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Sri Lanka Revisited

Introduction.

A great lesson in sincerity, that is what I would call the Dhamma discussions during my second journey in Sri Lanka. A Japanese monk, Bhante Jetananda, gave me as a birthday present the Pāli text of a treatise about “wholesome roots”, taken from the “Atthasālinī”, the Commentary to the first book of the Abhidhamma, together with the English translation which he had written out by hand. The text spoke about sincerity. I did not know that “sincerity” would play such an important role during my stay in Sri Lanka. One must develop satipaṭṭhāna (the four applications of mindfulness) with a sincere inclination; with a sincere inclination to eradicate attachment (lobha), aversion (dosa) and ignorance (moha).

Through satipaṭṭhāna one will come to know oneself and one will become more truthful and sincere. Those who have attained enlightenment are called “ujupaiṇṇa”, upright, sincere. We can find out for ourselves that we are not really sincere, that we do not really know ourselves. We have studied the teachings and we have learnt about the many types of consciousness (citta), but we do not sufficiently realize that what we have learnt is the truth about our daily life. We overlook our many moments of unwholesome consciousness (akusala citta). Do we overlook them because we do not want to know them? We have not considered enough the truth of what we have learnt through the Buddhist scriptures and often we are only able to give “textbook answers” about the problems of life. So long as right understanding of the realities that appear in our life has not been developed, we only have a superficial knowledge of what the Buddha taught.

I am immensely grateful to Bhante Dhammadharoo, an Australian monk, who exhorted us time and again with the words: “Listen more to the Dhamma, consider it more.” Ms. Sujin, “Acharn Sujin” as we call her, reminded us often that the realities the Buddha taught are not in the book. They should be known in daily life. I greatly profited from her wise words and from her countless reminders to consider the present moment: “What about this moment, is it kusala or akusala?”

Captain Perera had organised a Buddhist seminar in the International Buddhist Center of Wellawatte in Colombo. He had also organised a Buddhist seminar two years ago. Acharn Sujin who lives in Thailand, had been invited again as the principal speaker. At the same time a group of six foreign monks and one samanera (novice) came from Thailand; they were of Australian, New Zealand, American and Indonesian nationalities. Acharn Sujin was accompanied by a group of laypeople, a baby included, of Thai, Australian and Canadian nationalities. Sarah had come from England, Ursula from Germany and I from Holland.

The theme of the seminar was: “World Peace through the Dhamma”, but actually, each day during the seminar the topic was the development of right understanding in daily life. Bhante Dhammadharo remarked that the cause of the problems in Sri Lanka and in the world are in reality the defilements which arise on account of what is experienced through the five senses and through the mind. Being freed from defilements means real peace. The arahat who has eradicated all defilements is truly at peace.

The prime Minister, the Honorable Premadasa opened the seminar by lighting the traditional oil lamp and after that he spoke about the study of Dhamma. Each of the following days was to be dedicated to one of the eight factors of the eightfold Path as topic of discussion, but since the development of the eightfold Path is the development of right understanding in daily life we did not restrict ourselves to one factor a day. We found that in order to know what the development of right understanding means we had to consider all kinds of wholesome deeds and the different types of consciousness which motivate them. So often we take for wholesome what is not wholesome, and we realized this more and more during our journey. It is beneficial to find out the truth about oneself and to begin to become more sincere.

After the seminar in Colombo we traveled to Anurādhapura where we stayed for more than a week in order to pay respect at the Bodhi-tree and other sacred places and to have Dhamma discussions. We then proceeded to Kandy where Khun Lim, a Thai lecturer in Pāli, had organised Dhamma sessions. From Kandy we returned to Colombo where Bhante Dhammadharo led the Dhamma discussions in the Buddhist Information Center after Acharn Sujin had left for Thailand.

I wish to express my gratitude for the warm hospitality and friendship I received in the homes of the families I stayed with in Sri Lanka. I stayed with Mr. and Mrs. Gunasekera during my last days in Colombo and I still hear my host saying that one never should delay kusala because one does not know what kind of rebirth one will have. He helped me to find robes for a monk in the Hague and offered one set to this monk.

Our friend Janaki da Silva prepared dāna for the monks almost every day and she drove around cheerfully and wholeheartedly many of our friends who had come for the seminar. I shall quote from the account of the “Dhamma Visit” written by her thirteen year old daughter Rangita:

“Our days were full and happy. Devoted preparations for dāna to the bhikkhus, ‘Upasthama’ (service) to the venerable Dhammadharo and the other bhikkhus, serving the needs of the lay delegates-- all gave us much joy... My father was overjoyed to get the opportunity to offer Pāli Dhamma books to Venerable Dhammadharo and two other bhikkhus. I helped my mother to prepare for Nina’s birthday dāna. Sarah, I noticed, was full of fun and joy and so I changed my ideas

that Dhamma makes one very solemn. We attended Dhamma discussions. They made me realize how much attachment I have and how important it is to eradicate it, but how difficult this is. I at least have begun to learn that everything in our world is *nāma* and *rúpa*-- and that it is necessary to live in the present moment and study it with *sati*. Venerable Dhammadharo had explained this to us before, so now I understood just a very little bit more than nothing. I realized how much there was to know, how little I knew, and how much I needed to study. One day our home was a hive of activity. We had all the delegates, including lovely Susie and friendly Jill, for dinner. I don't think the seminar helped me to eradicate attachment to people. When the delegates left for Anurādhapura we all felt so sad. I found that with the Dhamma one can do anything. My mother could drive around the delegates spontaneously, at short notice, because the Dhamma gives her so much joy, and it does this to me too."

Rangita gave her collection of golden sovereigns to her mother in order that an invitation ticket could be bought for Bhante Dhammadharo. In this way he would have the opportunity to return to Sri Lanka.

With regard to her understanding of the Dhamma, Rangita expressed what we all discovered during the sessions: we understand a very little bit more than nothing, and we realized how much there still was to learn. This should not discourage us, because realizing this is the beginning of right understanding.

The following chapters are my account of the discussions about the development of right understanding we held in different places.

Chapter 1

Dāna.

Sri Lanka is a country where dāna is widely practised. The Sinhalese are always giving and sharing, they see the value of generosity. Even those who are poor organise dāna for the monks in temples or in their homes. Giving with genuine generosity is dāna, but also at those moments one is not able to give oneself, there can be an opportunity for dāna, namely, for “anumodana dāna”, the appreciation of other people’s good deeds. For us there were many opportunities for anumodana dāna while we were traveling.

While we were staying in a hotel in Anurādhapura, we invited each morning for dāna the group of foreign monks who had come from Thailand. They would enter the hotel carrying their bowls and sit down in silence with great discipline. The monks had decided to take only one meal a day. Monks are allowed to have more than one meal if taken before midday, but these monks found that there were many advantages in taking one meal.

The “Visuddhimagga” (Ch II) speaks about the “Duthangas”, ascetical practices a monk can undertake in addition to all the rules he has to observe. One of these is the “one sessioner’s practice”. The monk who has undertaken this eats only in one session and does not sit down again for more food. The “Visuddhimagga” (Ch II, 37) mentions the following benefits of this practice:

“He has little affliction and little sickness; he has lightness, strength and a happy life; there is no contravening (rules) about food that is not what is left over from a meal; craving for tastes is eliminated; his life conforms to the (principles of) fewness of wishes, and so on.”

All the monks of this group were striving earnestly to observe the monks’ sīla and to conform to the principles of fewness of wishes. They trained themselves not to engage in worldly talk but to speak only about Dhamma or else to be silent. The other guests of the hotel praised the discipline of this group of monks and one of them left money to be spend on dāna for them. The waiters of the hotel helped offering the food to the monks with great joy and devotion.

Dāna is a wholesome act, an act of generosity. But when we give are our motives always pure? Do we sometimes give with selfish motives? In order to know whether or not our giving is pure generosity, we should know more about the moments of consciousness which motivate our giving. We are used to paying attention only to the outward appearance of things. We think of people: of the giver and of the receiver, and of the gift itself, but should we not know more about the moments of consciousness which motivate the giving? This is the only way to know what true generosity is. We should learn more about the different moments of consciousness which arise. If we stay ignorant about them we cannot develop wholesomeness.

During our journey we often discussed dāna and we began to investigate the different moments of consciousness which arose while giving. When we presented food to the

monks we noticed that not only wholesome moments of consciousness arose, but also unwholesome moments of consciousness. We were attached to pleasant sights or to the peace and quiet we felt, or we were pleased with ourselves because of our giving. Sometimes we felt uneasy when we were wondering whether we presented the food in the right way or when we were afraid of spilling the food while offering it. The different moments of consciousness arise and fall away very rapidly and it is hard to know exactly when wholesome consciousness arises and when unwholesome consciousness. When we are sincere we can find out that there are many more unwholesome moments of consciousness than wholesome moments of consciousness. This should not discourage us from doing wholesome deeds, because if we would not perform wholesome deeds there would still be more unwholesomeness. Knowing that there are many more unwholesome moments than wholesome moments is in itself wholesome, because it is the beginning of right understanding. Right understanding is wholesome.

The many different moments of consciousness, *cittas*, arise because of their own conditions. There is no self who can exert control over the *cittas* which arise, *cittas* are beyond control. Even if we tell ourselves; “Now I am going to offer *dāna* and I wish to have only wholesome *cittas*”, unwholesome *cittas* are bound to arise as well. We all have accumulated tendencies to wholesomeness, *kusala*, as well as tendencies to unwholesomeness, *akusala*. Thus, there are conditions for the arising of *kusala* *cittas* as well as *akusala* *cittas*, at different moments. There is no mind which belongs to a “self”, a person. What we take for “my mind” are only different *cittas* which arise, one at a time, and then fall away, succeeding one another. Different types of *citta* arise: *akusala citta*, *kusala citta*, *vipākacitta* (*citta* which is the result of wholesome action or unwholesome action) and *kiriya**citta* (*citta* which is neither cause nor result).

We are used to an idea of self who sees, hears, thinks, performs *dāna* or tells a lie, but in reality there is no self performing such actions, only different *cittas* that arise one at a time and perform each their own function. Seeing is a function performed by a *citta*, hearing is another function performed by a *citta*. When one is generous or tells a lie there is no person who is acting, there are *cittas* performing their functions.

One *citta* arises at a time, but each *citta* is accompanied by several mental factors or *cetasikas*. The *cetasikas* assist the *citta* in performing its function. There are many kinds of *cetasikas*. Some *cetasikas* such as feeling or remembrance (*saññā*) accompany every *citta*, others do not accompany every *citta*. *Akusala* *cittas* are accompanied by *akusala cetasikas* such as attachment (*lobha*), aversion (*dosa*), ignorance (*moha*), stinginess or jealousy. *Kusala* *cittas* are accompanied by *sobhana cetasikas* (beautiful *cetasikas*) such as non-attachment (*alobha*), non-hate (*adosa*), mindfulness (*sati*) or wisdom (*paññā*). Thus, what we take for “my mind” are ever-changing *cittas* accompanied by *cetasikas*.

We do not only cling to the idea of “my mind”, we also cling to the idea of “my body”. What we take for “my body” are only different physical phenomena, *rúpas*, which arise and fall away all the time. We do not feel “our body” through touch; it is only hardness, softness, heat, cold, motion or pressure that can be experienced through touch; different elements that arise and fall away.

The realities of our life are only *citta*, *cetasika* and *rúpa*, elements that are impermanent and devoid of self. *Citta* and *cetasika* are mental, they experience or know something, they are *nāma*. Physical phenomena or *rúpa* do not know anything. Through the teachings we learn that our life consists of *nāma* and *rúpa*, but, as Acharn Sujin often said, they are “not in the book”. They are realities occurring at this moment. We should find out whether the *citta* at this moment is *kusala citta* or *akusala citta*. When the *citta* is *kusala citta* it has to be accompanied by *alobha*, non-attachment, and *adosa*, non-aversion or kindness. It may or may not be accompanied by *paññā*, understanding. When the *citta* is *kusala citta*, there cannot be *lobha* or *dosa* at the same time. When we perform deeds of generosity, do also moments of *lobha* or *dosa* arise in between the moments of *kusala citta*s? What is the motive of our giving? Do we expect something in return? Are we giving “with strings attached”? Do we hope that the receiver will do something for us? Do we give because we want others to have a high opinion of us? Do we want to be known as a generous person? Many times our motives are not pure. We read in the “Gradual Sayings” (Book of the Eights, Ch IV, § 3¹) about different reasons for giving:

“There are eight reasons for giving. What eight? People may give out of affection; or in an angry mood; out of stupidity; out of fear; or because they think: ‘Such gifts have been given before by my father and grandfather; hence it will be unworthy of me to give up this old family tradition’; or because of thinking, ‘By giving this gift, I shall-- after the body’s break up, after death-- be reborn in a happy realm of existence, in a heavenly world’; or because of thinking, ‘When giving this gift, my heart will be glad, and happiness and joy will arise in me’; or one gives because it ennobles and adorns the mind.”

We may give out of affection. One gives because one likes to give. When we like to give, there may be attachment and partiality. One gives to this person, but not to that person. Husband and wife generally give to each other with attachment. There may also be moments of generosity but there are likely to be many moments of attachment. When true generosity arises, one gives impartially; one does not restrict one’s giving to people one likes, such as husband or wife, or the members of one’s family. When my husband gives me dresses or jewelry, there are likely to be many *citta*s rooted in *lobha*: he enjoys seeing me in these dresses and with that jewelry.

We may give in an angry mood. When we read this we may think that this is not applicable to us. But we should not only think of anger. The text speaks about *dosa*

¹ I am using the translation of Ven. Nyanaponika, Wheel Publication, 238-240.

and there are many shades of dosa. Dosa can be anger, but it can also be a slight irritation, uneasiness or impatience. The commentary explains that, having dosa, one gets hold of what is handy and quickly gives it. One may give hurriedly in order to have done with it. We may have to exert ourselves in order to give a gift and this causes tiredness. There is bound to be aversion when we feel tired. Or we may have regret after our giving and then there is also akusala citta rooted in dosa. Do we know the many shades and degrees of dosa? Even now when a sound is harsh or the temperature is unpleasant, dosa is likely to arise. Since we accumulated dosa it can also arise while giving.

I prepared banana pancakes for the monks on the occasion of Sarah's birthday dāna in Colombo. For two hours I was in front of a hot stove in tropical heat, and, although there were also kusala cittas with generosity, there were many moments in between with aversion towards the intense heat, and there were moments of anxiety when I wondered whether the pancakes would be ready in time. Later on attachment to the gift arose and I felt pleased with myself that I had done the job. Thus we see that many akusala cittas arise even while we prepare dāna for the monks. We are so used to akusala cittas that we often do not notice them. In order to have more right understanding of our life it is necessary to learn more about the different types of citta which arise, also about our akusala cittas. They are realities, "they are not in the textbook".

The sutta states that one may give out of stupidity, that is, with ignorance. In daily life we often have cittas rooted in ignorance, moha, no matter what we are doing, and thus also while giving such cittas are bound to arise. Moments of true generosity arise, but when these have fallen away, cittas rooted in lobha, dosa and moha are likely to arise.

One may give out of fear. This is fear of blame from others or fear of an unhappy rebirth, the commentary explains.

One may give because one follows an old family tradition, and then there may be kusala cittas and akusala cittas at different moments. It is the same when one thinks of a happy rebirth as the result of one's good deed. One may cling to such result. We can think of anything with kusala citta or with akusala citta and only right understanding can know what type of citta arises.

Another motive for giving may be the prospect of having pleasant feeling. Instead of thinking of other people's benefit we may cling to our own pleasant feeling. Through the teachings we have learnt that pleasant feeling can accompany cittas rooted in lobha as well as kusala cittas, but, when pleasant feeling arises it is hard to find out whether it is kusala or akusala. We should not try to focus our attention on feeling in order to know its nature. It depends entirely on the arising of sati and paññā whether realities can be known as they are. When there are conditions for right mindfulness of feeling, its nature can be known as it is. It is beneficial to realize how little we know

about our own feelings. There may be pleasant feeling which is kusala, and then we may cling immediately to this feeling. Different kinds of pleasant feeling arise at different moments and we can easily mislead ourselves with regard to kusala and akusala. We do not like to admit that pleasant feeling is most of the time akusala, but in order to know the truth we must be sincere with ourselves. “Feeling good does not mean that the citta is kusala”, Bhante Dhammadharo reminded us. In society pleasant feeling, no matter what kind, is regarded as good and beneficial. Many people consider pleasant feeling to be the goal of their life, and, when we are sincere, is this not also what we seek, although we understand in theory that kusala is beneficial and akusala harmful? When we develop right understanding our sense of values will change and we shall see the danger of pleasant feeling which is akusala. We cling to pleasant feeling and we take it for “my pleasant feeling”, thus, we cling to ourselves. We cling time and again and hence clinging is bound to arise also while we are, for example, presenting dāna to the monks. The kusala cittas with generosity do not last and after they have fallen away akusala cittas arise so long as akusala has not been eradicated by right understanding developed in vipassanā.

The last reason for giving mentioned in the sutta is giving “because it ennobles and adorns the mind”. Dāna causes the citta of the giver and the receiver to be soft and gentle, the commentary explains in a previous Sutta on giving.

Giving in order to get rid of selfishness is the purest way of giving. We have many moments of stinginess, but when we are considerate of others and we are generous to them moments without selfishness can arise. However, we may also be attached to the idea that giving ennobles and adorns the mind. One may be attached to an idea of acquiring kusala for oneself, an idea of “my kusala”. Right understanding can gradually be developed of kusala citta and akusala citta that arise because of their own conditions.

The development of right understanding which can eradicate defilements was the topic of our Dhamma discussions in Sri Lanka. This understanding is developed through mindfulness of the nāmas and rūpas which appear in our daily life. Right understanding can be developed together with all kinds of kusala. We discovered in the course of our discussions that it is most important to understand the true purpose of kusala, dāna included: to lessen defilements, to get rid of selfishness. If one does not see that dāna is a means to have less selfishness and one neglects dāna, how can one with sincerity develop satipaṭṭhāna which has as its aim the eradication of the wrong view of self and eventually of all the other defilements? In order to develop satipaṭṭhāna with a sincere inclination one should see the danger of being attached to oneself.

All kinds of akusala are bound to arise time and again. Also when we saw other people giving gifts to monks we noticed that aversion, jealousy and conceit could arise and we discussed our akusala. One may think with feelings of guilt: “The others are giving and I am not giving.” One may be jealous of other people’s kusala. Or

there may be conceit while giving, one may find oneself important when thinking of the giver and the receiver. Or the thought may arise: “The others are ahead of me with regard to kusala, I am behind.” Not only when we think ourselves better than others, but also when we think ourselves equal or less than others we may find ourselves important and that is conceit.

Not only giving is difficult, also receiving is difficult; receiving can condition akusala cittas. When we receive a gift we are likely to have attachment to the gift or to the giver, or we may think that we have to do something in return and then cittas rooted in aversion (dosa-mūla-cittas) may arise. We can learn to receive with kusala citta, with true appreciation of the giver’s good deed. That is anumodana dāna. We noticed during our journey how difficult pure generosity is and how rare kusala cittas are. It is better to know this than to continue living in ignorance, taking for kusala what is akusala. Generosity is a form of alobha, non-attachment. Alobha is a cetasika (mental factor) which can arise only when there are the right conditions for its arising. There is no self who can force its arising and we found this out, time and again during our journey.

When we see the value of dāna as a means to lessen selfishness there will be more conditions for genuine generosity; we shall be more considerate of others. We find ourselves important but should we not begin to see the importance of others?

Non-attachment can be developed through right understanding. The arahat who has fully developed right understanding has eradicated all forms of clinging. He has achieved the highest form of giving, and that is the giving up of one’s defilements.

Chapter 2

Some aspects of Sīla

We read in the “Discourse on an Exhortation to Rāhula at Ambalañhika” (Middle Length Sayings II, no. 61) that the Buddha taught his son Rāhula to train himself in skilled moral habit, in kusala sīla. We read that the Buddha said:

“If you, Rāhula, are desirous of doing a deed with the body, you should reflect on that deed of your body thus: ‘That deed which I am desirous of doing with the body is a deed of my body that might conduce to the harm of self and that might conduce to the harm of others and that might conduce to the harm of both; this deed of body is unskilled, its yield is anguish, its result is anguish.’ If you, Rāhula, reflecting thus, should find, ‘That deed which I am desirous of doing with the body is a deed of my body that might conduce to the harm of self and that might conduce to the harm of others and that might conduce to the harm of both; this deed of body is unskilled, its yield is anguish, its result is anguish’ -- a deed of body like this, Rahula, is certainly not to be done by you....”

The Buddha then told Rāhula that a deed of body which would not conduce to the harm of himself, of others or of both, was skilled, with a happy result, and that such a deed might be done by him. He told Rāhula to reflect in the same way at the moment he was doing a deed with the body and after he had done a deed with the body. The same was said with regard to action through speech and through the mind.

While we speak do we always reflect whether the citta is kusala or akusala, whether our speech leads to the harm of ourselves or of others or of both? A word is spoken so quickly, it has been spoken before we realize it. We usually speak with akusala citta.

Sīla is behaviour or conduct through body and speech. Sīla has many aspects. Abstaining from ill deeds is included in sīla. Laypeople can observe five precepts, or they can observe eight precepts, for example, on ‘Uposatha days’ (vigil or fasting days). There are ten precepts that are obligatory for all monks and samaneras (novices). Moreover, the sīla the monks have to observe are the rules of Pāṇimokkha of the Dīpaṇī Code, consisting of two hundred- and-twentyseven rules. Not only abstaining from ill deeds is included in sīla, but also skilled behaviour through body and speech, such as paying respect and helping others.

When we abstain from ill deeds we do not harm ourselves, nor others, nor both ourselves and others. When we transgress the five precepts we harm ourselves as well as others. What is the cause of transgression of the five precepts? We read in the “Discourse to Samaṇamañeikā” (Middle Length Sayings II, no. 78) that the Buddha said to Samaṇamañeikā’s son, a carpenter:

“And which, carpenter, are the unskilled moral habits? Unskilled deed of body, unskilled deed of speech, evil mode of livelihood-- these, carpenter, are called unskilled moral habits. And how, carpenter, do these unskilled moral habits originate? Their origination is spoken of too. It should be answered that the origination is in the citta. Which citta? For the citta is manifold, various, diverse. That citta which has attachment, aversion, ignorance-- originating from this are unskilled moral habits....”

When we neglect the precepts we are selfish and we are not considerate of other beings. So long as we have not attained enlightenment we may neglect the five precepts, there are still conditions for transgressing them. We have committed unwholesome deeds in the past and, thus, unwholesome inclinations have been accumulated. Because of our accumulations of akusala there are conditions today for the performing of unwholesome deeds. We may think that we can always observe the five precepts, but is our sīla really perfect? We may suddenly find ourselves in very difficult situations which make it hard for us to observe the five precepts and then we may transgress them. We think that we generally do not lie, but do we sometimes say something that is not quite true, or do we tell a “white lie”? We think that we do not steal, but do we always return books we borrowed? Do we never evade the paying of taxes? The “Visuddhimagga” (I, 31) explains that one may neglect sīla because of gain, fame, relatives, limbs or life. By these factors sīla may be “limited”. We may, for example, generally not be inclined to kill insects, but because of our guests we may kill them. We may generally not be inclined to lie, but because gain or fame we may tell a lie. One’s sīla is unlimited if one does not transgress it, no matter what happens.

The sotāpanna, the person who has attained the first stage of enlightenment, has no more conditions for transgressing the five precepts. He sees realities as they are and he has eradicated the wrong view of self. As we have seen, lobha, dosa and moha are the causes of neglecting sīla. The sotāpanna has not eradicated lobha, dosa and moha, but they do not have the intensity so as to condition the transgression of the five precepts. For him there are more conditions for loving kindness and compassion. It is sati, not self, that prevents the transgression of the five precepts. Only through the development of right understanding of whatever reality appears, also of akusala citta, the wrong view of self can be eradicated. Then there will be no more conditions for transgressing the five precepts.

During the seminar we discussed the abstaining from different kinds of wrong speech. Only abstention from lying is included in the five precepts, but we should see the benefit of abstaining from all kinds of wrong speech. Laypeople may observe five precepts, but on Uposatha Day many laypeople in Sri Lanka observe eight precepts. Refraining from eating after midday, from using cosmetics and wearing jewelry, and from lying on high and soft beds are included in the eight precepts. Acharn Sujin pointed out that laypeople who develop satipaṭṭhāna can undertake another set of eight precepts. In addition to the five precepts one can observe three precepts with regard to speech. Apart from refraining from lying which is among the five precepts, one can train oneself in refraining from slandering, harsh speech and useless, idle talk. Thus, in this set of eight precepts there are four with regard to speech. One can train oneself each day in these eight precepts.

We are often forgetful and heedless with regard to our speech. It is beneficial to know more about the types of citta which motivate our speech. During the seminar we

discussed different kinds of unwholesome speech. Someone remarked that it is so difficult to refrain from gossiping when people around us are doing so. In society gossip is considered a means to keep the conversation going; before we realize it we have added a little to the disagreeable things others say about someone else. When we are forgetful we give in to wrong speech. If there is more right understanding of the present moment, this will condition refraining from gossip. Instead of gossip there can be mettā and karuṇā.

With regard to idle, useless talk, we may find it very difficult to refrain from it when we are in conversation with others. We are tempted to think that since only the arahat has eradicated conditions for this kind of talk we can wholeheartedly engage in it. We cannot be perfect, but if we realize more often whether the citta of the present moment is kusala citta or akusala citta we shall see the value of abstaining from wrong speech, even if it is more subtle such as idle, useless speech. Acharn Sujin advised us to speak more often with mettā and karuṇā. Even when the conversation is about the weather or about relatives we can speak with kusala citta. Many different types of citta can think of such topics as the weather or relatives. Mettā, karuṇā, muditā (sympathetic joy) and upekkhā (equanimity) have to be developed in daily life, also during our ordinary conversations. When we, for example, speak about the weather that has improved we may think of the wellbeing of other people who may profit from good weather. Is the citta kusala citta or akusala citta while we are talking? The citta that motivates speech cannot be ‘neutral’, it is either kusala citta or akusala citta. Most of the time it is akusala citta. The best cure for wrong speech is right mindfulness of the nāmas and rūpas that appear through the six doors, no matter whether we are speaking or whether we are silent. When right mindfulness arises, the six doors are “guarded”, and this is a way of sīla, the “virtue of restraint of the faculties” (indriya saóvara sīla, Visuddhimagga I, 42). When there is no mindfulness, all kinds of akusala are bound to arise on account of what is experienced through the six doors.

Politeness which is sincere and paying respect are ways of sīla. Bhante Dhammadharo pointed out that politeness may not always be sincere. We may have selfish motives for politeness, for example, when we want to have a good reputation, or when we want to obtain favours from someone else. Politeness which is kusala must be sincere. As regards paying respect, do we really understand what it is? It is not an empty gesture. Why is it wholesome to pay respect? What are the reasons for paying respect? When we see good qualities and virtues in others we can show our appreciation of these qualities through the body or through speech. We pay respect to the Buddha, not to his statue, but to his virtues; we think of his wisdom, his compassion and his purity. We pay respect to the monks because they have left their homes for the homeless life in order to “fare the brahman life completely fulfilled”. For a layman it is difficult to observe sīla perfectly. Since one has to live in a house and one has to prepare food, one may find oneself in circumstances which make it difficult always to observe sīla perfectly. A person who has accumulations for

monkhood leaves his home for the homeless life, he leads a life of non-violence and of fewness of wishes. We read in the “Greater Discourse to Saccaka” (Middle Length Sayings I, no. 36) that the Buddha said to Aggivessana:

“... Now, Aggivessana, before my Self-awakening while I was still the bodhisatta, not fully awakened, it occurred to me: Narrow is the household life, a path of dust, going forth is in the open, nor is it easy while dwelling in a house to lead the Brahma-faring completely fulfilled, utterly purified, polished like a conchshell. Suppose now that I, having cut off hair and beard, having clothed myself in saffron garments, should go forth from home into homelessness?...”

The goal of monkhood is arahatship and the way of life of the monk is actually the way of life of the arahat. The monks can remind us of the ariyan Sangha even when they are not ariyans, because they strive after the virtues of the ariyans. We read in the “Gradual Sayings” (Book of the Elevens, Ch II, § 4) that the Buddha said to Subhúti:

“.... In this connection, Subhúti, a monk is virtuous, he lives restrained with the restraint of the Obligation (Pāṇimokkha), well equipped with range of practice, seeing danger in minutest faults, and undertaking the practice of the training applies himself thereto....”

It is proper that laypeople pay respect to the monks who train themselves in observing so many rules in order to lead the “Brahma-faring completely fulfilled”. At the moments of paying respect there are no lobha, dosa or moha, no jealousy or conceit. When we are jealous of others or when we have conceit, we are unable to pay respect. If we are developing satipaṇhāna with a sincere inclination, we should be more eager to pay respect to those who deserve respect since this is a means to have less defilements.

Bhante Dhammadharo spoke about respectful behaviour of laypeople when they are in the company of monks and when they are listening to the Dhamma. We laypeople were traveling around all the time in the company of the group of foreign monks who had come from Thailand and during such a journey one may forget to be respectful to monks at all times. One may forget to let them always go ahead and not to speak casually to them in the same way as one speaks to friends. Bhante Dhammadharo reminded us not to interrupt monks when they were speaking. I found this reminder most helpful. If someone else does not remind us of the fact that we are interrupting others we may never realize this. Such a reminder can prompt us to find out what kind of citta motivates us to interrupt others. Often we are so attached to our point of view we want to bring up in the conversation that we cannot wait until someone else has finished speaking. We become impatient and then there is aversion. When we see the value of respecting the other person instead of finding only ourselves important, there are conditions for refraining from interrupting someone else; instead we can wait with kusala citta, with mettā and patience, until he has finished speaking.

Jonothan, the Australian layman who attended to the monks during this journey, remarked to me that one should not only refrain from interrupting when monks are speaking to us, but also when friends speak to us. Why should we be impolite to friends? This made me see all the more the value of restraint from interrupting, no matter with whom one is. When we do not interrupt others we are more able to listen to them and we shall understand them more. We shall understand the motives that make them speak and we shall understand their problems.

We all have weak points and we may not notice them. When someone tells us, for example, that we are interrupting others, it reminds us to consider more our different cittas, whereas before, we may have been forgetful at such moments. All aspects of the Dhamma can help us to develop right understanding in daily life. When one develops satipaṭṭhāna one should not neglect other ways of kusala.

When someone tells us what is wrong with us he renders us a service. He finds something for us that is as hard to find as a hidden treasure. We read in the “Dhammapada” (vs. 76):

“Should one see a wise man, who, like a revealer of treasures, points out faults and reproves, let one associate with such a wise person; it will be better, not worse, for him who associates with such a one.”

We can say that such a person actually hands us a treasure.

The good friend in Dhamma not only helps us to develop satipaṭṭhāna, he also points out our faults to us.

We may not find someone who tells us the truth and the cause may be our unwillingness to listen. We may always talk back and find excuses for what we are doing. Bhante Dhammadharo spoke several times about the “Anumāna Sutta” (Middle Length Sayings I, no. 15). In this sutta it is said that there are sixteen qualities which make a monk “difficult to speak to”, sixteen reasons why someone else does not want to point out to that monk his weak points. The monks have to reflect on this sutta twice or three times daily, but also laypeople can benefit from this sutta. We should remember that the purpose of the suttas is not just reading, they must be applied in daily life. We read that Mahā Moggallāna, while he was staying in Sumsumāragira, in Bhesakalā Grove in the deerpark, spoke to the monks about the qualities which make a monk difficult to speak to:

“... Herein, your reverences, a monk comes to be of evil desires and in the thrall of evil desires. Whatever monk, your reverences, comes to be of evil desires and in the thrall of evil desires, this is a quality that makes him difficult to speak to. And again, your reverences, a monk exalts himself and disparages others... a monk comes to be wrathful, overpowered by wrath.... a monk comes to be wrathful and because of his wrath is a faultfinder.... a monk comes to be wrathful and because of his wrath is one

who takes offence.... a monk comes to be wrathful and because of his wrath utters words bordering on wrath.... a monk, reproved, blurts out reproof against the reprover.... a monk, reproved, disparages the reprover for the reproof.... a monk, reproved, rounds on the reprover for the reproof... a monk, reproved, shelves the question by (asking) the reprover another, answers off the point, and evinces temper and ill-will and sulkiness... a monk, reproved, does not succeed in explaining his movements to the reprover.... a monk comes to be harsh, spiteful... a monk comes to be envious, grudging... a monk comes to be treacherous, deceitful... a monk comes to be stubborn, proud... And again, your reverences, a monk comes to seize the temporal, grasping it tightly, not letting go of it easily, this too is a quality that makes him difficult to speak to. These, your reverences, are called the qualities which make it difficult to speak to a monk.”

The sutta speaks of many different degrees of wrath. Do we know the different degrees of our aversion when we are being reproved? We may “round on the reprover”, telling him that he makes the same mistakes. Don’t we always try to find good reasons why we are behaving the way we do? Don’t we often use the word “but” with this intention? We may keep silent when we are reproved, but with aversion; we may speak words bordering on wrath or we may blurt out words full of wrath. There are many intensities of dosa. We read that the monk who is reproved is stubborn and proud. Do we recognize such qualities in ourselves? Do we really want to be corrected by someone else? This sutta reminds us to find out whether the citta is kusala citta or akusala citta in such a situation. It may be worth while to listen to the person who gives us advice. When someone else tells us something that is true it is hard to admit that it is true. We read at the end of the sutta that the monk should get rid of all these evil states when he finds that he has not yet eradicated them. Through the development of right understanding we come to know the different kinds of defilements that arise. It is impossible to eradicate them so long as they are still taken for “my akusala”. Thus, first the wrong view of self has to be eradicated through awareness of all kinds of nāma and rūpa which appear now through the six doorways.

There is the sīla of the eightfold Path and this is: right speech (sammā vācā), right action (sammā kammanta) and right livelihood (sammā ājīva). These three factors are sobhana cetasikas (beautiful mental factors) and they are factors of the eightfold Path if they are accompanied by the right understanding (sammā diñhi) of the eightfold Path. When we abstain from wrong speech, wrong action and wrong livelihood (which is wrong speech and wrong action committed for the sake of our livelihood), without right understanding of the eightfold Path, there is sīla, but not sīla of the eightfold Path. When right understanding of nāma and rūpa has been developed it can arise when we refrain from wrong speech, wrong action and wrong livelihood, and that is sīla of the eightfold Path. When we abstain from akusala we may still cling to a concept of self who abstains. When right understanding has been developed it realizes that it is nāma that abstains, only a conditioned reality, not self. It depends on conditions whether there can be sīla of the eightfold Path, but we should see the value

of all levels of sīla. We should apply ourselves to sīla, right conduct in body and speech, be it refraining from ill deeds, sincere politeness, the paying of respect or helping others.

Sīla is a form of giving, because when we give up defilements it is also for the benefit and happiness of other beings; we let them live in peace and we do not harm them. When we have more loving kindness and compassion for other beings, even for insects, there are conditions to refrain from harming them. When we refrain from killing we give the gift of life. We read in the “Gradual Sayings” (Book of the Eights, Ch IV, § 9, Yields) about five gifts, given by a noble disciple ² :

“Herein, monks, a noble disciple gives up the taking of life and abstains from it. By abstaining from taking life, the noble disciple gives to immeasurable beings freedom from fear, gives them freedom from hostility, and freedom from oppression. By giving to immeasurable beings freedom from fear, hostility and oppression, he himself will enjoy immeasurable freedom from fear, hostility and oppression....”

The same is said about the other four precepts. By abstaining from stealing, sexual misconduct, lying and the taking of intoxicants one gives to immeasurable beings freedom from fear, hostility and oppression. When we see sīla as a gift of kindness to others it can inspire us to develop sīla together with satipaṭṭhāna so that we shall have less selfishness.

Chapter 3

The Development of Calm

Our life is full of attachment, aversion and ignorance. When we do not apply ourselves to kusala through body, speech or mind, we act, speak or think with akusala citta. Dāna and sīla are opportunities to have kusala citta instead of akusala citta, but there are not always conditions for these ways of kusala. Mental development, bhāvanā, is a way of kusala that can be performed also at those moments when there is no opportunity for dāna or sīla. There are two ways of mental development: samatha or the development of calm and vipassanā or the development of insight.

Through samatha the calm that is temporary freedom from lobha, dosa and moha is developed; lobha, dosa and moha cannot be eradicated through samatha. The calm which is developed in samatha is different from what we mean by calm in

² I am using the translation of Ven. Nyanaponika, Wheel Publication 238-240, B.P.S. Kandy, Sri Lanka.

conventional language. The calm developed in samatha can arise only with sobhana citta (beautiful citta). When we say in daily language that we are calm, we only think of a concept of calm and we do not realize whether the citta is kusala citta or akusala citta.

There is calm with every kusala citta. When true generosity arises there is calm with the citta, because at that moment there are no lobha, dosa and moha. When we abstain from ill deeds there is calm with the kusala citta. However, the moments of kusala citta are very rare and soon after they have fallen away akusala cittas arise; cittas with attachment, conceit or aversion may arise. Since kusala cittas are so rare and akusala cittas arise very shortly after the kusala cittas have fallen away, it is difficult to know exactly when there is kusala citta and when there is akusala citta. Only paññā can know this precisely. Dāna and sīla may or may not arise with right understanding, but there cannot be any form of mental development, bhāvanā, without right understanding.

The calm of samatha that is temporary freedom from defilements cannot be developed without paññā. The paññā of samatha must be able to discern the characteristic of calm when it arises, otherwise calm cannot grow. The paññā of samatha knows kusala as kusala and akusala as akusala, but it is different from the paññā of vipassanā since it does not realize kusala and akusala as not self. The concept of self is not eradicated through samatha.

We read in the “Visuddhimagga” (Ch IV-XII) about forty subjects of meditation which can condition calm, but they can condition calm only if there is right understanding which knows how to develop calm by means of a particular meditation subject. A meditation subject does not necessarily bring calm, it depends on the citta which develops calm, and the citta has to be accompanied by paññā. Bhante Dhammadharo said: “When we bring in here a pile of bones it does not guarantee calm for those who are looking at it.” Some people have aversion immediately when they are looking at a corpse and they cannot become calm with this subject.

One may think that when one concentrates on one point there are conditions for the arising of calm. However, we should not forget that concentration (samādhi) accompanies each citta. The function of this cetasaika is to cause the citta to focus on one object. Thus, there is concentration with akusala citta as well as with kusala citta. If one does not know precisely when the citta is kusala citta and when akusala citta, how can one be sure whether there is right concentration? One may, with attachment, exert a great effort to concentrate, or, if one needs such effort to concentrate, one can easily have aversion. Do we know when there are akusala cittas? If we do not know this, calm cannot be developed. For the development of calm paññā is indispensable.

During the discussions in Sri Lanka we found out that we need to consider more whether the citta at this moment is kusala citta or akusala citta so that we can begin to understand the characteristic of calm that is freedom from akusala. Do we realize the

amount of clinging we have? We may know when there is strong clinging, for example, when we are greedy and badly want to have particular things, but do we know the moments when there is more sub-tle clinging?

Bhante Dhammadharo helped us to find out more about the different degrees of our clinging and he asked us whether we truly believe that clinging is harmful. I found that although I have read the scriptures and pondered over them, I have not considered them enough in my daily life. We listen and ponder over what we have heard, but during this journey we found out that we had not considered enough the Dhamma we had heard.

One of our friends said that she had been clinging to her lunch. She was to come home for lunch, a rare occasion for her, and she looked forward to her meal. Do we look forward to our meals? That is daily life. We should investigate more often the cittas that arise at such moments. I found that I was clinging to the fan in the room since it brought some coolness in the hot weather. I also cling to unspoilt nature, to a sunset and to music. I cling to Dhamma discussions and to the friends of the Dhamma discussion group.

Do we truly see that clinging is harmful? I have read in the scriptures, for example in the “Parable of the Water-snake” (Middle Length Sayings I, no 22), that sense-pleasures are compared to “a skeleton... to a lump of meat... to a torch of dry grass... to a pit of glowing embers...” However, I have to admit that I do not really see the danger of clinging to such objects as a sunset or music. I do not harm others when I cling to such pleasant objects, and, moreover, I am not a monk but a layfollower. I cannot give up music, it is part of my daily life. It is difficult to see the danger of clinging, even though we know that it brings sorrow and disappointment when we do not have the pleasant objects anymore we have been clinging to.

The Buddha did not forbid clinging, he urged people to prove the truth to themselves. I found that when a moment of sincere generosity arises, or true consideration of someone else’s happiness, there is another kind of joy, different from the kind of pleasure that is connected with clinging. We can find out that there is selfishness with clinging. When we like a sunset or music, we actually cling to our own pleasant feeling, thus, we are attached to ourselves. We may not find clinging harmful, but when we compare it with a moment of kusala citta, we may begin to see the benefit of kusala and the disadvantage of akusala. If we consider more the different cittas which appear we shall see this, not merely in a theoretical way, but through our own experience. We can come to know that at the moment of kusala citta there is peace and at the moment of akusala citta there is restlessness. We may have read the Buddha’s advice to the Kālāmas (Gradual Sayings, Book of the Threes, Ch VII, § 65, Those of Kesaputta):

“... Be not misled by report or tradition or hearsay. Be not misled by proficiency in the collections, nor by mere logic or inference, nor after considering reasons, nor

after reflection on and approval of some theory, nor because it fits becoming, nor out of respect for a recluse (who holds it). But, Kālamas, when you know for yourselves: These things are unprofitable, these things are blameworthy, these things are censured by the wise; these things when performed and undertaken, conduce to loss and sorrow-- then indeed do you reject them, Kālamas....”

Do we really understand this sutta? We read suttas but we do not apply them. During our discussions we discovered that we cling more often than we ever realized before. We cling to all the objects that are experienced through the senses and through the mind-door. We cling to people’s opinion about us, we want to be liked by them. Once Acharn Sujin was handing a bowl of soup to someone else and then the bowl was overturned; soup was spilled all over a friend’s clothes. Sarah and I noticed that Acharn Sujin was not upset and we said that we would be upset in such a situation. But being upset is dosa and thus it is not helpful. “I feel awful”, is what we usually say in such circumstances, but do we realize it when our words are motivated by akusala citta? The dosa that arises may be conditioned by strong clinging to ourselves.

We cling to ourselves time and again. When we miss someone who is dear to us there is sadness and this is conditioned by clinging to our own pleasant feeling, the feeling we derive from being in the company of that person. When we realize more often our many moments of clinging, it is the beginning of right understanding and this is beneficial. It is better to know ourselves than to be ignorant our whole life.

Most people do not like to have dosa, because it is accompanied by unpleasant feeling and one dislikes unpleasant feeling. However, we should not forget that it is our clinging to pleasant objects which conditions dosa. When we have experienced ourselves that attachment leads to sorrow it will help us to see its disadvantage.

Moha, ignorance, is dangerous. It arises with each akusala citta. Ignorance blinds us. Because of ignorance we do not see realities as they are, we do not see what is right and what is wrong. Because of ignorance we take for beneficial what in reality is harmful. It is because of ignorance that we do not realize that clinging is harmful.

Bhante Dhammadharo encouraged us to investigate more the different cittas which arise when we want to go somewhere, when we make a plan or wish to get something. Is it not most of the time clinging that motivates our walking and moving around, our bending and stretching? Which types of cittas arise when we want to rest in the afternoon, is it kusala citta or akusala citta? Is it not vital to know this? There can easily be cittas rooted in lobha and dosa. When we feel tiredness is there not often aversion?

We can easily mislead ourselves with regard to kusala and akusala. We should remember that all that is taught in the Abhidhamma concerns our daily life; it teaches reality and we have to verify what is taught ourselves. Do we confuse indifferent

feeling with calm? Indifferent feeling can accompany kusala citta as well as akusala citta. The citta rooted in attachment can be accompanied by pleasant feeling but also by indifferent feeling, and the citta rooted in ignorance is invariably accompanied by indifferent feeling. Thus, we see that when indifferent feeling arises there is not necessarily calm, although feeling that is neither pleasant nor unpleasant may seem calm to us. When we consider more what has been taught about feeling, we shall realize how difficult it is to know the characteristic of true calm which is wholesome. Calm arises with kusala citta and the feeling can be pleasant or indifferent.

There is seeing now. Are the cittas which arise shortly after seeing has fallen away kusala or akusala? When we are not engaged with dāna, sīla or bhāvana, it must be akusala citta. Sense-impressions are usually followed by akusala cittas. The feeling may be indifferent, it may seem that we are not particularly glad about what is seen. Still, most of the time there is clinging. We cling to all our experiences, we want to go on seeing and hearing, we do not want to be without these experiences. We cling to life, we want to go on living and receiving sense-impressions. We think about the sense-impressions we experienced, about events that occurred, about people. When we are mindful of the cittas that think we can find out that these are mostly akusala cittas. Is there clinging now? So long as clinging has not been eradicated we have to be reborn.

Even before the Buddha's time there were wise people who saw the disadvantages of sense-impressions. They developed jhāna, a high degree of calm, in order to be temporarily freed from sense-impressions. The attainment of jhāna is extremely difficult and only those who have accumulated the right conditions for jhāna can attain it. But even if one has no conditions for the development of jhāna, there can still be moments of calm in daily life. However, right understanding which knows the characteristic of calm is essential. We should not forget that calm accompanies kusala citta and that it falls away with the citta; nobody can induce calm to stay on.

Recollection of the Buddha (Buddhanusati) is one of the meditation subjects of samatha. When we reflect on the Buddha's virtues moments of calm may arise, but akusala citta is bound to arise as well since akusala cittas arise time and again throughout our life. When we look at a Buddha statue there is likely to be clinging. We like seeing, we like visible object and we like thinking of what we have seen. The fact that it is a Buddha statue we look at cannot prevent us from clinging. We should not be discouraged by the akusala cittas which arise. If we think with aversion of our clinging there is akusala citta. At the moment of right understanding that knows akusala as akusala, there is kusala citta. Different cittas are arising and falling away all the time and, therefore, it is difficult to know them precisely. We should not delude ourselves into thinking that there is bhāvanā, merely because we sit in front of a Buddha statue and we recite some texts. When we pay respect to the Buddha there is an opportunity for kusala sīla through body and speech. When we ponder over his

virtues moments of calm can arise. Contemplation of the Buddha's virtues is difficult for those who have not attained enlightenment. Can one really know what enlightenment means if one has not attained it oneself? However, when we have reflected upon the teachings and when we apply them in daily life, the Buddha's wisdom, compassion and purity begin to have more meaning to us. Then there may be conditions for calm when we contemplate his virtues.

The "Earth Kasina" (Visuddhimagga IV, 21) is another meditation subject. Not everybody who looks at a disk of clay can become calm, right understanding of this subject is indispensable. What is the purpose of the contemplation of this subject? To lessen clinging to sense objects. The terms Earth, Water, Fire and Wind represent the "Four Great Elements" which form up all physical phenomena. Is there not Earth (solidity), Water (fluidity), Fire (heat) and Wind (motion or oscillation) in all physical phenomena? Is there not solidity in our body and in all the things around us? Acharn Sujin said: "Everything around us is just earth in different shapes and forms. We are attached to it, we fight for it, but it is just earth." Thus, if we see that all the things around us and also our body is just earth it can condition moments of detachment, of calm. We see that the meditation subject itself is no guarantee for calm, that the arising of calm depends on right understanding.

The "Brahmavihāras" (Divine Abidings) which are mettā, karuṇā (compassion), muditā, altruistic joy) and upekkhā (equanimity) are among the meditation subjects of samatha, but they are qualities that should be developed in daily life. We often are in the company of other people or we are thinking of them. It is more valuable to think of others with kusala citta than with clinging or with aversion. When someone speaks unpleasant words to us we can think of him as a fellow-being who makes himself unhappy because of his defilements and then compassion can arise instead of anger. When we have more understanding of our own defilements as conditioned realities, we shall also see other people's defilements as conditioned realities that do not belong to anyone. When we think of the benefit of those around us it will help us to be patient. We ourselves do not like to suffer, we want happiness, but it is the same with other people. People may let us down but don't we let others down too, Bhante Dhammadharo remarked. He reminded us in a very direct way to develop mettā, saying: "What about the person sitting next to you? Are you really considerate of his welfare? Do you truly wish that he is happy and that he has no problems at home?"

The "Visuddhimagga" (IX, 1,2) states about the development of mettā:

"... To start with he should review the danger in hate and the advantage in patience. Why? Because hate has to be abandoned and patience attained in the development of this meditation subject and he cannot abandon unseen danger and attain unknown advantages...."

We see that the "Visuddhimagga" emphasizes right understanding of the meditation subject. Attachment is the "near enemy" of mettā (Vis. IX, 98). Mettā is impartial

love; it is not love only for one particular person; we should consider all beings as friends, no matter who they are, no matter whether we know them or whether they are strangers. We are attached to people and we also encourage them to be attached to us. We want to be well liked, we want to be object of clinging. Acharn Sujin said: “It is kindness to others if we don’t cling to them or encourage them to be attached to us.” Mettā is love without any selfish motives.

What is the difference between mettā and karuṇā? We read in the “Visuddhimagga” (Ch IX, 93, 94) that the proximate cause of mettā is seeing lovable-ness in beings and that the proximate cause of compassion is seeing help- lessness in those who are overwhelmed by suffering. When we think of someone else’s suffering and we want to allay this there is karuṇā. However, when someone is suffering we can easily have aversion towards his condition and that is why the near enemy of karuṇā is “grief based on the homelife” (Vis. Ch IX, 99). Right understanding can know precisely when pure compassion arises and when aversion; if the difference is not known calm based on karuṇā cannot be developed.

Muditā, altruistic joy, is another quality which is among the Brahmavihāras. It has as its proximate cause “seeing beings’ success” (Vis. Ch IX, 95). When we are envious of other people’s happiness there is no muditā. It is not easy to know the difference between altruistic joy and attachment, but if one does not know this the quality of altruistic joy cannot be developed. When other people are successful or when they obtain a pleasant object such as praise we may easily have envy. When we see the value of kusala and the danger of akusala, there may be conditions for altruistic joy instead of jealousy.

My husband had received a decoration of honour and I asked Bhante Dhammadhara whether my gladness about it could be muditā. The Bhante answered that one can easily be attached instead of having muditā where it concerns one’s husband or wife. When there is muditā there should also be impartiality. One should be equally glad about the success of someone else and is that so? I had to admit that this was not the case. It is difficult to be impartial when it concerns those who are near and dear to us.

Upekkhā, equanimity, is another Brahmavihāra. Its characteristic is promoting the aspect of neutrality towards beings (Vis. Ch IX, 96). Seeing beings’ ownership of kamma is its proximate cause. For example, when we see someone who suffers but he is beyond help, there can be equanimity instead of aversion, if we realize that he has to receive the result of the kamma he performed. Through equanimity there can be calm amidst the vicissitudes of life. One day there is praise, but the next day there will be blame; one day there is gain, but the next day there will be loss. The “Visuddhimagga” (Ch IX, 96) states that the manifestation of upekkhā is the quieting of resentment and approval. We can learn to see that it is beneficial to have less attachment to pleasant objects and less aversion towards unpleasant objects. The experience of such objects depends on kamma that produces its result accordingly, it does not depend on our will. The Brahmavihāras are difficult to develop because of

our defilements. They can only be developed if there is a precise knowledge of kusala as kusala and of akusala as akusala.

Through the development of samatha one can become temporarily free from lobha, dosa and moha, but these defilements are not eradicated. Vipassanā is the only way to eradicate defilements. Samatha was taught also by other teachers before the Buddha's time, but vipassanā is exclusively the Buddha's teaching. The Buddha reminded the monks of the goal of the teachings, the eradication of defilements, and he exhorted them not to be satisfied with lesser attainments, but to continue developing the right conditions for the attainment of arahatship. We read in the "Greater Discourse on the Simile of the Pith" (Middle Length Sayings I, no 29) that the Buddha, while he was staying near Rājagaha, on Mount Vulture's Peak, spoke about a monk who received gains, honours and fame. We read:

"... Because of the gains, honours, fame, he becomes satisfied, his purpose is fulfilled. Because of the gains, honours, fame, he exalts himself, disparages others, thinking: 'It is I who am a recipient, being famous, but those other monks are little known, of little esteem.' He, because of the gains, honours, fame, is exultant, indolent and falls into sloth; being indolent, he dwells ill...."

We then read about a monk who does not think that his purpose is fulfilled when he receives gains, honours and fame, but who develops moral habit, sīla, and attains success in this. He then thinks that his purpose is fulfilled. We read the same about a monk who gains success in concentration and then thinks that his purpose is fulfilled, and about a monk who gains "knowledge and vision" and then thinks that his purpose is fulfilled. So long as he has not attained arahatship he has not reached the goal. We read at the end of the sutta that the Buddha said:

"... So it is, monks, that this Brahma-faring is not for advantage in gains, honours, fame; it is not for advantage in moral habit, it is not for advantage in concentration, it is not for advantage in knowledge and vision. That, monks, which is unshakable freedom of mind, this is the goal, monks, of this brahma-faring, this is the pith, this is the culmination."

Chapter 4.

Subtle Clinging

When we were staying in Anurâdhapura, some of our friends arranged an outing to Wilpattu National Park. We enjoyed ourselves looking at the wild peacocks and herons and we watched the deer who were peacefully grazing along the lakeside. At such moments it is obvious that attachment arises after seeing. Lobha can arise with pleasant feeling as well as with indifferent feeling and when it arises with pleasant feeling we can recognize it more easily. In Wilpattu there were many moments of lobha with pleasant feeling.

Is there clinging at this moment, perhaps with indifferent feeling? Is there seeing now? Seeing itself is neither kusala nor akusala, it is vipâkacitta, the result of kamma. Shortly after seeing has fallen away, kusala cittas or akusala cittas arise. After seeing, hearing and the experiences through the other senses there is usually clinging, because from birth to death we cling to all objects that can be experienced through the senses.

We learn through the Abhidhamma that seeing arises in a process or series of cittas which all experience the same object, that is, visible object. A process of cittas experiencing an object through a sense-door is followed by a process of cittas experiencing that object through the mind-door. Visible object is experienced through the eye-door and after the eye-door process has been completed that object is

experienced through the mind-door. After that there can be other mind-door processes of cittas which think of a concept of shape and form, of a whole, of a thing or a person.

Seeing experiences what is visible, and it experiences it through the eyesense. Seeing does not pay attention to shape and form. The cittas which pay attention to shape and form arise later on. When we know that something is a house or when we recognize a person there is thinking of concepts conditioned by remembrance of former experiences, and this is different from seeing. Seeing does not pay attention to beauty or ugliness, at the moment of seeing there is no like or dislike. Shortly after seeing has fallen away, kusala cittas or akusala cittas arise in that same eye-door process. Thus, even before we know what it is that was seen, kusala cittas or akusala cittas arise on account of the object; these types arise because of their own conditions. There is not one moment of them but seven moments and they are called “javana-cittas”, which can be translated as the cittas that “run through” the object. When a sense-door process has been completed it is followed by a mind-door process with seven javana-cittas, kusala cittas or akusala cittas. If there are other mind-door processes of cittas which think of concepts, there are also in these processes kusala cittas or akusala cittas. The cittas which think of concepts are akusala cittas if their objective is not dāna, sīla or bhāvanā, mental development. We cannot think of concepts with cittas which are neither kusala nor akusala.

We may wonder why it is necessary to learn about the different processes of cittas and the objects that are experienced by citta. It may all seem abstract. However, we can find out that everything that is taught in the Abhidhamma occurs in our daily life. There are time and again seeing, attachment to seeing and to visible object, attachment to the people and things we think of, and we can find out that attachment brings sorrow. A more precise knowledge of the different cittas and also of akusala citta and kusala citta will help us to develop more wholesomeness.

Acharn Sujin reminded us that when we see a flower or a cup there is usually clinging. This gave us a shock, we had not considered this enough ourselves. We are so used to akusala citta that we do not realize it when it is there. Besides, when akusala citta is accompanied by indifferent feeling we can easily be misled as to the nature of citta.

When we pay attention to the shape and form of all the familiar things around us, such as a table, a flower or a cup, is there some clinging, even when we do not feel particularly glad? We want to see and we want to pay attention to the shape and form of things, even though we do not think about these things for a long time but just for a moment. We are so used to recognizing the things and people around us, and we do not know whether such moments are kusala or akusala. If the room would become pitch dark or we would become blind we would regret it not to be able to discern the things around us and that shows our clinging to all we experience. When we are reading a book there are moments of seeing and also moments of citta that think of

the meaning of what is written, of the story, and such moments are different from seeing. We should investigate the nature of the different cittas which arise while we are reading. Seeing is vipāka, but thinking about what is written is either kusala or akusala. We think of the meanings of words mostly with clinging, we want to know the meaning of what we read.

As regards hearing, this experiences sound through the ears. Hearing is vipā-kacitta, the result of kamma; it is neither kusala citta nor akusala citta. Hearing hears, it does not know the origin of the sound, it does not think of the meaning of the sound. When we know that we perceive the sound of a bird or of the traffic, it is not hearing but thinking of concepts. As we have seen, the cittas which think of concepts are mostly akusala cittas with clinging. Thus, we have many more akusala cittas than kusala cittas. We had pondered over this before, but during this journey it all became clearer. We realized that we had not considered enough in daily life what has been taught in the Abhidhamma.

The subtle clinging after seeing, hearing and the other sense-impressions does not have the intensity of akusala kamma which produces akusala vipāka, it is different from gross clinging. However, it is not kusala and thus not beneficial. During our journey we first realized that we did not have many kusala cittas even while we were offering dāna to the monks; then it gradually began to dawn on us that there were many more akusala cittas than we ever thought, even while seeing a flower or a cup.

The person who has attained enlightenment is “ujupatipanno”, he is upright, truthful, sincere. When we pay respect to the Sangha we recite the words: “Ujupatipanno bhagavato sāvaka-saṅgho”, “Upright is the order of disciples of the Blessed One”. Do we understand these words? The word “ujupatipanno” may begin to have more meaning to us. Through right understanding of the present moment we become more sincere. We begin to realize that we are bound by clinging.

In the teachings defilements have been classified in many different ways and each classification shows a different aspect. Defilements can be classified as “āsavas”, which is translated as cankers, poisons or intoxicants. There are four kinds of āsavas:

the canker of sensuality (kāma-sava)

the canker of becoming (bhava-sava, clinging to rebirth)

the canker of wrong view (diṭṭhi-sava)

the canker of ignorance (avijjā-sava)

The “Visuddhimagga”(Ch XXII, 56) states that the āsavas are “exuding from unguarded sense-doors like water from cracks in a pot, in the sense of constant trickling”. The āsavas produce the suffering of the round of rebirth. Only the arahat has eradicated the āsavas. Thus, for us the āsavas keep on trickling from unguarded

sense-doors, they are also trickling at this moment. Because of clinging we have to be reborn again and again. Before, we may not have understood that being born again and again is sorrowful, but now we may begin to see that we really are in a tangle because of our being in the cycle of birth and death. There was clinging since the first javana-cittas of our life arose. Actually, the first javana-cittas of every living being are lobha-múla-cittas, cittas rooted in attachment.

We read in the scriptures that people cultivated samatha to the degree of jhāna in order to have temporary release from sense-impressions and the akusala cittas which arise on account of them. Those who were skillful could have many moments of jhānacittas succeeding one another. But after they emerged from jhāna there were sense-impressions again. There was seeing again and clinging, and paying attention to shape and form with clinging, there was no end to akusala. Moreover, even the calm of jhāna could be an object of clinging. Jhāna cannot eradicate the āsavas and, thus, it cannot lead to true freedom.

Vipassanā is exclusively the Buddha's teaching and this leads to the eradication of defilements; it can eventually liberate us from clinging and, thus, from rebirth. Vipassanā is the development of right understanding of any reality which appears now, even if it is akusala. We read in the "Kindred Sayings" (IV, Saññāyatanavagga, Kindred Sayings on Sense, Second Fifty, Ch II, §70, Upavāna) that the venerable Upavāna asked the Buddha:

“ ‘People speak of the Visible Dhamma (sandīhiiko). In how far, Lord, is the Dhamma visible here and now, is of immediate result, invites to come and see, is onward-leading and to be directly experienced, each for himself, by the wise?’ ”

‘Herein, Upavāna, a monk, having seen visible object with the eye, experiences the object and his attachment to it. Of the attachment to visible object which is present in him he knows: I have attachment to visible object. If a monk, having seen visible object with the eye, experiences visible object and his attachment to it and knows that attachment to visible object is present in him, in so far, Upavāna, is the Dhamma visible here and now, is of immediate result, invites to come and see, is onward-leading, and directly experienced, each for himself, by the wise....’ ”

The same is said on account of the other doorways. We then read about the monk who has no attachment to the objects which are experienced through the six doors and knows this. Since this is so, the Dhamma is visible here and now.

There is not always opportunity for dāna and sīla, but there is an opportunity for vipassanā at any moment, no matter where we are and what we are doing. We usually waste our life with clinging and we do not even realize this. If there is a short moment of awareness of a nāma or rūpa which appears understanding of the realities of our life can grow.

Sometimes there are conditions for calm. For example, we may see the benefit of loving kindness for other people and then there can be moments of calm, moments without lobha, dosa or moha. Calm can then be known as only a conditioned reality, not self. Calm has arisen because of its own conditions and it cannot stay, it falls away again. Acharn Sujin reminded us not to try to make it stay:

“It does not matter when it is gone and then another reality which appears can be known. It does not matter what appears. This ‘it does not matter’ is very difficult, since it usually does matter to us. We attach importance to calm. But when we want to make calm stronger and stronger and we want to have it stay longer and longer, there is no way to know it as it is, no way.”

Our clinging to self prevents us from seeing the true nature of calm: only a conditioned reality. If calm is known as a reality which has arisen because of its own conditions and which does not stay we do not try to hold on to it and we are not disappointed when it is gone.

We read in the suttas about monks who developed both calm and insight, but we should not conclude that we all must develop jhāna. Many people who came to see the Buddha were used to developing samatha already and the Buddha exhorted them to develop vipassanā as well so that defilements could be eradicated. If monks in the Buddha’s time had accumulated conditions for jhāna, jhānacittas could arise. If they did not cling to jhāna there could be right understanding of jhāna as only a conditioned reality, not self.

Is it necessary to develop mindfulness of breathing so that there can be later on mindfulness of any nāma or rūpa which appears? This is a question which is often asked and it was asked also during the sessions.

Mindfulness of breathing is a subject of samatha and it is also included in “Mindfulness of the Body” which is one of the “four Applications of Mindfulness”. If one wants to develop mindfulness of breathing as an object of calm one should know that this is one of the most difficult subjects of samatha. It can easily be an object of clinging instead of an object of calm.

Calm is not the same as concentration. We should remember that concentration is a cetasika that accompanies each citta and that can, therefore, arise with kusala citta as well as with akusala citta. When akusala citta with clinging arises there is wrong concentration, there cannot be right concentration. When the feeling is indifferent one may think that there is calm, but, as we have seen, there can be clinging accompanied by indifferent feeling. People who apply themselves to yoga may concentrate on breath for reasons of health or relaxation. One may benefit from yoga in different ways, but one should know that the aim of samatha is temporary freedom from defilements. In samatha right understanding of the way how to develop calm is indispensable, it is not sufficient to know in theory that we have a great deal of

clinging. We have to find out whether there is at this moment clinging, even if it is subtle. We should be honest with ourselves. If we do not know whether the citta at this moment is kusala citta or akusala citta there cannot be development of calm. The test is always at this moment.

Why is mindfulness of breathing included in the “four Applications of Mindfulness”, in the section on “Mindfulness of the Body”? The reason is that any reality can be object of right understanding, also the nāmas and rūpas which appear when there are conditions for mindfulness of breathing.

Breath is rūpa, conditioned by citta. It appears at the nosetip or upperlip, but it is very subtle. One may be thinking of a concept of breath instead of being mindful of it. We may take for breath what is not this kind of rūpa. If there are conditions for mindfulness of breath it can appear as hardness, a characteristic of the Element of Earth, as heat, a characteristic of the Element of Fire, or as motion or oscillation, a characteristic of the Element of Wind. These characteristics can appear, no matter whether one is walking, sitting, standing or lying down. Breath is tangible object, only a rūpa, but we cling to it. Don't we cling to tangible objects in our daily life, all day long? We cannot stop clinging merely by sitting down and trying to concentrate on the nosetip or upperlip.

Any reality which appears at this moment, be it calm, akusala citta or any other reality, can be the object of right understanding. If one is attached to calm there is attachment, not bhāvanā. We may be attached to the calm which can arise while we reflect on the teachings. Reflection on the Dhamma is actually included among the subjects of samatha (Visuddhimagga Ch VII, 68). Reflection on the Dhamma is indispensable in order to understand the meaning of what the Buddha taught. Are we attached to calm while we take part in Dhamma discussions and reflect on the teachings? Do we want more and more of such moments? We should not forget that the goal of the teachings is not calm of the level of samatha but the eradication of defilements through the development of insight. Because of clinging to calm we may forget to be mindful of the nāma or rūpa which appears now. Acharn Sujin said:

“There is seeing now, no calm. Study it now, that is the development of satipaṭṭhāna. There should not be attachment to calm. One knows that seeing arises, but is there understanding of it? It is useless to see without understanding, to hear without understanding. When one knows this, one is not involved in wanting to be calm. No matter how calm one is, without studying and understanding reality as it is, it is useless. It cannot condition satipaṭṭhāna.”

The goal of the teachings is the understanding of the reality which appears so that ignorance and wrong view will be eliminated. That is why the Buddha always taught about seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting, touching, the experiences through the mind-door, about each doorway. Because of ignorance we confuse the different doorways.

Acharn Sujin said that the cure of ignorance is awareness and “study” of the realities which appear. In that way there can be right understanding of all realities as they are. Someone asked how one can know that there is subtle attachment. Acharn Sujin answered:

“By awareness and study of realities. At this moment realities appear. There is seeing, and then, what else is there after seeing? Kusala or akusala? Subtle attachment or calm, or right understanding or what else? Without awareness and study one cannot know this. It has been taught in the Abhidhamma that after seeing, if there is no kusala, there must be lobha-mūla-citta, dosa-mūla-citta or moha-mūla-citta. Do we know this moment? Do we know what is there, as soon as there is seeing and no awareness or understanding of reality as it is? What is there after seeing? Subtle attachment, very subtle. So subtle that one cannot see that it is attachment. One wants to have indifferent feeling and one thinks that by having indifferent feeling one is calm. No, not at all. There can be moha-mūla-citta or lobha-mūla-citta with indifferent feeling. As soon as seeing has arisen there is attachment with indifferent feeling, but the attachment is very subtle. Before the Buddha’s enlightenment there were wise people who understood the danger of subtle attachment after seeing or hearing. They developed calm since they did not have the understanding of the development of satipaṭṭhāna. People who listened after the Buddha’s enlightenment to his teachings with right understanding knew that the most beneficial way of mental development is to be aware and study any reality which is conditioned and which appears. They knew that this is the way which leads not just to temporary freedom from defilements, but to their eradication.”

The Buddha taught people about each of the six doors so that realities could be known separately, one at a time. We usually confuse all the doorways and there is no mindfulness of only one reality at a time when it appears.

We read in the “Kindred Sayings”(IV, Saṁyutta-vagga, Kindred Sayings on Sense, First Fifty, Ch I, §1) that the Buddha, while he was staying near Sāvatthī, at the Jeta Grove, taught the impermanence of the eye. He said to the monks:

“... The eye, monks, is impermanent. What is impermanent is dukkha. What is dukkha, that is anattā. What is anattā that is not mine, I am not it, it is not myself. That is how it should be seen with perfect insight as it really is.”

The same is said about the ear, the nose, the tongue, the body and the mind. The sutta then continues:

“...So seeing, monks, the well-taught ariyan disciple is repelled by the eye, the ear, the nose, the tongue, the body and the mind. Being repelled by them, he is not attached to them. Being not attached to them he is freed. In this freedom comes the insight of being free. Thus he realizes: ‘Rebirth is destroyed, lived is the righteous life, done is the task, for life in these conditions there is no hereafter.’ ”

Each reality has to be known separately. The Buddha taught the true nature of each reality which appears.

Chapter 5.

Conventional Truth and Ultimate Truth.

We read in the “Gradual Sayings” (Book of the Fives, Ch VI, §7, Things to be contemplated) that the Buddha said to the monks:

“Monks, these five things ought to be often contemplated by woman and man, by house-dweller and by him gone forth. What five?

Old age can come upon me; I have not outstripped old age!- this ought to be often contemplated by woman and man, by house-dweller and by him gone forth.

Disease can come upon me; I have not outstripped disease!...

Death can come upon me; I have not outstripped death!...

All things near and dear to me are subject to variableness, subject to separation!...

I am the result of my own deeds; heir to deeds; deeds are matrix; deeds are kin; deeds are foundation; whatever deed I do, whether good or bad, I shall become heir to it!- this ought to be often contemplated by woman and man, by house-dweller and by him gone forth....”

The Buddha then explained that through the first three contemplations the pride of youth, the pride of health and the pride of life are got rid of or reduced. Through the contemplation of the fact that those near and dear are subject to variableness and separation, passionate desire is got rid of or reduced. Through the contemplation of kamma and vipāka defilements are got rid of or reduced. We read further on in this sutta:

“Monks, the ariyan disciple reflects thus: I am not the only one who is subject to old age, who has not outstripped old age; but wheresoever there are beings, coming and going, faring on and arising, all are subject to old age, none has outstripped it. And while he often contemplates this thing, the Way comes into being; and that Way he follows, makes become and develops; and in doing so the fetters are got rid of, the tendencies are removed.”

The Buddha taught the truth about our life, he taught the truth of all conditioned realities which are impermanent and not self. The development of the eightfold Path eventually leads to the eradication of defilements at the attainment of arahatship. According to the commentary, the “Manorathapúrānī”, the Buddha taught in this sutta by way of these five contemplations vipassanā and lokuttara magga, the supramundane Path arising later on.

Do we realize the truth of these five contemplations, or do we just read this sutta and then forget about it? Do we realize that we are becoming older, even each splitsecond?

I was jogging in the woods in Holland and I wanted to forget that there is ageing. I enjoyed the songs of the birds, the trees and the meadows. If we are sincere we must admit that we want pleasant things to last. We wish visible object to last, sound to last, we wish all pleasant objects to last. We are thinking of a self who is jogging in the woods, who is seeing and hearing, but in reality there is no self. Seeing sees, not a self. Seeing is only one moment of experience, it experiences visible object and it cannot last, it falls away immediately. Hearing hears, not a self; thinking thinks, not a self. There is no person, no self, there are only different mental phenomena, nāmas, and physical phenomena, rūpas, which are impermanent. When we are enjoying ourselves, do we want to develop right understanding in order to know realities as impermanent and not self? At first it may not appeal to us to know more about nāma and rūpa and to be mindful of them when they appear. But do we want to go on living in a dream or do we want to know the truth? When we begin to see what is real and what is not real we shall know that it is not a waste of time to develop right understanding. It is most beneficial, it is the only way to cope with birth, old age, sickness and death, the only way to cope with all our troubles.

Through the development of right understanding we shall know what is real and what is not real. There are two kinds of truths:

conventional truth (sammutti sacca)

ultimate truth (paramattha sacca)

Conventional truth are people, soul, body, animal, tree or chair, all the things we have been familiar with throughout our life, all the things we take for granted. Before we listened to the Dhamma and studied it we only knew about the conventional truth and

we took it for real. When there is no right understanding one thinks that conventional truth is the only truth. Through the Dhamma we learn that conventional truth is not real in the absolute or ultimate sense. This does not mean that we should deny conventional truth and that we should avoid thinking of concepts. Concepts and ideas are in our ordinary language expressed by conventional terms and we need these to make ourselves understood. We cannot help thinking of concepts, it is conditioned. We all think of concepts but there can be more understanding of what is real and what is not real.

Nāmas, mental phenomena, and rūpas, physical phenomena, are ultimate realities, paramattha dhammas. They are different from concepts and ideas. They can be directly experienced, one at a time, when they appear through their appropriate doorways. Seeing, for example, is a reality in the ultimate sense. It can be experienced by everybody who has eyesense; it has its own unalterable characteristic and there is no need to name it “seeing” in order to experience it. It is real for everybody. Anger is a reality; it has its own unalterable characteristic and it can be experienced by everybody when it appears, without the need to name it anger. Heat is a reality; it has its own unalterable characteristic and it can be experienced when it appears through the bodysense without the need to name it “heat”. Seeing, anger or heat are not concepts, we do not have to use any names in order to know them; they can be experienced when they appear, one at a time. Realities have each their own characteristic, their own function and their own manifestation, they are the same to all people. Paramattha dhammas are true for everybody and they can be directly experienced through one of the senses and through the mind-door.

In the beginning it is difficult to know the difference between concepts (conventional truth) and realities (ultimate truth). When we, for example, look at a flower and we like it, what are the realities? Usually we are only interested in the people and things we perceive, in concepts, and we are ignorant of realities. When we like a flower, there is pleasant feeling, but there are also other realities besides pleasant feeling. It seems that seeing and thinking of a flower with pleasure occur at the same time but this is not so. Seeing experiences visible object, not a flower. We don't have to call what is visible “visible object” or “colour”, we don't have to give it any name, but there is a reality that can be experienced through the eyesense. We can verify the truth at this moment, while there is seeing. This will lead to more understanding of what seeing is and to detachment from the idea of a self. Seeing is different from thinking of something, but if there were no seeing we could not think of things and people. Thinking is conditioned by seeing. There are different nāmas which each perform their own function and which are not self. When we look at a flower we take the flower for something which lasts, but in reality there is no flower which lasts. When we pick it there are different realities appearing through the bodysense; hardness, for example, may appear. When we smell its scent, there is only odour appearing through the nose. We are not used to knowing different objects, one at a time, through different doorways, but this is the only way to know the truth. Because

of wrong view there are always people and things in our life which seem to last. We take the unreal for real, we are living in a dream.

We think of people and things. We should not avoid thinking of them, but we can have less misunderstandings about realities and concepts. *Nāma* and *rúpa* are not imaginary, they are real. We do not have to name them *nāma* and *rúpa* in order to distinguish them from each other.

Do we know the difference between *nāma* and *rúpa*? We cling to an idea of a unity of mind and body, we cling to an idea of “my body that is alive”. But, when there is pain, what are the realities? It is not *rúpa* which feels the pain but *nāma*. When we think of our body as a corpse we can understand that it does not feel anything. But also the body which is alive consists of *rúpas* which do not experience anything. When we have an idea of a “whole” or a unity of mind and body we cling to the concept of self. When we touch what we think is our body, hardness or heat may appear, *rúpas* that are tangible object. We touch objects all day long but we are usually absorbed in thinking of concepts.

In the beginning it is very difficult to know one reality at a time. One of our friends said that she could not help seeing figures all day, she saw figures coming towards her. It seemed that she was looking at a world full of people. We think that we see many different things in a room: a table, a chair, and further away a picture and a window, or the trees outside. However, there are not all the time moments of defining what was seen, moments of paying attention to shape and form. There must also be the experience of what appears through the eyesense, visible object, otherwise we could not think of concepts. Right understanding of the difference between ultimate truth and conventional truth can condition the arising of right awareness of one reality at a time. There is no self who can cause the arising of sati, but if there are conditions for its arising understanding of paramattha dhammas can grow.

Is it beneficial to know ultimate truth? We may wonder whether it is necessary to develop more understanding of such realities as seeing and hearing. It is most beneficial to develop right understanding of all realities of our daily life. On account of what we experience through the six doors many defilements arise: we are attached, we have aversion, we are stingy or jealous, we may even commit ill deeds and at such moments there are no loving kindness and compassion, we do not think of other people’s happiness. It is necessary to know our many defilements so that we shall have less ignorance. We should not only know our good and bad qualities, but also seeing, visible object, hearing, sound and all the other realities which appear through the six doors. We should know when we are living in the world of concepts, when we are daydreaming and quite absorbed in the objects we experience. Right understanding of the realities of our life is the only way to be less enslaved to our dreams.

When I was jogging in the woods and enjoying nature I was lost in dreams and at such moments there was no understanding of realities. However, everything we enjoy is subject to change. The next day one can be in hospital, this is life. The Buddha said that we should often contemplate old age, sickness and death, the variableness of things, kamma and vipāka. We should realize the impermanence of all conditioned realities. Seeing at this moment is conditioned. There can only be seeing if there are eyesense and visible object. What arises because of conditions has to fall away again, it does not last. Everything in life is very temporary. When people pay us compliments and say nice things to us we are pleased. When they are unkind to us we are sad. When we look at a beautiful sunset we are pleased, when we watch an accident we have aversion. The realities of life are beyond control, they cannot be all the time as we would like them to be. We are so taken in by the world of conventional truth that we do not know what is really there when we listen to what people say, when we look at nature or watch an accident. There are only realities which appear through the six doorways. There are hearing, sound, aversion, or attachment, but there are no people there. Realities arise because of their appropriate conditions and then fall away immediately. When we see something pleasant, it is the result of a deed committed in the past, it is conditioned by kamma. We cannot avoid unpleasant results, they are conditioned already. There is no “I” who experiences an unpleasant result, and there are no other people who cause that unpleasant result. There is no me, no he, only different nāmas and rūpas which arise because of their own conditions and then fall away again. When we develop right understanding we shall be more patient when unpleasant things happen to us and we shall be more tolerant towards other people.

How can we develop loving kindness and compassion when there are in reality no people? We can still think of people as usual, but right understanding of realities conditions more wholesomeness in our life. If right understanding is not developed we are absorbed in the world of conventional truth and this is not beneficial. We often look at people with attachment, with aversion, with ignorance and wrong view. When people are objects of clinging we think only of our own happiness. We are expecting pleasant things from others and at such moments there is no opportunity for loving kindness and compassion. When we cling to others we actually cling to ourselves. When we develop right understanding it does not prevent us from thinking of people, but we realize that there is at that moment thinking of concepts. At such moments we are not absorbed in concepts with akusala citta. Right understanding can condition thinking with loving kindness or compassion.

When we begin to realize the difference between the moments we are living in the world of the conventional truth and the moments of development of understanding of the ultimate truth, we shall see the extent of our clinging to concepts. After I returned to Holland I was looking at windmills and I was lost in my dreams. But I remembered what Bhante Dhammadharo had said about visible object: “We can only look at it, we cannot derive any benefit from it. We cannot take it with us.” These

words become more meaningful when we begin to understand that seeing sees only visible object, that which appears through the eyes, nothing else. We cling to visible object and after that we cling to concepts we can only think about, but we make our experiences into something very important; we enjoy ourselves with what is just a dream. We have not eradicated clinging and, thus, we still continue enjoying ourselves, but, when a short moment of right understanding arises we begin to see that kusala is more beneficial than akusala.

We read in the “Māgandiyasutta” (Middle Length Sayings II, no. 75) that the Buddha taught the wanderer Māgandiyā the danger of sense pleasures by way of a simile: a man, blind from birth, was deceived by someone who gave him a greasy, grimy, coarse robe and told him that it was a lovely, unstained, pure white cloth. But after he had received treatments for his eyes and regained vision he saw that he had been deceived. The Buddha told Māgandiyā that evenso, after having been taught Dhamma he would have vision:

“... With the arising of your vision, you might get rid of that desire and attachment to the five khandhas of grasping, and this might occur to you: ‘For a long time indeed I have been defrauded, deceived and cheated by this mind, for, grasping, I grasped after rūpa itself... after feeling itself... after perception (saññā) itself... after the habitual tendencies (saḍkhāra-kkhandha) themselves; grasping, I grasped after consciousness itself. Conditioned by grasping after this, there was becoming for me; conditioned by becoming, birth; conditioned by birth, old age and dying, grief, sorrow, suffering, lamentation and despair came into being. Thus is the origin of this whole mass of dukkha.’ ”

Māgandiyā wished to be ordained and afterwards he became an arahat.

Chapter 6.

The Objects of Paññā

Through the development of vipassanā we shall see all realities as anattā, not self. What does paññā know so that the truth of anattā can be realized?

We read in the “Discourse on the Six Sixes” (Middle Length Sayings III, no. 148) that the Buddha, while he was staying near Sāvatthī, at the Jeta Grove, taught the monks about “Six Sixes”. He taught them that there are six internal sense-fields (āyatanas), six external sense-fields, six classes of consciousness, six classes of contact (phassa), six kinds of feeling and six kinds of craving. We read:

“When it is said, ‘Six internal sense-fields are to be understood’, in reference to what is it said? It is in reference to the sense-field of eye, the sense-field of ear, the sense-field of nose, the sense-field of tongue, the sense-field of body, the sense-field of mind....

When it is said, ‘Six external sense-fields are to be understood’, in reference to what is it said? It is in reference to the sense-field of visible objects, the sense-field of sounds, the sense-field of smells, the sense-field of tastes, the sense-field of touches, the sense-field of mental states....

When it is said, ‘Six classes of consciousness are to be understood’, in reference to what is it said? It is in reference to the eye-consciousness that arises because of eye and visible objects; the ear-consciousness that arises because of ear and sounds; the nose-consciousness that arises because of nose and smells; the tongue-consciousness that arises because of tongue and tastes; the body-consciousness that arises because of body and tactile objects; the mind-consciousness that arises because of mind and mental states....”

We then read that the Buddha taught that there are six classes of contact: eye-contact, ear-contact, nose-contact, tongue-contact, body-contact and mind-contact. Eye-contact, for example, is a cetasika that conditions seeing to experience visible object through the eye-door. Contact arises together with each citta. The Buddha taught that the six kinds of contact condition six kinds of feeling, and that the six kinds of feeling condition six kinds of craving. All these realities occur now, at this moment, in daily

life. Are there not eye, visible object and seeing? Are there not eye-contact, feeling and craving?

The Buddha explained that all these realities are not self:

“If anyone should say, ‘Eye is self’, that is not fitting. For the arising of the eye is to be seen and its decaying. Since its arising and decaying are to be seen one would thus be brought to the stage of saying: ‘Self arises in me and passes away’. Therefore, if anyone should say, ‘Eye is self’, that is not fitting; in this way eye is not-self. If anyone should say, ‘Visible objects are self’... ‘Eye-consciousness is self’... ‘Eye-contact is self’... ‘Feeling is self’... that is not fitting;... If anyone should say, ‘Craving is self’ that is not fitting. For the arising of craving is to be seen and its decaying. Since its arising and decaying are to be seen one would thus be brought to the stage of saying: ‘Self arises in me and passes away’. Therefore, if anyone should say, ‘Craving is self’, that is not fitting; in this way eye is not-self, visible objects are not-self, eye-consciousness is not-self, eye-contact is not-self, feeling is not-self, craving is not-self....”

The Buddha clearly explained what the material to be studied is so that the understanding can be developed which eradicates defilements. The material to be studied are all the objects which can be experienced now through the six doors.

How can we begin to study realities? What can be known at the beginning? Nothing else but the reality which appears at this moment. Are there realities appearing and can they be known one at a time? It seems that many realities appear all at the same time, but then we are thinking of a “whole”, of a concept or idea.

In the Wellawatte Temple of Colombo where we had Dhamma discussions a train passed every so often and since the noise was loud we had to stop talking for a while. We all may have thought of a concept of “train” at such moments, and we must have thought of it in different ways. Some of us perhaps thought of it with gladness because it meant a little pause in a long discussion and an opportunity to reflect. Others may have had aversion because of the noise. The moments when one is absorbed in concepts there is no sati. When sati arises it can be aware of different realities appearing through different doorways, one at a time. This is the way to learn that there are only *nāmas* and *rūpas* appearing, no people who are sitting in a room, no train. It has all been explained in the above-quoted sutta: there are sound, hearing, different feelings conditioned by different contacts, and craving conditioned by feeling. None of these realities is self or belongs to a self. No person hears, hearing hears. Hearing hears sound, it does not hear a train. A train is only a concept we can think of, and the thinking does not occur at the same time as hearing. The thinking of the concept “train” is conditioned by accumulations of former experiences. We cannot help it that we think in such or such a way, thinking is “beyond control”, and “beyond control” is another word for *anattā*.

What is mindfulness, sati? There are many levels of sati. Sati is a *sobhana cetasika* (beautiful mental factor) that arises with each *sobhana citta*. When we are generous sati accompanies the *kusala citta* and it is non-forgetful of *kusala*. When we observe *sīla* sati accompanies the *kusala citta*. When there are moments of calm, for example, when we have loving kindness, there is sati, so that we are intent on other people's happiness. Sati of *vipassanā* is of a different level and it has a different object. Sati of *vipassanā* is mindful of realities, it is mindful of one reality at a time which appears now, through one of the six doors. We are usually living in the world of conventional truth. When we, for example, look at a sunset we are quite absorbed in what we perceive, we are lost in the shape and form and in the details of things. We believe that what we perceive really exists. When sati arises we wake up from our dreams. There is, for a short moment, non-forgetfulness of whatever reality appears at that moment, be it *kusala* or *akusala*, pleasant or unpleasant. We may believe that we should not think of concepts, but thinking is a reality and sati can be aware of it.

Sati arises when there are the right conditions for its arising. Association with the good friend in Dhamma, listening to the Dhamma, considering it thoroughly for oneself and knowing what the object of right understanding is can condition the arising of sati. At the moment of sati there can be a beginning of learning and noticing the characteristics of the different realities which appear. Sati is not an aim in itself, right understanding of realities is the goal. Just sati without the study of realities will not lead to the growth of right understanding.

We hear sounds all day long; some are soft, some are loud, but most of the time there is ignorance of realities. When there are conditions for sati it can be aware of the characteristic of sound, a reality appearing through the ears. At that moment we do not think of the quality of the sound or its source. When sound appears, there must also be hearing, a reality that experiences sound, at the same time. We may wonder how realities can be known one at a time. Each *citta* and, thus, also the *citta* with sati can experience only one object at a time. The characteristic of hearing may appear to sati. Sati may be mindful of hearing so that there can be more understanding of that characteristic. At another moment, not at the same time, the characteristic of sound may appear to sati and then there will be more understanding of it. Each moment of "study" with mindfulness is extremely short. The reality which is there as object of study appears and then it is gone, it is like a flash of lightning. There is no rule as to the object sati is mindful of, there is no self who can direct sati to a particular object. We know in theory that the characteristic of sound is quite different from the characteristic of hearing. We know that *rūpa* does not know anything and that *nāma* experiences an object. However, the difference between *nāma* and *rūpa* can be directly known through mindfulness and study of their different characteristics when they appear. That is why one needs courage to be mindful of realities over and over again. Only at the first stage of insight knowledge (*vipassanā ñāṇa*) the difference between *nāma* and *rūpa* is clearly known. If the difference between these two kinds of

realities has not been realized yet their true nature cannot be known, they cannot be known as impermanent and not self.

When the first stage of insight-knowledge arises pañña realizes the difference between nāma and rūpa through the mind-door. Cittas that experience objects arise in a series or process of cittas. There are processes of cittas that experience an object through one of the sense-doors and processes of cittas that experience an object through the mind-door. For example, visible object is experienced by cittas arising in the eye-door process and after that visible object is experienced by cittas arising in a mind-door process. When seeing arises, it seems to last, at least for a while. It may seem that there is seeing without interruption. In reality visible object, after it has been experienced through the eye-door, is experienced through the mind-door. It seems that seeing is immediately followed by hearing but in reality there must have been processes of citta in between. However, we do not notice this, cittas arise and fall away very quickly. Rūpas that are sense objects such as visible object or sound, can be experienced through their corresponding sense-door and through the mind-door, and nāma, such as seeing or hearing, can be experienced only through the mind-door. Thus, through the mind-door both nāma and rūpa can be experienced. When the difference between nāma and rūpa is realized by pañña, it is realized during a mind-door process. At those moments it is also known what a mind-door process is. At this moment we know it in theory, but at the moment of insight-knowledge it is directly known. At such moments there is no self, no world, and nāma and rūpa clearly appear one at a time through the mind-door.

It is useful to know about the stages of insight-knowledge, otherwise we may erroneously believe that stages of insight have arisen already. Pañña is bound to be weak in the beginning. There may sometimes be awareness of a rūpa and sometimes of a nāma, but we should not take our weak knowledge for the first stage of insight-knowledge. There is likely to be an idea of self who is mindful. Is it already clearly known what the mind-door is? It is beneficial to know what one does not know yet.

The Buddha exhorted us to contemplate the impermanence of conditioned realities. Contemplation of impermanence is not merely thinking about impermanence, it is the direct knowledge of the arising and falling away of a nāma or rūpa that appears, one at a time. We should realize our ignorance of realities which appear one at a time. We know, for example, that pain does not last, that it falls away. But do we know the realities which are there when we have pain? There are different nāmas and rūpas when we feel pain. The rūpa that is hardness may appear, or the nāma that is bodily painful feeling, or the nāma that is mental unpleasant feeling and that accompanies dosa-mūla-citta (citta rooted in aversion). We are ignorant of the different nāmas and rūpas that arise and fall away when we have pain, we usually think of an idea or concept of pain, we take it for “my pain”. There must be a precise understanding of the difference between nāma and rūpa before their arising and falling away can be realized. The direct understanding of impermanence is a later stage of insight-

knowledge and this stage cannot arise before the first stage of insight-knowledge: the knowledge of the difference between the characteristic of *nāma* and the characteristic of *rúpa*.

What is the task of *paññā* and in which way does it know realities? Someone asked what *paññā* knows when flavour appears. Flavour may be salty or sweet, there are many different kinds of flavour. When we are eating pudding or herring, we think of their flavours with like or dislike, we are absorbed in concepts and at such moments there is an idea of some “thing” in the flavour, we do not know the true nature of flavour. When there is mindfulness of the characteristic of flavour, *paññā* can know it as only a reality appearing through the tongue, as only a kind of *rúpa*, no “thing” in it. At that moment the flavour is still salty or sweet, it has not changed into a “neutral” flavour, but *paññā* does not think about the flavour, it knows its true nature. Flavour is tasted through the tongue and after that we may define what kind of flavour it is, but defining the flavour and thinking about it is not *paññā*. It is the task of *paññā* to know its true nature, no matter what kind of flavour it is.

We are bound to have misunderstandings about the characteristic and function of *paññā* and take for *paññā* what is not *paññā*. Hardness and softness, for example, may appear and when we notice them we may believe that there is right awareness. Everybody, even a child, can know that something is hard or soft, but knowing this is not *paññā*. We may not expressively think, “This is hard, this is soft”, but there may still be an idea of some thing that is hard or soft and then hardness and softness are not realized as only *rúpa*. Or we may try to direct *sati* to these characteristics since we want to know them and in this way the truth will not be realized. When *kusala citta* with mindfulness arises, hardness and softness are not changed into something else, but *paññā* can know their true nature.

Paññā knows a *nāma* or *rúpa* which appears as only a reality. What does this mean? When a *nāma* or *rúpa* is known as only a reality it is not mixed up with the idea of a person or thing. Why is the word “only” used? When what we experience is taken for “something” or “somebody”, we attach great importance to it. We take what we experience for somebody who exists or for something we can control, thus, for “self” or “mine”. We are ignorant of the conditionality of phenomena. When *paññā* knows, for example, hearing as only a reality, it knows it as a reality that has arisen because of its own conditions, not because of our will, and which cannot be controlled. Earsense and sound are conditions for hearing and also these factors are conditioned. Everything which arises because of conditions has to fall away. Hearing, sound and all the other conditioned realities are only present for an extremely short moment, they are insignificant realities. Bhante Dhammadharo remarked that the word “only” is important: “Only is another name for *anattā*.” A reality is only *rúpa*, not something, or only *nāma*, not somebody.

“How can we begin to develop *paññā*”, this was a question that people often asked. Acharn Sujin invariably answered: “Develop it now!” There is no other way because

right understanding can only begin at the present moment and all the material to be studied is there already; thus, we have to develop it now. Do we believe that we have to do something else first, such as thinking of *nāma* and *rūpa*, before there can be mindfulness? Thinking and considering are very useful, but we should not believe that we have to think first in order to induce the arising of *sati*. When we think of *nāma* and *rūpa*, it is conditioned, we could not think of them if we had not studied the Dhamma. There is no self who thinks. At that very moment there can be mindfulness and understanding of thinking as only a reality, and that is the beginning of *paññā*. Some people may believe that thinking is not suitable as object of awareness. When thinking arises, that is the reality of the present moment, we should not wait. When people were worried about there being more often thinking than mindfulness, Acharn Sujin said: “What about this moment?” She remarked:

“We should not forget to develop right understanding of seeing as only an experience, different from visible object which appears. Develop it now. How can *paññā* be clear immediately, just at the moment of awareness? Develop understanding, don’t worry about it when it is not clear yet. When understanding arises more often it will be clearer.”

Don’t we expect too much in the beginning? When realities do not appear clearly we become impatient already and we wonder how *paññā* can ever develop. We should not be afraid to develop understanding of a *nāma* or *rūpa* which appears now, even if *paññā* does not know it clearly. Isn’t there time and again an object impinging on one of the six doors?

Through ignorance of realities we are enslaved by our many defilements. When *paññā* is being developed now there will eventually be detachment and freedom from defilements. We read at the end of the “Discourse on the Six Sixes” which was quoted above about the detachment brought about by right understanding of realities:

“Seeing this thus, monks, the instructed ariyan disciple turns away from eye, turns away from visible objects, turns away from eye-consciousness, turns away from eye-contact, turns away from feeling, turns away from craving. He turns away from ear, he turns away from sounds... He turns away from nose, he turns away from smells... He turns away from tongue, he turns away from tastes... He turns away from body, he turns away from touches... He turns away from mind, he turns away from mental objects, he turns away from mind-consciousness, he turns away from mind-contact, he turns away from feeling, he turns away from craving. Turning away he is dispassionate; by dispassion he is freed; in freedom is the knowledge that he is freed, and he comprehends: Destroyed is birth, brought to a close the Brahma-faring, done is what was to be done, there is no more of being such or so.”

Chapter 7

Hindrances to the Development of Paññā

Association with the good friend in Dhamma, listening, considering what one has heard, testing its meaning and the right practice are the conditions for enlightenment. We have listened to the Dhamma and considered it and now we are wondering how mindfulness of *nāma* and *rūpa* can begin. We find that it hardly begins. Are there factors which hinder the development of right understanding?

Bhante Dhammadharo pointed out that, although we believe that we listened and considered what we heard, we did not listen enough and we did not truly test the meaning of what we heard. Perhaps we were only passive listeners. We read in the “Gradual Sayings” (Book of the Threes, Ch III, § 30, Topsy-turvy) about three ways of listening to the Dhamma. The Buddha said that there is the “topsy-turvy-brained”, the “scatter-brained” and “the man of comprehensive brain”. As to the “topsy-turvy-brained” who visits the monks and listens to the Dhamma, we read:

“... But as he sits there he pays no heed to that talk in its beginning, pays no heed to its middle, pays no heed to its ending. Also when he has risen from his seat he pays no heed thereto... Just as when a pot is turned upside down, the water poured thereon runs off and does not stay in the pot, even so in this case a certain person frequents the monastery ... but pays no heed to that talk... Also when he rises from his seat he pays no heed thereto... This one is called ‘the topsy-turvy-brained’.

And of what sort, monks, is the scatter-brained ?

In this case a certain person frequents the monastery... As he sits he pays heed to that talk in its beginning, its middle and its end, but when he has risen up from his seat he pays no heed thereto... Just as when in a man’s lap divers kinds of food are piled together, such as sesamum, rice, sweetmeats and jujube fruits. When he rises from his seat he scatters all abroad through absent-mindedness, -- even so, monks, in this case a certain person frequents the monastery... As he sits he pays heed to that talk... but when he has risen up from his seat he pays no heed thereto. This one is called ‘the scatter-brained’.”

We then read about the man of comprehensive mind who listens and pays heed to that talk in its beginning, middle and end, and who also when he gets up bears it in mind. We read:

“... Just as when a pot is set upright the water poured therein accumulates and does not run away, even so in this case a certain person frequents the monastery... and pays heed to that talk... Also when he rises from his seat he bears it in mind, in its beginning, its middle and its ending. This one, monks, is called ‘the man of comprehensive mind’.”

We think perhaps that we do not belong to the two first categories, but are we sure? We may be forgetful of what we heard and we may not apply it. Then we are like the “scatter-brained”.

During our journey we found out that we had not considered enough the Dhamma in our daily life. We were surprised when we found out how rare pure kusala is. We noticed that even when we performed good deeds such as offering dāna to the monks or helping other people, there were many more akusala cittas than we ever thought. We found that we hardly knew what pure kusala without any selfish purposes is. We were often asked: “Is this moment kusala or akusala?” and then we were not sure about this. What has been taught in the Abhidhamma “is not in the book”, it is reality, now. Did we verify in daily life what has been taught in the Abhidhamma? During this journey we learnt that even when it seems that there isn’t any unwholesomeness, such as at the moments we see a flower or a cup, there can be subtle clinging with indifferent feeling. We are ignorant of such moments time and again. Through the Abhidhamma we learnt about sense-door processes and mind-door processes, processes of cittas which experience objects through the sense-door and through the mind-door. In a process there are seven “javana-cittas” (cittas “running through” the object) which are either kusala cittas or akusala cittas. When there is no dāna, sīla or bhāvanā, the javana-cittas are akusala cittas. When we were reminded that when we look at a flower or a cup there is clinging most of the time, we realized that we had not sufficiently considered the Abhidhamma in our daily life. Now we understand more how difficult it is to know whether at this moment, just after seeing or hearing, or at the moment of thinking, the citta is kusala citta or akusala citta. Only right understanding can know this moment precisely.

If one does not consider the Dhamma enough in one’s daily life it can be due to clinging to one’s good friend in the Dhamma. One may be inclined to ask questions all the time, but sometimes it may be better to consider oneself the points one wants to be clarified. The good friend in Dhamma can point out to us the Way, but we should be courageous enough to develop right understanding ourselves. Right understanding is our best teacher; it knows kusala as kusala, akusala as akusala, it can solve all our doubts. Right understanding knows whether there is any development or not yet and it knows what hinders our development.

We found out that we did not develop satipaṭṭhāna with a sincere inclination and this is also a hindrance. The purpose of satipaṭṭhāna is the eradication of the wrong view of self and of all defilements. We want to listen to Dhamma talks because it gives us a feeling of security and we enjoy moments of peace and calm. But we do not want to apply the Dhamma. “We pay lipservice to satipaṭṭhāna”, Bhante Dhammadharo said. Do we really see the value of all levels of kusala? All kinds of kusala are beneficial and they help us to have less lobha, dosa and moha. If one sees the benefit of satipaṭṭhāna one should at the same time also practise true generosity without selfish motives, one should have true consideration for others and develop loving kindness

and compassion. Do we think of kusala in a selfish way? We may cling to a concept of “my kusala”. When we see the benefit of unselfishness we shall develop all levels of kusala and we shall also have more understanding of the purpose of satipaṭṭhāna: the eradication of defilements.

The last day Acharn Sujin was in Sri Lanka she offered dāna in our friend Janaki’s house to the group of foreign monks we were traveling with. After the monks had finished their meal Bhante Dhammadharo gave us a sermon, speaking the following words:

“When one comes to learn more about realities of this moment, one does not discover something new and different, but there comes to be some understanding of what one has been familiar with: of what one has always taken for “self”, for people, places and things. The development of understanding must be very gradual and very natural, just at this moment. We cannot force right understanding to arise and perform its function. When the conditions are there, there can be a moment of right understanding. But there is no signal, no warning, nothing to tell you: “Now right understanding is going to arise and know something about the present moment.” Still, it arises and something is learnt about the reality at this moment. Right understanding brings detachment and this can lead, one day, to complete and final eradication of all this ignorance which causes us to see the present moment other than it is. It causes us to see things as attractive, lasting, worth while, important. All these ways of seeing the present moment are false, treacherous, dangerous and useless. There is not enough understanding of the true nature of the present moment; in the beginning understanding is very weak. There can just be some moments of understanding from time to time. In between such moments anything can happen. Don’t fool yourself that, because you heard Dhamma and you are in good company, defilements, perhaps quite strong, can’t arise and surprise you, that you are beyond that. Anything can happen according to conditions, according to your accumulations, and it is a test of one’s understanding whether there can be some mindfulness even of those as it were surprising moments. When defilements arise there are conditions for them. It is of no use being disappointed or surprised about them. There is only one way to cope with them: have more understanding of whatever has arisen. There should not be forgetfulness of lobha. It is with us nearly all the time in some form or other. It is like an enemy with the appearance of a friend, very hard to detect. It is like a friend who speaks nicely, waits upon us, smiles at the right time. Who would know that that very pleasant, comfortable and secure feeling we have is really an enemy, the cause of all suffering, the cause of the arising of realities from moment to moment, one after the other. We may even cling to kusala. Although it brings pleasant results, it is still impermanent, it is still dukkha. It is anattā, nothing abiding, nothing lasting, nothing substantial.

Remind yourself again and again of what the goal is. Don’t be negligent. When it is time for dāna, give! Even when it is not time for dāna, perhaps it can be made into

time for dāna. Don't be negligent as to sīla. If one neglects sīla, who knows what could happen. All sorts of bad deeds of the past might have an opportunity to give bad results, they might cause one to be in a situation where one cannot hear Dhamma anymore. Don't be negligent as to calm, the moments one is free from lobha, dosa and moha. We should have mettā towards other people, instead of seeing them as objects of competition, objects to be jealous of, objects to run down. Above all, most important, don't be negligent to study the present reality. Don't forget to be aware of rūpa, of the different types of rūpa that arise and appear through the senses. Be aware of visible object that appears from morning to night, arising and passing away unnoticed. The present reality should be studied in order to get rid of ignorance which caused us to be born and which will cause us to go on being born again and again if there is no development of right understanding.

May you all be well and happy with right understanding!"

After the Bhante's sermon Acharn Sujin gave Dhamma dāna to us all. She spoke about the deepest cause of all our failures in the development of satipaṭṭhāna: our own defilements which we have accumulated for so long. She reminded us again of our fundamental inconsistency: we want to develop satipaṭṭhāna in order to eradicate the concept of self, but we still continue to consider ourselves as very important. This selfish attitude appears in our manner and speech, it can be very prominent. We often speak about realities such as seeing, hearing or thinking as anattā, non-self, but do we realize it when there is plain selfishness in daily life? Up till now we did not understand very well that less clinging to the concept of self also means being less selfish in our daily life. We are so used to thinking of ourselves that we do not notice it. Acharn Sujin reminded us to realize more the moments we think of ourselves and to realize our action and speech that are motivated by egoism.

How often do we find ourselves important? How often do we have conceit? Do we think ourselves better than others? Even when we think ourselves equal to or less than others we may find ourselves important and that is conceit. We may, for example, think: "Why does he treat me in that way?" Does this not often happen in daily life?

The "Vibhanga" (Book of Analysis, Second Book of the Abhidhamma) enumerates in the "Analysis of Small Items" (345) many objects which can be objects of pride and conceit. Pride is here the translation of the Pāli word "māda" which literally means intoxication. We read:

"Pride of birth; pride of clan; pride of health; pride of youth; pride of life; pride of gain; pride of being honoured; pride of being respected; pride of prominence; pride of having adherents; pride of wealth; pride of appearance; pride of erudition; pride of intelligence; pride of being a knowledgeable authority; pride of being (a regular) alms collector; pride of being not despised; pride of posture (bearing); pride of accomplishment; pride of popularity; pride of being moral; pride of jhāna; pride of

dexterity; pride of being tall; pride of (bodily) proportion; pride of form; pride of (bodily) perfection; pride; heedlessness; (mental) rigidity; rivalry....”

All these objects can be a source of intoxication and conceit. We should consider them in daily life, that is the reason why they are enumerated. Is it not true that we want to be honoured and respected, that we want to be popular and receive compliments? We are attached to other people’s opinion about us. The word “rivalry” used in the “Vibhanga” is another word for competition. We do not want others to be better than we are, even with regard to kusala and right understanding. We may not have noticed that we are so self-seeking, but the enumeration in the “Vibhanga” can remind us to be aware more often of such moments. We should investigate the deepest motives of our behaviour. Behaviour and speech we thought to be correct and pleasing are often motivated by selfishness. Acharn Sujin told us in plain words that we should do something for others instead of doing something for ourselves, and that this gradually can become our nature. It will condition more kusala in our life. When we consider ourselves not as “somebody” we see more the importance of other people. A “nobody” or “not somebody” is another word for non-self, anattā. Do we really understand the meaning of anattā and its application in daily life? The sotāpanna has realized the truth of anatta and for him there are no more conditions to neglect the five precepts. When we transgress them there is no true consideration for other people’s well-being. The sotāpanna has eradicated stinginess. We are still stingy, we do not always want to share with others what we have because we think of our own comfort. Through satipaṭṭhāna there will be less ignorance of the many moments of selfishness which arise and there will be the understanding that akusala is only a conditioned reality, not “my akusala”. We shall develop satipaṭṭhāna with a more sincere inclination, we shall develop it in order to understand whatever reality arises, to understand it as non-self.

An insincere inclination inhibits the development of satipaṭṭhāna. Right understanding can know whether we are sincere or not, whether there is development in the right way or not. Do we take our intellectual understanding for direct knowledge of realities and do we believe that there is nothing more to be developed? This will hinder the right practice of the eightfold Path. There are many misconceptions which can hinder its development. Do we have certain fixed ideas about sati, ideas of what it should be like? Do we, without noticing it, confuse sati with an idea of calm and peace? Some people find sati “a very special experience”, but then there is clinging. Sati is only a reality, not something special, and we should not hold on to it. Are we sure about the characteristic of sati or are we merely thinking of a concept of sati? In the beginning there cannot be clear understanding of any reality, and thus, when we think that we know sati as it is we may mislead ourselves. When we are too preoccupied with what sati is like, we forget to be aware of all realities that are appearing already, such as seeing, sound or hearing.

We may have prejudices against particular objects and we may not like to be aware of them. Someone thought that when she was practising satipaṭṭhāna she should not recognize her parents or friends, or look at her watch, since she was then thinking of concepts. Are we doing the same, do we want to avoid thinking of concepts? We were walking around the great Stupa of Anurādhapura, the “Ruvanvelisaya”, and then there was thunder. The rainy season had begun. I was paying attention to the sound of thunder and thinking of a concept. I tried to experience just sound, but the concept of thunder seemed to come up immediately. What was really happening? I was thinking of a concept and trying to avoid thinking of it, because I wanted to know just sound. We should not resist being aware of the reality that appears. When we think of thunder it does not matter; the thinking can be studied in order to know it as only a reality that is conditioned. At another time, when we do not try to focus on sound, sound may appear and then it can be known as only a reality that arises because of the appropriate conditions. There is no self who can cause the arising of any reality and we can verify this in daily life. We should not try to live only in the world of ultimate truth because then there is clinging again. We cannot change what appears now.

Acharn Sujin reminded us time and again that the development of satipaṭṭhāna should be very natural. The sotāpanna sees things as they are, but this does not mean that he cannot live his daily life. He does not avoid the world of conventional truth, but he has no wrong view, he does not take the unreal for reality. The sotāpanna sees visible object and after the seeing there can be thinking of the concept “person”, but he has no misunderstanding about seeing and thinking of concepts. He knows that there is no person there, only nāmas and rūpas which are impermanent and non-self, but this does not mean that he cannot think of a person; thinking is conditioned. When thinking arises, he knows that it is a reality that thinks, no self who thinks. The objects the sotāpanna experiences and the objects the non-ariyan experiences are the same, but the sotāpanna has eradicated wrong view about them. The objects are the same, but right understanding which experiences them can grow.

We have often heard that the development of satipaṭṭhāna should be very natural, but have we really grasped this? Is there right understanding in our daily life, for example, while we are eating? We may know when we have eaten enough. Can there be mindfulness at that moment? It is daily life, but perhaps we have never considered such a moment. The monks have to remember that the food they take is like a medicine for the body, that it is not for enjoyment. Food sustains the body so that one can go on with the development of right understanding. These considerations are also useful for lay-followers. We enjoy our meals, but do we know when the citta is kusala citta and when akusala citta while we are eating? While we consider what clothes to wear for such or such occasion, for example, when we are going to the temple, there can be mindfulness of those moments. When it is cold, don't we reflect about what to wear? These things belong so much to our daily routine that we forget

to be mindful. However, right understanding can be developed, no matter what we are doing, no matter of what we are thinking.

We cling to sati and we try to control it. Acharn Sujin reminded us that sati is saòkhàrakkhandha, the khandha of “formations” or activities. We learn through the Abhidhamma that there are five khandhas:

rúpakkhandha (rúpas)

vedanàkkhandha (feelings)

saññàkkhandha (remembrance or perception)

saòkhàrakkhandha (formations or activities)

viññàñakkhandha (cittas)

In the khandha of “formations” are included all cetasikas, mental factors, except feeling and remembrance. Thus, all sobhana cetasikas (beautiful mental factors) and akusala cetasikas are included in saòkhàrakkhandha. Both good qualities and bad qualities have been accumulated from life to life. Saòkhàrakkhandha conditions this moment of kusala citta or of akusala citta. The sobhana cetasikas that have been accumulated support one another so that they can condition this moment of right awareness. All the moments of kusala such as generosity, síla, mettà, the moments of studying and considering the Dhamma are conditions for the growth of paññà. If there was very little sati in the past how can we expect a great deal of mindfulness today? Acharn Sujin said:

“Saòkhàrakkhandha, we all read about it. But at this moment of wanting to do something about sati, one forgets about saòkhàrakkhandha. It is not self, it is the khandha of formations. What has been accumulated until this moment will be a condition for the arising of sati. It can arise if the conditions are right.”

We may not have considered enough the Dhamma in our daily life. We may have misconceptions about the object of sati: any reality which appears now. Or we may cling to calm; we may forget that the aim of the development of vipassanà is more understanding of the object which appears, not calm. When the conditions are not right sati cannot arise, it is saòkhàrakkhandha.

Knowing that sati is saòkhàrakkhandha will prevent us from expecting the impossible and from becoming discouraged when there is lack of sati. It will prevent us from trying to control sati. We should know that we have accumulated conditions for all kinds of defilements. When there are conditions for sati it arises already, before we thought about it. It arises and performs its function of being mindful of the reality appearing at the present moment.

Our interest in the Dhamma today could not arise without conditions for it. In past lives we must have listened to the Dhamma. We listen again today and we shall listen again in the future, only in order to understand nāma as nāma and rūpa as rūpa. If we are not forgetful of the realities which appear and we develop understanding with a sincere inclination, nāma can be known as nāma and rūpa as rūpa.

Chapter 8

The Buddha's Excellent Qualities

We visited the sacred places of Sri Lanka in order to recollect the excellent qualities of the Buddha and of the arahats. When we were in Anurādhapura we often walked around in the area of the “Mahā-vihāra”, the Great Monastery, where in olden times

many arahats had been dwelling. We paid respect at the different stupas and old monuments and in that area we had under the trees Dhamma discussions with the group of foreign monks we were traveling with. We thought of the arahats who had lived in that place; they had developed satipaïhãna until all lobha, dosa and moha were eradicated.

Do we understand what it means to be without clinging to the self? Do we understand what the qualities of alobha, non-attachment, adosa, non-aversion or kindness, and amoha or pañña really are? The development of satipaïhãna will condition such qualities, it will lead to the eradication of all unwholesomeness. The Buddha himself was endowed with wisdom and virtue of the highest degree. When we pay respect to the Buddha we recite the words: “vijjã caraüa-sampanno”, endowed with wisdom and virtue. Do we know the meaning of these words? Why do we show reverence in front of a Buddha statue, at the places where his relics have been enshrined or at the Bodhi-tree? We pay respect to all his excellent qualities: to his wisdom, his compassion and his purity. If we do not recollect his excellent qualities while showing reverence, our action is not very beneficial.

If one hardly knows whether the citta at this moment is kusala citta or akusala citta can one truly appreciate the Buddha’s excellent qualities? During this journey we came to have a little more understanding of the many moments of akusala citta which arise and we saw how deeply rooted our selfishness is. We noticed how rare the moments are of genuine generosity without selfish motives and how rare true consideration for other people is. When we begin to understand the difference between kusala and akusala, not in a theoretical way, but in daily life, we appreciate more the value of right understanding of nãma and rüpa. Right understanding of visible object or of seeing which occurs now, of all realities that appear now, leads to the end of defilements. The Buddha taught the development of right understanding for fortyfive years, out of compassion, he taught for our welfare and happiness. The words we use to honour the Buddha: vijjã-caraüa-sampanno, can become more meaningful when we begin to understand what these qualities are.

Besides the sacred places in Anurãdhapura we also visited other memorable places outside this city. We went to Mahintale, the place where the arahat Mahinda, who had come from India, met the Singhalese King Devanampiya Tissa (250 B.C.) and preached to him the “Lesser Discourse on the Elephant’s Footprint” (Middle Length Sayings I, no 27). The King presented Mahinda with the Royal Park in Anurãdhapura and this place became the Mahã-vihãra, the center of Buddhism in Sri Lanka. Buddhaghosa, the author of the “Visuddhimagga” and the compiler of most of the commentaries to the Tipiãaka, resided in the Mahã-vihãra. We visited the Thuparama, the oldest stupa in Sri Lanka, where the relic of the Buddha’s right collarbone had been enshrined. Near the Thuparama is the cremation place of bhikkhuní Sangamitta, Mahinda’s sister, who brought a sapling of the Bodhi-tree to Sri Lanka. After her arrival the order of bhikkhunís was founded in Sri Lanka. We payed respect at the

Ruvanvelisaya, the great stupa which was constructed during the reign of King Duihagāmañi (150 B.C.), where relics of the Buddha had been enshrined. While we walked around the stupa we discussed satipaṭṭhāna. When the rain poured down in the afternoon we sat in a small temple near the stupa for Dhamma discussions. We payed respect at the Bodhi-tree several times and we noticed that the new sprout we saw two years ago was still growing bigger. To us this was a sign that the teachings are still being preserved in Sri Lanka.

One morning the group of foreign monks was going for a long walk from the Abbhayagiri Vihāra to the Thuparama. Jonothan, the Australian layman who looked after the monks during this journey and who had organised the walk, two Thai friends and I came along as well. The Abbhayagiri, our starting point, was built about 89 B.C. This monastery dissented from the monks of the Mahāvihāra. Since in all old stupas relics have been enshrined we payed respect there, by walking around the stupa three times while reciting the Pāli words which express honour to the Buddha, the Dhamma and the Sangha. From the Abbhayagiri we walked to a famous old Buddha statue, the Samādhi statue, and from there we went to the “Twin Pond” of Abbhayagiri which had been built for the use of the monks. We then proceeded to “Naka Vihāra”, now an old ruin, where once a fingernail relic of the Buddha had been enshrined. After that we followed the monks along the fields and we saw on our left side in the midst of marshy grounds the “Pathama Cetiya”, the first place where the arahat Mahinda had stayed after his arrival in Mahintale. We ended our walk in Thuparama.

Sri Lanka is the country where the teachings have been preserved after Buddhism declined in India and therefore it is not surprising that relics of the Buddha have been enshrined in stupas of this country. We had an opportunity to visit the stupa where the relic of the Buddha’s forehead-bone had been enshrined, the stupa of Seruwawila which is not far from Trincomali, on the East coast. Seruwawila is said to be one of the sixteen places in Sri Lanka the Buddha visited himself. He came three times to Sri Lanka and visited Seruwawila during his third visit. He predicted that in this place his forehead-bone relic would be enshrined.

We went to Seruwawila in a van, together with the group of monks. An elderly Sinhalese monk received us in Seruwawila and he gave an account of the history of the relic in Sinhalese which was translated into English. Mahā-Kassapa had in India given the relic to Mahā-Nanda, an enlightened monk. Mahā-Nanda brought the relic to Sri Lanka where it was kept in Tissārāma, the first monastery in Sri Lanka, which was founded by King Devanampiya Tissa and later on developed into the Mahāvihāra. King Kākavanna Tissa, King Duihagāmañi’s father, had the stupa constructed in Seruwawila where the relic was transferred. The relic chamber was securely built into the stupa and covered by masonry, and the stupa was covered by another one, the outer stupa, so that the relic could never be taken away. Later on the place of this stupa became unknown for several centuries and it was inaccessible

because of the jungle around it. In 1923 it was rediscovered and restored. A vihára was built and a road constructed so that it could become once again a place of worship. We payed respect in walking around the stupa three times and then we sat down near the stupa for a Dhamma discussion.

When we were in Kandy we payed respect to the Buddha's Tooth relic in the "Dawada Maligawa", the Temple of the Sacred Tooth. When we pay respect to the relics of the Buddha, kusala cittas may arise, but also akusala cittas are bound to arise. We may have attachment to the idea that there is something left of the Buddha. Some people have aversion towards the idea of a relic. One of my friends had aversion each time when she was inside the Tooth Temple. Paying respect to the Buddha's relics is only meaningful if we recollect his excellent qualities. The relics can remind us directly of his excellent qualities because they are what remained of his body, the body of a Buddha endowed with thirtytwo bodily characteristics each one of which was conditioned by kamma. In the "Lakkhaṇasutta" (Dígha Nikāya, Dialogues of the Buddha III, no. 30) it is explained that the Buddha, during his lives as a Bodhisatta, accumulated manifold virtues and that these conditioned the special bodily features that are the characteristics of a Buddha. We read about his immeasurable generosity, his perfect sīla and his boundless loving kindness and compassion towards all living beings. He had no selfish purposes in mind, he always thought of the welfare of others. After all our discussions about selfishness the impact of this sutta that points out the Buddha's utmost selflessness is much greater and it can serve as a reminder to us to be less self-seeking. I shall quote parts of this sutta without going into the details of the bodily characteristics conditioned by his excellent qualities which are mentioned after each section of this sutta:

"... Whereas in whatsoever former birth, former state of becoming, former sojourning, monks, the Tathāgata, then being human, took on mighty enterprise in all good things, took on unfaltering enterprise in seemly course of deed and word and thought:--- in dispensing gifts, in virtuous undertakings, in keeping of festivals, in filial duties to mother and father, in pious duties to recluse and brahmin, in honour of the head of the house and in other such things of lofty merit.... (145)

... Whereas in whatsoever former birth, former state of becoming, former sojourning, monks, the Tathāgata, then being human, lived for the weal of the great multitudes, dispeller of dread and of panic, purveyor of just protection and wardenship and giver of supplies..... (148)

... Whereas in whatsoever former birth... the Tathāgata, then being human, putting away the taking of life, refrained therefrom and laying the scourge and sword aside, dwelt gentle and compassionate, merciful and friendly to all living creatures.... (149)

... Whereas in whatsoever former birth... the Tathāgata, then being human, became popular to the people by the four bases of popularity, to wit, by giving, by kindly speech, by sagacious conduct and by impartiality... (152)

... Whereas in whatsoever former birth... the Tathāgata, then being human, became one who spoke to the multitude on their good, on righteousness, explaining to the multitude, became a bearer of welfare and happiness to living creatures, a celebrant of righteousness... (154)

... Whereas in whatsoever former birth... the Tathāgata, then being human, drew near and questioned recluse or brahmin, saying: What, sir, is good? What is bad? What is right, what is wrong? What ought I to do, or not to do? What when I have done it will long be for my unhappiness... or for my happiness?... (157)

... Whereas in whatsoever former birth... the Tathāgata, then being human, lived without wrath, full of serenity, and even when much had been said, feel not foul of anyone, was neither angry, nor malign, nor enraged, manifesting neither anger nor hate nor melancholy, but was a giver of fine and soft coverlets, and cloaks, and fine linen, fine cotton, fine silken, fine woollen stuffs.... (159)

... Whereas in whatsoever former birth... the Tathāgata, then being human, reunited long-lost with long-bereaved relatives, friends and comrades, reunited mother with child and child with mother, father with child and child with father, brother with brother, brother with sister and sister with brother, making them as one, causing them to rejoice.... (161)

... Whereas in whatsoever former birth... the Tathāgata, then being human, grew desirous for the good of the many, for their welfare, their comfort, their safety, considering how they might increase in confidence, in morality, in education, in charity, in righteousness and in wisdom, might increase in money and corn, in land, in animals twofooted and fourfooted, in wife and children, in servants and slaves, in kinsfolk and friends and connections.... (164)

... Whereas in whatsoever former birth... the Tathāgata, then being human, put away abusive speech, what he heard here not repeating elsewhere, to raise a quarrel against people here; and what he heard elsewhere not repeating here, to raise a quarrel against people there:-- thus becoming a binder together of those who are divided, or fostering those who are friends, a peacemaker, lover of concord, impassioned for peace, a speaker of words that make for peace....” (171, 172)

This sutta encourages us to develop satipaṭṭhāna with a sincere inclination. All kinds of kusala such as generosity, sīla, mettā, should be developed along with satipaṭṭhāna. Right understanding of nāma and rūpa will lead to being less self-seeking and being more intent on the happiness of others. This was an important lesson we learnt during this journey. We can now reflect on the Buddha’s excellent qualities with more respect and with more gratitude. He accumulated all kinds of virtues and attained Buddhahood out of compassion for us. Out of compassion he taught us satipaṭṭhāna so that defilements can be eradicated. He taught us satipaṭṭhāna for our welfare and happiness.

Namo tassa Bhagavato Arahato Sammā Sambudhassa--

Homage to the Lord, the Perfected One, the Fully Enlightened One.
