



# Helping Yourself To Help Others

**PHRA DEBVEDI**

(Prayudh Payutto)

translated by

**PURISO BHIKKHU**

BUDDHADHAMMA FOUNDATION  
BANGKOK

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## Author's Note

Contained in this book is a transcript of a talk delivered to Police General Chavalit and Khun Tempun **Yodmani**, together with their friends and relatives, on an occasion of alms-giving in memory of the late Ajahn Chitra **Dansuputra**.

The recorded cassette of the talk was passed on to Ven. Puriso, an Australian **Bhikkhu**, abbot of Wat Keu-an in **Ubolrajadhani**, by a Thai monk who resided there. After listening to the talk, he found it interesting and thought that its clear and relevant treatment of **Dhamma** practice would be specially helpful to Western practitioners. He, therefore, translated it into English, had it typewritten and then presented it to me for checking. His enthusiasm for having accomplished the task deserves appreciation and gratitude.

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April 1990

*Phra Debvedi (Prayudh Payutto)*



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## ***Making merit in the name of a deceased***

Today I would like to express my appreciation to ***Police General Chavalit*** and ***Khun Tempun Yodmani***, together with their friends and relatives, who have sponsored this occasion of alms-giving in memory of ***Ajahn Chitra Dansuputra***, who passed away five years ago to this day. This act of **merit-making** shows the sponsors' appreciation for those who have been their benefactors. Even many years after the deceased has passed away, the children and other relatives still take his goodness to heart and express their appreciation by an annual act of alms-giving, dedicating any merits rising from the occasion in his memory. This is **one** way of acknowledging that person's goodness, enabling his memory and his worthiness to live on in the hearts

of his children and relatives. In addition, it is an opportunity for the sponsors to develop skillful qualities.

In the Buddhist religion it is said that when people perform meritorious actions in the name of a deceased, they should make their minds calm and clear. When the mind is so cleared and composed, that act of dedicating merit is said to be most efficacious.

Looking at this in one way, it seems as if the act of merit-making is done simply for the sake of the deceased, but if we look more closely we will see that really the results arise within ourselves. When one is performing an act of merit to be dedicated to another, one must first calm and clear one's own mind, and then consciously dedicate the fruits of one's good actions. When the mind is so established we can say that the dedication of merit is most thorough and fruitful. So merit or goodness must first arise within one's own mind before it can be dedicated to another.

*By helping oneself one helps others*

Therefore, in the practice of Dhamma, even if one specifically looks to the benefit of other beings, the results that are most certain are those which arise in oneself. Thus it is said that by helping oneself one helps others, and by helping others one helps oneself.

There is a simile regarding this related by the Buddha, in the story of the two acrobats. One form of acrobatics performed at that time involved the use of a long bamboo pole. This was balanced on the head and shoulders of one acrobat while the other balanced himself on top of the pole. In such a way they would perform tricks while maintaining their balance. These two acrobats, teacher and apprentice, would travel around the country performing their art.

At one time the teacher said, "Now you keep your eye on me and I'll keep my eye on you and keep you from falling off."

The apprentice replied, "Oh, no, teacher. You should look after yourself while I look after myself. In this way we can perform our act and earn a living in safety." This story is a parable: in looking after oneself one also looks after others, and by looking after others one also looks after oneself.

In practising the Dhamma we are cultivating virtue, which first arises in ourselves. That virtue can then extend to others, even without our knowing about it. Specifically, when practising Dhamma we are cultivating virtue (*sīla*), concentration (*samādhi*) and wisdom (*paññā*). Having virtuous conduct we don't harm others. This is one result of Dhamma practice. Although we have developed that *sīla* within ourselves, the good effects extend to others in the form of their safety. Again, if we help others, such as by using *khanti*, forbearance, not harming others through anger, for example, but rather using *mettā*, good will, and *karunā*, helpfulness, for others, we are practising Dhamma, the fruit of which also arises within ourselves. Thus it is said that when one looks after oneself one also looks after others;

and when one looks after others one also looks after oneself. The practice of Dhamma is coproductive in that its effects extend to all beings.

### *A medicine for treating the ills of life*

Dhamma, when well practised, is like a medicine for treating the ills of life, enabling us to live our lives well. The Buddha, as the proclaimer of the Dhamma, is like a skillful doctor who prescribed particular medicines for particular illnesses. If a doctor is not skillful, even though he may have good medicine, he may prescribe it wrongly. His treatment will then not be very effective. If a doctor is skillful and astute he will be very effective in treating his patients, because he thoroughly understands the properties of the various medicines.

Now I've heard it said, "This religion has been with us now for thousands of years and yet we still see people fighting and in conflict. Evil still

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abounds. Religion seems incapable of dealing with it, it's useless. We may as well dispense with it." Some people see it like this.

Is this idea of theirs true? They say that even though we've had this Buddhist religion for so many years, people are still corrupt, they still live in conflict. Religion seems powerless to stop these things, one can see no concrete results from religion at all. Better to do away with it.

To these people I say, "The science of medicine has been with us for many thousands of years. Medicine is plentiful and there have been doctors curing illnesses throughout the ages, for thousands, even tens of thousands, of years. And yet we see disease and illness still abound. If what you say is true then we must also say that the science of medicine is redundant, we may as well throw that out, too."

This leads us to consider that this body of ours is by nature a breeding ground for various

illnesses, subject to pain and ageing. It becomes necessary for us to **try** to find medicines **and** to exercise the body, so as to maintain our strength and **live** as free of illness and pain as we **can**.

Therefore the science of medicine, and the profession of doctor, are still very valuable things. As long as there are people in the world there will be pain and disease, so there must **also** be treatment for these things.

Now in the **same** way, regarding religion: As long as there are people in the world there is **also** "mind." This mind is similar to the body. It **can also** be weakened and **damaged**. Problems **arise** in the mind, causing it to be discontent. That which disturbs the mind is what we **call** "suffering" (**dukkha**). As long as there are people living in **this** world there will be suffering, so we must **also have** a treatment for it. When one person is cured there are still countless others to follow.

Therefore religion **can** be compared to the science of medicine and the Buddha to a great doctor. Having cured many people in his own **time** he **also** left us the texts so that we who follow after him **can also treat** these illnesses.

Now in our lives we **have** both body **and** mind. As for the body, the doctors usually **deal** with its illnesses. The Dhamma, however, is what we must use for dealing with our lives as a whole, particularly the mind.

What disease is it which incessantly hounds the mind? It is the disease of the defilements (*kilesa*). Whenever *lobha*, *dosa* or *moha*\* **arise** within the mind they disturb it, causing discontent and suffering to **arise**. The mind which is thus **harmed can** be called an ill or diseased mind. When diseases such as greed **arise**, they stifle and oppress the mind, making it become obsessed with some **object** or other. The mind **is** not spacious or clear.

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greed, hatred and delusion

When hatred **arises** it **makes** the mind hot and agitated. This is another disease which unsettles the mind and so, likewise, do **all** other kinds of defilements disturb the mind.

The healthy mind **should have** the qualities of lightness, **radiance**, clarity and calm. Whenever defilements arise these qualities disappear. Clarity becomes murkiness; calm changes to excitement and agitation; the quality of lightness gives way to oppression, **obstruction** and so on. These are the symptoms of the diseases of the mind, which are **all** caused by defilements. So we say that defilements are a disease which must be treated.

The Buddha's teaching is like a handbook of medicines. Some of the medicines are for specific illnesses. For example, *mettā-bhāvanā*, the **cultiva-**tion of good-will, is for treating the disease of anger, which we **call dosa**. When the mind is oppressed and disturbed, in addition to *mettā-bhāvanā*, which acts like a refreshing, cool shower on the mind, there is **also khanti**, patient endurance, to aid in

driving annoyance and irritation from the mind. Or one **can** use *karunā*, compassion, to counteract destructive thoughts, or use *paññā*, wisdom, to brighten the mind, making it light **and** clear.

There are many different types of Dhamma medicine, and one must use them appropriately. One who aspires to skillfulness in using these medicines should follow the example of the Buddha, whom we **revere** as the greatest "Dhamma doctor", prescribing medicines with the greatest proficiency. If a teacher is unable to use these medicines skillfully, then his "teaching" may become like so much hot air. Anybody listening to such teaching would **have** to rely on his own wisdom to choose the teachings appropriate to his needs. If he wasn't skillful then he might not obtain much help from the teaching.

### ***The primal disease***

**All** the above refers to Dhamma as a collection of specific medicines for use with specific illnesses, the disease of **the** defilements.

Now there **is** another kind of disease which is even more extensive. Just now I spoke of the mind which is troubled and disturbed. Now this very mind, as well as the body, which together we **call** a "life", being compounded of the five *khandhas*\*, are **all** known as *sañkhāras*, conditioned things. **All *sai-khais* have certain** characteristics. They are unstable, unenduring, or suffering, and they are not a self, not being under anybody's power, other than the **natural** progression of cause and **effect**.\*\* **All *sañkhāras* conform to these Three Characteristics,** known in Pali as the *tilakkhana*. That these things are **all** unstable, suffering and not self is another kind of disease, one that is inherent in **all *sankharas*,** the five *khandhas*, or body and mind. It is the disease of their imperfection, their privation. Being imperfect there naturally follow conflict, struggle and change. This imperfection causes problems to **arise in the mind also.**

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The Five Khandhas: Body, feeling, perception, **prolifera-**  
 \* \*tion, consciousness.

*Aniccāṃ*, **impermanent**; *Dukkhaṃ*, suffering; *Anatta*, not self.

Therefore people suffer not only as a result of the workings of the grosser defilements, which we **can** clearly see arising from **time to time** in the mind, but **also** from the more **subtle** defilement of not knowing the **true** nature of **life**.\* Suffering arises because of the very imperfection of *sañkhāras*, of their being subject to the Three Characteristics. This is a more profound kind of disease, one which we must cure in order to really transcend suffering. We **can't** simply try to cure the greed, hatred and delusion which are constantly arising in the mind, we must **also** clearly know the nature of life, that it **is** bounded by these Three Characteristics.

If we don't understand this we will cling to the five *khandhas* as being a self or belonging to self, demanding of them not to change. Even though, we thus cling to them they won't conform to our wishes, they simply follow **causal** conditions. Then we are disappointed and suffering arises again.

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\* *Avijjā* - ignorance

So on the deeper **level** we could say that beneath the greed, hatred **and** delusion, the **real** cause of suffering **is** the imperfect nature of ***sañ-khāras***, the **ignorance** of which causes the defilements of greed, hatred and delusion to **arise** in the mind.

It is therefore **important** for us to study the diseases of our lives on two levels. The disease which **is** most apparent is the disease of the various defilements: ***lobha*** (greed), ***dosa*** (aversion), ***moha*** (delusion), ***māna*** (conceit), ***ditthi*** (stubborn views), ***issā*** (jealousy), ***macchariya*** (stinginess) and so on, which we see **all** around. However, looking more deeply, we find that **all** disease is caused by the nature of ***sañkhāras***, which are bound by ***aniccam***, ***dukkham*** and ***anattā***.

### ***Becoming aware of sense contact***

We must find a way to treat these diseases, by not allowing the defilements to **arise**. But how are

we going to prevent the defilements from arising? To do this we must look on a broader scale. Just now we looked at things in terms of ourselves, seeing the disease as something that arises in our own minds, in our own lives. We saw defilements arising in our own minds, while the *sañkhāras*, which are **impermanent** and imperfect, we saw as ourselves.

But if we look on a broader scale we will see clearly that this disease (*roga*) is based on contact with **the** world (*loka*). Disease and the world are connected. How are they connected? Why do greed, hatred and delusion **arise** within us, how do these things come about?

Generally speaking, these things **arise** from contact with the world. This world makes contact with us and we make contact with the world. How do we make contact with the world? Our everyday experience comes to us as sense contact, from receiving sense impressions through the eye, ear, **nose**, tongue, body and mind. Sensations which **arise**

through the eye are called sights; those entering through the ear are called sounds; those entering through the **nose** are called smells; those entering through the tongue are called tastes; those entering through the body are called tactile sensations; those entering through the mind are thoughts and feelings. We experience our selves through these sensations. If we experience none of these sensations we are not aware, such as in deep sleep or **unconsciousness**. **Whenever** we are aware it's through these sensations.

From where do these sensations **arise**? They come from the world, our environment. Our **environment** becomes manifest to us through the eyes, ears, **nose**, tongue, body and mind, which in Buddhism we **call** the six sense bases. Any experience that appears to us must appear to us through these entrances, as sights, sounds, smells, tastes, bodily feelings **and** thoughts.

A person with no eyes would therefore be deprived of one **type** of sensation, sight. One who

was deaf would **lose** sounds. So this world appears to us through these sense organs.

Now these sensations, or experiences, appear to us and there is contact, after which follows an immediate answering reaction. **All** these experiences **can** therefore be seen as experiences which **are** either a base for greed to **arise**, a base for hatred to **arise** or a base for delusion to **arise**. If we **have** no Dhamma medicine, then whenever sensations **arise** we will **fall** under their power, and the resulting reactions will take **place**. When a sensation which is a base for greed arises, we want to take it. When a sensation which is a base for hatred arises, instead of seducing us into desire, it upsets us and taunts us into anger. Defilements thus **arise** in response to those sense impressions.

In the case of the ordinary, untrained person (*puthujjana*), whenever a sense impression arises there will initially follow a feeling of pleasure or displeasure. What sort of feeling arises, is it agreeable to us or not? If it is agreeable to us there

is a feeling **of pleasure** and then follows a reaction of "liking" or approval. Seeing a pleasant sight, or hearing a pleasant sound, we feel approval. If it's a sight that offends our eyes or a sound that grates our ears, one that we remember as something we don't like, there is a reaction of disapproval.

From these initial reactions of approval and disapproval **arise mental** proliferations, thoughts about those things which become problems in our mind, making the mind **stained** and dull. The disease arises. So this disease arises within the mind, it's true, but **it** comes as a result of experiencing sensations, or the world as it appears to us through **our** senses.

### ***Restraining the senses to see more clearly***

So we must know how to function correctly in this world. If we know how to function properly, the disease won't **arise**. The **proper** functioning in

regard to the world is the **proper** conduct towards sense impressions.

Therefore, the Buddha taught the **initial** practice of sense restraint, *indriyasamvara*: Restraining the eyes, ears, **nose**, tongue, body and mind, so as to prevent the various sensations from overwhelming us and causing greed and hatred to **arise**. This means to use *sati*\* to know these things as they **arise**, as they are. Whenever a sensation arises, *vedanā*, the feeling of pleasure, **displeasure** or **indifference**, is there. When a pleasant feeling arises, one who has not developed *sati* will delight in it. When unpleasant feeling arises, the mind untrained in *sati* will flow down the stream of proliferations to disapproval, anger, displeasure, hatred and so on.

The mind of the average person will be in this state **all the time**, constantly flitting from delight

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*Sati*: Recollection or mindfulness.

to aversion. In the *Tipiṭaka* these two words "delight" and "aversion" crop up frequently.

Whenever we experience a sense impression there is a resulting reaction from the mind. So I say we experience life through the awareness of sensations. This experience of sensation is therefore a very important aspect of our everyday lives. If we don't practise correctly in relation to our experience of sense contact, defilements will arise, resulting in problems.

The first defilements to arise will be "delight" and "aversion." Therefore it is said to cut the stream at its beginning, by using *sati* to guard over the senses, using sense restraint.

In the beginning, we recollect whenever a sensation has arisen. Whether it's to our liking or not we should not allow that sensation to overwhelm us, leading us to proliferate under the influence of delight and aversion, and from there to further harmful thoughts.

This is how to practise properly in relation to sense impressions, which is also the proper relationship towards the world. When we practise like this, the diseases won't arise.

This is one aspect of the matter, the disease which arises within through sense contact. However, if we look more deeply we see that this interaction between ourselves and the world, what we call life, is all ***saṅkhāras***, conditioned phenomena. The world consists of ***saṅkhāras***, which all come under the domain of the Three Characteristics; they are Impermanent, Suffering and Not-self. The whole world is therefore just the same as our individual lives, changing and ephemeral. It is not within our power to force it to be any way other than as conditioning factors direct it, it is *anattā*.

Although the world is *anattā*, people still attach to it. "World" here refers to everything we come in contact with, not only our bodies, but all our possessions, both living and non-living. All these things are Impermanent, Suffering and Not-self, just

as are our own lives. The wrong way to conduct oneself is to perceive sensations with clinging. Seeing sensations as ourselves or belonging to us, we demand of those sensations that they obey our wishes. When we cling to the world like this, wanting everything, especially our possessions, to conform to our desires, to belong to us, then when those things change according to the natural laws of cause and effect, our minds manifest a state of turmoil and distress. Suffering arises.

Thus, in the final analysis, the world causes disease to arise in us because it is subject to the Three Characteristics. Summarizing, we can say that there are two distinct factors which cause the disease of suffering. Firstly, kilesa, the unskillful interactions with the world through the influence of delight and aversion, as well as the many other kinds of defilements. The second way is by the very nature of the world, being Impermanent, Suffering and Not-self, which causes **conflict** to arise in the mind of anyone who clings to it.

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However, the arising of problems, regardless of whether we look on the level of our own lives, or look outward to the world in general, must ultimately stem from one and the same source. The arising of problems in the most elementary sense occurs on a moment-to-moment basis, as the mind interacts with the various sensations and becomes, as a result, spoiled, agitated and tricked by greed, hatred and delusion.

If one has mindfulness and can cut the flow of defilements, by not allowing the mind to indulge in delight and aversion, then one can maintain the mind in a clear, calm state. The **disease** won't arise. However, on a deeper level, one must also understand the true nature of this world and our lives in their entirety, as Impermanent, Suffering and **Not-self**. One can thus relax the grip of attachment. When one has relaxed the grip of attachment, one's mind is no longer swayed or overwhelmed by the world. No matter how things go, they can no longer rule over the mind. Not following those conditions, the mind detaches itself freely from them.

This is an important point. In the end, we must be able to free our mind, to make it liberated, clear and calm at all times.

What I've been talking about here is the practice of Dhamma on various levels. Firstly, as I've explained already, there is the practice of Dhamma as a medicine for specific illnesses. This includes the various techniques for counteracting such defilements as *macchariya*, selfishness or stinginess. When this arises we would use one particular technique. If anger or envy arise we can use other techniques.

But on the deeper level, eventually we must know the true nature of *sañkhāras*. Just by knowing the true nature of *sañkhāras* we can thereby simultaneously cut defilements in all their forms, because we see that they are not worthy of holding onto. When we don't cling to things, they no longer cause us to whirl around, because we've seen their ultimate nature.

*The development of the mind: Cittabhāvanā*

So on the higher levels of Buddhist practice we talk about *bhāvanā*, cultivation, the training of the mind. This training also has various levels. Initially one may train the mind simply to be calm by the practice of *samīdhi*. The aim of *samādhi* is to focus the mind at one sensation, or object of awareness. Normally the mind is not at rest. It's like a monkey, jumping from one impression to another. Now it has one object of awareness, then in an instant it flies off somewhere else, then somewhere else again. The more it jumps around following various sensations, the less is it its own master, the more it is enslaved by those sensations and caught up in greed, hatred, delusion and so on.

If we are able to bring our mind to rest on one object, not jumping around after countless sensations, the mind will become manageable. So we must take one particular impression, anything will do that is wholesome and not outright **harmful**, such as a meditation theme. For example, something

which is quite neutral and doesn't cause the mind to proliferate in unskillful ways is the in and out breathing. Or one can concentrate on the qualities of the Buddha, this is a very good theme for keeping the mind from wandering around.

When the mind rests with that object we don't have to bother with sensations arising from the outside world. Defilements resulting from value judgements about externals do not arise.

This is the most elementary level of meditation practice: concentrating the mind on an object which is harmless. With the mind coming to rest on that object, we can be said to have accomplished our aim, the mind is in *samādhī*, being firmly fixed on one object. When talking of *samādhī* they use the word *ekaggatā*, one-pointedness, meaning that the mind rests with one particular object. When it rests on that object it is calm and undistracted. This is *samidhi*.

*Samādhi* has just this much as its initial requirement: bringing the mind to a focus at one particular sensation. The defilements are subdued and unable to arise. If the mind goes on to more refined levels of concentration, it may enter the *jhinas* (absorptions), but no matter how refined the concentration becomes it still retains the same basic qualities—having one sensation for its object and fixing onto that.

### *Qualities of Samādhi*

When the mind is one-pointed, it is said to be like a magnifying glass which we use to concentrate the sun's rays. Using a magnifying glass, a concentration of energy occurs which can even ignite an object which gets in its path. Again, it can be compared to water which is released from a great height, such as a mountain. If the water has no channel it dissipates, but if we use a channel or a pipe the water flows down in a torrent. The flow of

the water may be so strong as to sweep all obstacles, such as branches and trees, from its path.

Yet again, the calm mind can be compared to still, limpid water, which is completely free of ripples, perfectly smooth. If one were to look in the water one could clearly see a true reflection of one's features. Similarly, the calm mind sees things undistortedly.

To put it even clearer, when water is still and calm, any dust or impurities in the water would tend to drop to **form** a sediment, leaving the water above clean and clear. Anything in the water, such as fish, snails, rocks and so on, would be readily visible. Similarly, in calming the mind by practising concentration (*samādhi*), there is a further benefit to be derived. Apart from making the mind unperturbed and unmolested by defilements, it also facilitates in the arising of wisdom.

Usually, with a restless mind, whatever one looks at one sees unclearly. It's as if we were trying

to look at an object which is swinging back and forth. No matter how hard we look we can't see it clearly. In fact, the more closely we try to inspect the object, the more blurred it becomes. If we want to see that object more clearly we must hold it as still as possible.

Our minds are like this. We are always having to deal with arising sensations but usually our minds are not calm. When the mind is not calm it's like the object being blown about in front of us by the wind. We can't see it clearly, our view is constantly changing. More refined things, such as particular problems we may want to resolve, are even harder to see clearly if the mind has no *samādhī*.

So we calm the mind. Calming the mind is like holding that object firmly and still, so that we can examine it as closely as we wish. The mind which has *samādhī* is a pre-requisite for wisdom; It is said, *samāhito yathābhūtaṁ pajānāti*: When the

mind is firm and calm, wisdom functions clearly and we can see the truth.

However, simply having *samādhi* doesn't mean that one will automatically develop wisdom. If one doesn't know how to rightly use *samādhi*, one may simply settle for the calmed mind. Or one may think, "Oh, when I've calmed the mind maybe I'll be able to develop some psychic powers." One gets a desire for mental powers, such as divine sight, divine hearing and so on. These are all attributes of samatha, calm. Samlrdhi which is practised simply for the sake of the samlrdhi itself is called samatha practice. It flies off in the direction of the refined absorption states (*jhāna*), and psychic powers. These are all fruits of mind-power.

***Right samādhi is the mind that is workable.***

If one is to understand samlrdhi correctly in the Buddhist sense, one must understand it as it is described in the scriptures, as the mind that is malleable, fit for work. The mind that is malleable is

one that is ready for work, in that it is firm and still, as I've just explained with the comparison of holding an object still in order to see it clearly. This means we use *samidhi* to facilitate the arising of wisdom.

Wisdom is of many types and can arise in many ways. For instance, in our everyday lives there are countless things constantly demanding our attention and consideration, but if our minds are not calm we don't see them clearly. At some later time, having calmed the mind, these things may arise once more into consciousness, so that we can review them more clearly. This is one type of wisdom which can be derived from *samidhi*: seeing the events or experiences of our lives more clearly in retrospect. Cases where wisdom was initially not apparent become clearer.

In addition to this one can also use *samidhi* as a tool for looking at experiences as they arise in the present moment. For example, a meditator practises *samidhi* to the level of *jhāna*, then proceeds to examine the various qualities of *jhāna*, which are given as

vitakka, *vicāra*, *pīti*, sukha and *ekaggatā*,\* bringing these qualities up for scrutiny so as to see their true nature: that they are Impermanent, Suffering and Not-self. This is a function of wisdom.

Wisdom can thus be used to examine an event from the past or to examine experiences in the present. In either case, the result is the same, that of seeing things as they really are.

### *The real value of samādhi*

The real value of *samādhi* lies with wisdom. The difference between *samādhi* and wisdom is that *samādhi* renders the mind calm and undefiled for only a limited time. When the mind leaves that state of calm it experiences various sensations which proceed to influence the mind as before. Sensations which are the bases for greed, hatred and delusion arise once more. You see, the mind is still the same as before, except that when the mind enters *samādhi*

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Initial and sustained attention, rapture, pleasure and one-pointedness, the five composite factors of first *jhāna*.

it rests with a harmless sensation, so that defilements don't arise. As soon as the mind encounters harmful sensations once more, the defilements arise as before.

Therefore the results of simply practising *samidhi* still leave us prone to problems. Suffering still arises, the disease is still with us. *Samidhi* in itself does not give us a real, lasting result. One who transcends the influence of defilements temporarily, by using *samidhi*, is said to have experienced *vikkhambhana vimutti*, transcendence through suppression. The illustration is used of covering grass with a rock. As long as the rock is covering the grass, it is suppressed and cannot grow, but once the rock is removed, the grass grows as before.

So now, how can we cure the problem once and for all, so that, even when the mind experiences various sensations, no harm or problems arise? One must delve deeper into the problem, by destroying the seed of defilement in the mind, so that the mind

does not react with defilement to the various sensations.

This is called abandoning the defilements through true knowledge and vision of the way things are, that is, by using wisdom. Wisdom on this level is called *vipassanā*.

Thus, when we talk of the higher levels of Buddhist practice, it is said to have two main branches. On one hand, *samādhi* in itself, which we call samatha, calm, and on the other hand, the use of wisdom, seeing the true nature of things, which is called *vipassanā*. If one develops *samādhi* and then uses that calm mind in the development of wisdom, one will achieve what in Buddhism we would consider to be comprehensive results.

### ***The four foundations of mindfulness***

Now there is another technique which is often stressed, and that is called sati. Sati is a very important factor of Dhamma practice. We often hear

of the Four Foundations of Mindfulness. *Sati* is the crucial factor of this practice. The Four *Satipatṭhāna*\* is the practice which stresses *sati*. In the practice of the Foundations of Mindfulness, the development of a calm, still mind is not emphasised. What is emphasised here is the use of *sati* to bring about the arising of wisdom. *Sati* is a factor which can greatly assist in the development of wisdom.

Moreover, usually if there is no *sati*, *Samādhi* cannot arise. *Sati* is actually mentioned as one of the component factors of *samādhi*, as in the Eight-Fold Path, where the last three factors, *sammāvāyāma* (Right Effort), *sammāsati* (Right Mindfulness) and *sammāsamādhi* (Right Concentration) are placed together to form the section on *samādhi*.

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\* The Four Foundations of Mindfulness: Body (*Kāya*), Feeling (*Vedanā*) Mind (*Citta*) and Mind-object (*Dhamma*)

***Sati and Samādhi***

Now how does *sati* differ from ***samādhi***? They compare it to using a rope to tie a wild animal, freshly caught from the jungle. The animal runs about wildly. If there was no rope to hold it, the animal would certainly escape. So we must tie the animal to a stake, so that instead of escaping, the animal can only run around the vicinity of the stake. The rope is comparable to *sati*. *Sati* is that which pulls the mind back, or pulls a particular sensation to the mind, or pulls the mind to a particular sensation. Or you could say it holds the mind to, or forces the mind to stay with, a particular sensation. That which holds or forces the mind, preventing it from wandering too far, is *sati*.

Now if we restrain the mind until it calms down and stays still of its own accord, this is ***samādhi***. Like tying up a calf, the calf can't roam about because of the rope, which we compared to *sati*, which holds it back. After a time the calf tires

and lies down calmly. The calf lying calmly is like the mind which has *samidhi*, which is firm and still.

Thus *sati* and *samidhi* are closely related. *Sati* is a factor which helps to develop *samidhi*.

Now in addition to aiding in the development of *samidhi*, *sati* is also a factor which can influence the mind to develop wisdom. Whatever we can think of or reflect on, that is called a sensation (*ārammana*). If all sensations disappeared we would no longer have anything to reflect on, because there would be nothing there. In order for that sensation to stay with us there must be something to hold it down. *Sati* is what holds the theme of contemplation to our attention, so that wisdom can consider it and develop understanding. Therefore *paññā* (wisdom) cannot function if there is no *sati*. There must be *sati* to hold things to consciousness so that we can see them and reflect on them. We must have, before anything else, *sati*.

## *Sati and Vipassanā*

The practice of *vipassanā* meditation emphasises the use of *sati*. If there is no *sati*, *paññā* cannot function. *Sati* itself has many different functions. First, *sati* allows us to be aware of the sensations that enter our consciousness as they arise. Usually our minds are trapped by delight and aversion. When a sensation arises which produces pleasant feeling we feel happy and we like that sensation. If another type of sensation arises, one that produces an unpleasant feeling, we don't like it and give in to aversion. Whenever our mind delights in or is averse to, likes or dislikes anything, it gets stuck on that sensation. The mind fixes itself onto that sensation but, being temporary, in a moment that sensation has passed. It becomes a past experience. Immediately there follows a new sensation, but the mind, being stuck on the sensation which just passed, does not follow the new sensation that's arising. That which has just passed becomes the past, so it is said that the mind which proliferates has fallen into the past.

If the mind falls into the past, it can also float off and begin projecting fantasies about the future.

The mind which is not aware in the present moment is the mind which delights and feels averse. The mind, either delighting or feeling averse, must clutch onto some particular sensation. As soon as it clutches onto any particular sensation the mind falls into the past, even if only for a matter of one second.

### ***Keeping awareness in the present***

Delight and aversion arise dependent on some particular sensation. For instance, if we see something we like, the mind then proliferates around that liking. If aversion or dislike takes over, the mind proliferates in a different way. In other words, the mind doesn't see things the way they are. When we say the mind doesn't see things the way they are, we mean that the mind is under the influence of delight and aversion, which make the mind either fall into the past or float off into the future. Saying that the

mind falls into delight and aversion or saying that the mind doesn't see things the way they are, is to say one and the same thing. Either way the mind does not have awareness with each sensation as it arises.

Now if we experience a sensation in the present moment, but do not attach to it with delight or aversion, then the mind will simply follow each sensation with awareness. Delight and aversion do not have a chance to arise, because of **sati**, which causes the mind to stay with the present moment.

When the mind doesn't proliferate under the influence of delight and aversion, then we do not see things through the "coloured glasses" of our likes and dislikes. We see things as they are. It is said that all things in this world are simply as they are in themselves, nothing more. But the mind defiled by delight and aversion proceeds to pigment things into something more than what they are. We don't see things as they are. Without the staining

effect of desire and aversion we see things as they are.

Thus *sati* facilitates the arising of wisdom, helping our mind not to fall into the past or float into the future with delight and aversion, but seeing things as they are, which is a function of *paññā*, wisdom.

The practice of *sati**paṭṭhāna* is said to help eradicate desire and aversion and to see things as they are. Now when we are more adept at seeing things as they arise, we will notice the arising, existence and cessation of them. When we perceive the various sensations coming and going as they do, we will be seeing the process by which they function, seeing that they are constantly arising and ceasing. They are impermanent. Seeing impermanence we will also see *dukkha* (suffering) and *anattā* (selflessness), the Three Characteristics. So the practice of *sati**paṭṭhāna* on deeper levels enables us to see the arising, changing and dissolution of all things. This is seeing the Three Characteristics of

conditioned existence, which is the arising of wisdom. The mind will then no longer clutch onto, get stuck on or be influenced by external sensations. The mind becomes its own master and breaks free. The free mind is the fruition of the development of wisdom.

As I said in the beginning of this talk, if the mind knows the truth of life, the disease of *avijjā*\* will not arise. The disease of the mind is caused by *avijjā*, ignorance, which causes the mind to proliferate.

Now this is the practice of Buddhism. Looking at it, we notice that it all relates to us. All the practice I've been talking about here is based on this fathom-long body. We can see the truth right here. Living in this world we experience the environment as sensations. If we don't practise appropriately towards those sensations we will experience problems.

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*Avijjā* - Ignorance of the true nature of existence.

***Dhamma practice: passive or active?***

In one sense, it's almost as if we "lie.in wait" for sensations to arise, and relate to them in such a way as to not give rise to defilement. It's as if we were a passive receiver of sensations. In this sense we may feel we should sit and wait for things to happen and do our best to avoid getting involved in anything. **This** is one way of looking at **Dhamma** practice.

Another way is to use our practice to improve the world, by training to see it in a more skillful way. So the initial practice is **not** only to be a passive experiencer, but also learning to get up and go outside to meet the world also. This means practising toward the world in a good way.

One who practises like this practises correctly in relation to oneself and also, having seen the truth, practises in the world in such a way as to

be helpful, not harmful. Helping others also helps us to develop good qualities in ourselves. The mind tends toward skillful reactions in its everyday contact.

In this way the practiser sees the relationship between his own personal practice and the practice of relating to the world. One sees that all beings are related, and so deals with them with *mettā*, goodwill, and *karunā*, compassion, helping them in their need. Furthermore, we understand that all other beings are afflicted with the same illness as we are, they are bound by the Three Characteristics just as we are. Therefore it is proper that we learn to help each other as fellow travellers on the path of practice.

Dhamma practisers should therefore not only consider the right way to relate to the various experiences they encounter in the course of their lives, but should also help others.

This type of practice was recommended by the Buddha, even up to the level of those who have

experienced insight. At one time the Buddha compared the Stream Enterer (*sotāpanna puggala\**) to a mother cow. The mother cow eats grass to feed itself, and also to feed the calf which follows her around. "Eating the grass" can be compared to one's own personal practice of Dhamma. At the same time, the mother cow doesn't neglect her calf, she is constantly looking after it and watchful to keep it from falling into danger. Likewise, one who practises the teaching of Buddhism practises primarily to train oneself in the correct practice, but also gives consideration to one's fellow men and all other beings, so as to help them with goodwill and compassion.

So this fits in with the principle I mentioned at the beginning of this talk: In helping oneself one helps others, in helping others one helps oneself. All in all the practice boils down to behaving in the

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*Sotāpanna puggala* - one who has experienced a first glimpse of transcendental insight, thus entering the stream to *Nibbāna*.

right manner, both to oneself and to others. In this way Dhamma practice leads to progress both for oneself and for others.

### *In conclusion*

Today I have spoken about the general principles of Buddhist practice, beginning by comparing the Buddha to a doctor, one who both administers medicine and also who operates. "To operate" means to "remove the dart." In the past, one of the most important operations was performed during times of battle, when people were often shot by arrows, sometimes dipped in poison. The victims would experience great agony and even death as a result of their wounds.

The Buddha used the arrow as a simile for sorrow and all human suffering. **The** Buddha, as a "surgeon," **cut out** the arrowhead. We also must accept the responsibility of removing our own respective "arrows", by practising the Dhamma. If

we practise the Dhamma correctly we will realise the real benefit of the Buddha's "medicine."

The Buddha has bequeathed us this **well-**expounded teaching. It now remains up to us to make the most of the Buddha's kindness, by taking up that teaching and practising accordingly. Thus can we cure the disease of the Five *Khandhas*, removing the arrow, and experience peace, clarity and purity, which is the goal of Buddhism.

