all your activities if you hate suffering, if you don't want to suffer. It's like hating a wound, or like a doctor who doesn't want there to be a wound: He has to take care of it, he has to wash it all the time. If he does, it'll heal. And it's the same with us. If we don't like suffering, we shouldn't run away from it, in the same way that if we don't like a wound, we have to focus attention on it.

The Buddha gained release from suffering in the same way a doctor approaches a disease. When the doctor examines a patient, he doesn't examine the parts that are beautiful and strong. He doesn't examine those parts. He examines wherever the disease is, in the parts that are dirty or wherever the symptoms appear so that he can cure them, and the body will be strong and healthy. It's the same with us. Whatever it is that makes the mind suffer, that's where we look. Wherever we find it, we wash away the causes until the mind reaches its primal, elemental nature, its true nature, a nature that's pure.

When we reach that element, there are no cemeteries, no hospitals, no stomachs or intestines for consuming things, stocking up on things, for encouraging greed. There's no anger, no delusion.

What would there be to be angry about? What would there be to get greedy for? Everything has been taken apart, and each part is independent, in and of itself. They don't get involved with one another. The properties are simply properties. Earth is just earth, that's all. Water is just water, fire is just fire, wind is just wind, that's all. These things don't get involved with one another. They're simply conditions, that's all. The mind is just a knowing property, just as earth is the earth property, not involved with anyone; just as water is the water property, not involved at all.

But at the moment, the mind suffers. The reason it keeps struggling is because it's not yet intelligent. It grabs hold of this and that, and finds that it's grabbing hold of things that are inconstant, so it raises a big fuss. It grabs hold of things that hit back, and it suffers. It grabs onto sunlight and complains that sunlight is hot. It grabs onto the body, but the body is inconstant, so it complains that the body is inconstant and hungry—but we never get disenchanted. This is what it means not to be intelligent.

If you really want to contemplate down to the true elemental nature of things in a subtle way, you have to develop the path that the Buddha himself practiced. There's only one path: the *ekāyana-magga*, the path for the purification of beings. If you want it to be complete, you have to see that it's composed of eight factors. It's like taking many good medicines and mixing them together to cure a disease that requires all of the ingredients, because each plays its role in curing the disease and wiping it totally out. In the same way, each factor in the noble eightfold path plays its role in curing the mind, controlling the mind so that it can become pure. There's nothing lacking in the path, nothing in excess. It can wipe out all sufferings, stains, and defilements.

To practice the noble eightfold path, don't go looking in the books. The eight factors boil down to three: virtue, concentration,

and discernment. Now, virtue, concentration, and discernment aren't letters of the alphabet. They're not spoken words. Virtue is an affair of the body. It looks after the body: right action. It looks after speech: right speech. It has you earn your livelihood rightly: right livelihood. This is the path, the practice. Whatever you do in your life, keep in mind what's right. Whatever you're about to say, first stop and keep in mind what's right. Examine your words to make sure that they're in line with the path. Don't let them wander off the path. Whatever you consume, consume within the limits of what's right. Don't go outside those limits.

It's like being a patient: If the patient trusts the doctor and practices in line with what the doctor says, the disease is sure to go away. But if you disobey the doctor, you can guarantee that the disease won't go away. You won't get to the end of the path.

These are the parts of the path concerning body and speech.

As for the heart: right effort, right mindfulness, right concentration, right view, and right resolve. These are the factors that train the heart.

It's for this reason that virtue, concentration, and discernment can purify the body, so that no damage comes from our actions. They purify our speech, and purify our livelihood, our means of survival. They keep our body and speech under control so that they're pure. This is what's meant by virtue.

As for the mind, whatever you think about, you have to think in ways that are right, in line with right resolve. Resolve to find the way to escape suffering, resolve to gain right view, resolve to practice renunciation to get out of suffering—*nekkhama-vitakko*; to have no ill will—*abyāpajjhā hontu*; and to cause no harm—*avihimsā-kammanto*. These are the principles of right resolve. We resolve to escape from birth, aging, illness, and death. We don't get carried away with sights, sounds, smells, tastes, or tactile sensations. When

we meditate, we contemplate to see that these are the things that take birth, age, grow ill, and die. When we can see their drawbacks, the mind can grow still. We can develop the mind because it's still. We gain a new kind of happiness, a happiness that doesn't have to depend on sensuality. Ultimately, we gain a happiness that's totally enough, that doesn't need to involve birth, aging, illness or death. We gain a deathless happiness (*amata-sukha*) based on our practice of concentration.

When we practice virtue, we gain a type of peace free from animosity or danger—because we don't create them. We look after our speech to make it right speech, and there's no animosity or danger. We gain peace from our speech. We practice right effort and right livelihood and train the mind to gain mental peace and mental happiness.

When these factors gain strength, and we've developed our discernment, we'll see the four noble truths. We'll feel a sense of disenchantment for things that age, grow ill, and die. We see their drawbacks. But because we see the happiness that comes from a quiet mind, we can also let go and discard these things. I've never seen any noble one who's gone back to start a household ever again, or who's looked for satisfaction in the body ever again. The Buddha, even though he had great wealth and could have ruled over a kingdom, was able to let it all go, without any doubts. None of his disciples, even though they had been millionaires, ever returned to get involved with their wealth. They did nothing but let it go, let their aggregates disband, while they totally unbound.

That's because the happiness that comes from peace is free from animosity, free from danger, free from birth, aging, illness, and death. It's freed from all the confusion and quarrels in the work of the world. How much happiness is there in that kind of work? Contemplate your body: How far can you depend on it? Your mind,

if it's not trained: How far can you depend on it? But if you do train it to find true peace, that's when you can depend on it. *Attāhi attano nātho*: That's what you can depend on when you depend on yourself.

When the mind has been well trained, it becomes Dhamma: *supaṭipanno*, one who has practiced well; *ujupaṭipanno*, one who has practiced straightforwardly; *ñāyapaṭipanno*, one who has practiced rightly; *sāmīcipaṭipanno*, one who has practiced appropriately for gaining release from suffering. The mind becomes Dhamma; the Dhamma becomes the mind. There's no being there, no person at all. The Buddha, Dhamma, and Saṅgha become one and the same element, the same mind: a single element, with no second. There's nothing to strike against anything, because it's all one and the same. There's nothing to strike it—as when you try to clap with one hand, there's no sound. When everything is let go, there's just one.

This is why there's only one unbinding. There's no second. If there were a second, there would be problems. So we should let go of everything so there's no second. Let there be just one.

Now that you've heard this, remember it well.

Glossary

Ārammaṇa: Preoccupation; object or issue of the mind or will; anything the mind takes as a theme or prop for its activity.

Āsava: Mental effluent or fermentation—sensuality, becoming, views, and ignorance.

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.

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*.

Dukkha: Stress; suffering.

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

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, intention, thought construct; and *viññāṇa*—sensory consciousness, the act of

taking note of sense data and ideas as they occur. Sanskrit form: *Skandha*.

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*.

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

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—any force or factor that fabricates things, the process of fabrication, and any fabricated thing that results; anything conditioned, compounded, or fashioned by nature, whether on the physical or the mental level. In some contexts, this word is used as a blanket term for all five *khandhas*. As the fourth *khandha*, it refers specifically to the intentional fabrication of urges, thoughts, etc., within the mind.

Sati: Mindfulness; the ability to keep something in mind; powers of reference and retention.

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