

17 I KNOW YOU MĀRA

25th August 2004

Almost a month of the rains retreat has gone. When it comes to the opportunity for practise it doesn't get any better than this. We should recall the opportunities that we have and put everything we've got into the practice. Whatever duties you have to do, do them thoroughly, and when there's nothing to do, then do nothing. Sit in your hut or walk on your meditation path, and enjoy the freedom of having to do nothing.

We have to go in the direction of working and meeting our responsibilities so often that sometimes we just aspire and long for the opportunity to practise. In a monastery such as this, which is so well established, so well supported, and so well looked after there's nothing much we have to do. So when you are in your hut and have this opportunity, make sure that you put great effort into doing nothing.

Controlling and Wanting

Too many people still do things. You only have to look at the *sutta* we are going to chant next week, the Anattalakkhana Sutta (SN 22.59), to see that each of these *khandhas* (aggregates) – *rūpa*, the body; *vedanā*, the feelings, pleasure and pain; *saññā*, your perceptions; *saṅkhāra*, mental-formations, your will; even *viññāṇa*, consciousness – is out of your control. There is *no* self in there that controls these things. The Buddha said in the Anattalakkhana Sutta that if any of the *khandhas* were a self, you would be able to say, “Oh, may my consciousness be like this. Oh, may it not be like that. Oh, may my feelings be such. May my pleasure and pain not be like that.” The Buddha said we cannot do that because there is no self; it is all *anattā* (non-self), and we do not control those things. It's a powerful statement! The Buddha said we should reflect upon the truth of *anattā* again and again.

We may not personally have seen *anattā*, but at least we can have faith in the Buddha's teachings, clearly repeated so many times, that the five *khandhas* are nothing to do with us. They are out of our control. So why, when we meditate, do we try to control these things? Why do we try pushing and pulling the mind to be just as we want it to be, to get rid of this, and to get hold of that? Surely we should have got

the message by now. It states in the *suttas* that the more one controls, the more one is going against the Buddha's advice. So our path of practice is to be able to sit down and learn what it means to be able to let go, to go in the opposite direction of the *āsava*, (the out-flowings of the mind), and to just sit and be patient.

The problem is that people don't know how to be truly patient. Whenever you are sitting down doing nothing, you want something. Craving and desire come up, and they take you away from this moment, and prevent you from going inwards. Remember, wanting is that force which takes you away from *whatever you are experiencing now*, into something in the future, into fantasies or dreams. According to the Sappurisa Sutta the *jhānas* and Enlightenment, are always different from what you imagined them to be. 'Yena yena hi maññanti tato taṃ hoti aññatha' (MN 113). So, how can you actually want anything, if you are not sure what it is that you want?

We have the simile from the *suttas* of the person who has fallen in love with the most beautiful girl in the country, but he doesn't know what she looks like, or where she lives, what her name is, or even if she exists. Some monks, novices, and *anagārikas* in this monastery have already fallen in love with *nimmittas* and *jhānas*, even when they don't know what they are, where they are, or whether they even exist or not. So why are you craving for something that you don't know? Leave all that alone. Let it go, until there is no wanting at all, so that the mind is content, still, and peaceful. Your whole job in this meditation retreat is just to be peaceful, to be still. Make that your goal. Not *jhānas*, not *nimmittas*, not Enlightenment. Make it your goal to be as peaceful as you possibly can, to lessen those desires, to stop the mind moving and keeping the mind still to stop the mind being disturbed by you getting in control and wanting things. Remember that the greatest controller of all is Māra.

Knowing Māra

Māra lives in the *paranimmittavasavattī* realm. It is the realm where 'will', *cetanā*, has power over others' creations, others' *nimmittas*. It is almost like the realm of control freaks. Know that control freak within yourself; understand that Māra is the 'doer' inside you. He's always trying to push and pull you, saying, "Come on; don't get so sleepy". "Come on, put forth some effort". "Come on, get into a *jhāna*".

“Come on, who do you think you are?” “Come on, how long have you been a monk, how long have you got left of your retreat?” “Come on, get going.” That is Māra! In answer say, “I know you Māra”, and then Māra disappears. If you don’t know Māra, if you don’t know the control freak within you, then you will always get tense and frustrated.

You can practise for years and years, and get very close to your goal, because Māra gives you a few crumbs every now and again. But you will never get a full meal you will never get into the *jhānas*. Remember that the *jhānas* are the places that Māra can’t go, where Māra is blindfolded. These are the places where Māra is banned. Why? Because anyone who has experienced a *jhāna* knows that in those stages there is no control left: the potential to ‘do’ is gone, and that potential to ‘do’ is Māra. So, are you giving Māra an opportunity when you are meditating? Are you taking control, trying to steer this meditation, do it this way, do it that way? If you are, you will find that you don’t get peaceful.

I answered a question in the interviews by saying that we know we are going in the right direction if we relax, if it leads to peace, to a sense of freedom, to inner happiness. The Buddha’s advice to Upāli and Mahāpājapatī, the first Bhikkhunī, was that if the training leads to things like dispassion and *upasama*, you know it is the Dhamma, the truth, the Vinaya. This beautiful word *upasama* means peace, quietness, stillness. When things settle down and there is no more business that is *upasama*. You can understand what that really means, because when you are meditating, you experience that peace, that *upasamasukha*. The happiness of peace, just being still; there is nothing to do, and there are no burdens. You are resting not just the body, but also the mind. Then you know: this is the path, this is the Dhamma and the Vinaya of the Buddha. The Buddha made it very clear that what leads to peace is the Dhamma, so use that as a check to make sure you are going in the right direction. See how peaceful you can become. Don’t just see how much you can crave and how much will power you can develop. Instead see how much ‘peace power’ you can develop.

Giving Up Time

It sometimes happens, when you start with this way of peace, that you have to go through dullness. That's just old *kamma*; bear with that. It will disappear, and when it disappears, you get energy. This beautiful energy is not the restless energy which comes from struggling and fighting, but a beautiful, peaceful energy. When you build up that peace one of the great results is that you develop this fabulous mindfulness. What I am talking about is 'super-power mindfulness'.

One of the ways of developing 'super-power mindfulness' is by what I call, 'total listening'. Whatever you are doing, you have to be totally there. Because listening is an important sense faculty, 'total listening' is a great metaphor for this brilliant mindfulness. So whatever you are doing, you are totally listening to what's happening. Even when you are practising present moment awareness meditation, you are totally there, totally listening, totally feeling. One hundred percent of the mind is in the moment. When you understand the idea of what I mean by 'total listening', you also understand what this mindfulness is and how it becomes so powerful. When we say 'total listening' we give it everything we've got, and then we find we have more to give to our mindfulness, to our alertness. We feel more deeply, we know more powerfully, and then mindfulness starts to grow and grow. It grows because we are not doing anything. The mind is still, it's not going away from 'total listening'.

When we look at the concept we call time, we see time only moves because of craving, because of doing things. When we stop doing things, when we stop planning, when we stop hurrying and hastening through the rounds of rebirth, time stops in this beautiful timelessness. Whenever we want something, we are already making the future. What is it going to be like? What is going to happen next? Where are we going to go next? And then we start going into ill will or guilt, we start looking into the past. It's all just craving or ill will. That's why I say the present moment is the place where you will be free from those things. Once craving and ill-will stop, time stops, and then the idea of where we are going and what we are going to do next just disappears. The mind becomes still in time and we experience the beautiful timeless present.

Those of you who get into deep meditation, know what that feels like. Time has no meaning anymore. You sit there for hours and who cares. You don't really know,

you don't have a clue, that so many hours have gone past. Time has lost its meaning and you are free from that burden.

Māra is the entity inside the wrist watch, inside the clock, that is ticking. He's trying to control you. But when we go beyond time, then Māra gets very worried. He only goes to such places with difficulty. So remember, when you are meditating, when you are walking, whatever you are doing, to see if you can allow that peace, that stillness in time to develop. You don't know what day or hour it is; you just get up in the morning and meditate. Who cares what the time is? If you are tired, you can go back to bed again. Don't count how many hours you sleep, don't count how many hours you meditate; just get rid of that time business. In the Bhaddekaratta Sutta (MN 131) it says, "Give up the past, give up the future". And the Dhammapāda also says, "Give up the past, give up the future". When you have given up the past and the future, the next thing to give up is the present. Give up all time. If you can start to do that – giving up time fully – reflect on what it means. Use your insight practice to understand what timelessness truly is. Then you will understand how freeing that is. Straightaway you get a perspective, a reflection that helps in your meditation: the reflection of timelessness – no time.

So, when we are meditating, we can use these little words like 'timeless', 'no time', 'free of time', 'total listening', 'fully alert', 'fully aware in this very moment', as ways to remind ourselves, and to point the way in our meditation. Craving and ill-will take us away from this moment. They take us away from where we are supposed to be going, which is inside of everything. If we keep being taken away from this moment, then we will never gain *jhānas*, and we will never get Enlightened. We are always going somewhere else, never right inside.

No One in Here

Later in the retreat, we will start talking about the citadels of the 'self', the 'knower' and the 'doer'; they're right in the centre of this. To get close to them is so difficult because the 'doer' is always pushing us away. The 'doer' doesn't want to be seen for what it truly is: just a phantom, a fake. That's why it always pushes us away so that

we can't understand it or see it as it truly is. It is the same with the 'knower'; it is so hard to see. But by stillness we get to understand what 'knowing' and 'doing' is.

We have to find that place where nothing moves. We can understand what it is: timelessness is one of the places where you get the feeling that nothing is moving. It is *upasama*, peaceful. Stay there, don't do anything. Never ask your self, "What should I do next?" You have lost the plot if you say that. What we are doing now, that is the only question. What we are doing now is to know more fully. Stay there, be more patient. Give up wanting, give up trying to do things. Stop trying to change the five *khandhas*; just leave them alone. Stop that process of Māra controlling and interfering; say, "Māra, I know you!" When Māra scurries away, with head bowed, that is when Māra is known to the monk, novice, *anagārika*, layman, or the laywoman; then Māra doesn't control. You are on the way to *Nibbāna*, the cessation of all things. When this happens, you can see that things stop.

Why do you always try to control these things? It is all impermanent; it rises and falls despite of you. If the world was under your control, you could actually control this business of impermanence: this night and day, things coming and going, happiness and pleasure, dark and light. How many times have you tried to control these things? All that happens is that it changes anyway. It is beyond you. So, *anicca* means uncertain, out of control; it come and goes as it wishes, without you being able to force it this way or that. That's why if you have a good meditation, fine. If you have a bad meditation, fine. Don't blame yourself. Don't become proud because you got a good meditation, thinking, "Now I can meditate". If anyone of you have had a good meditation and think, "Now I can do it", the next meditation will be disappointing.

You experience that many times because that's the nature of things. It is *anicca*, that's all: rising and falling, coming and going. So stop messing around! Allow it to be. Be content with the bad meditation, and be content with the good meditation. As my first meditation teacher said, there is no such thing as a bad meditation. There is just a meditation; it goes according to its causes and results. How can you control the results, when they depend on causes. It's just nature, that's all. It's nature doing its thing. You have to be part of this and let go. Enjoy the nature, the mind just

unfolding. In fact, the more you let go and get out of the way of this process, the faster, more peaceful, and beautiful it becomes. The more you get out of the way, the more powerful is the path. You disappear. You are just being a ‘nobody’.

Vanish into emptiness when you meditate, so that there’s no one in there. You can do the perception of *anattā saññā*. *Anattā saññā* is the perception that no one is in here. What I mean by developing these perceptions is that when you are on the walking path, you start thinking about these things. You use your thoughts to focus your mind on what these things mean. At least you have enough knowledge and enough faith to know that there’s nobody in here. The ‘knower’ is no one. It is just a process of consciousness. When form hits the eye, there is a conjunction of these two, there’s contact. With contact, there’s a sense impression, that’s all. When the mind object meets mind consciousness the two come together, that’s mind contact. From mind contact you get *vedanā*. That’s all it is.

So when you understand what these things are, you see there’s nobody in here. Even if you can’t know that is true for yourself, because you have not seen it with wisdom yet, at least you’ve heard it with faith. Try it out. Imagine there are no other monks here. Imagine that things are just not there. Imagine that. Put yourself in that position, and then meditate from that perspective of non-self, seeing that as an imaginary place where you meditate. Start your meditation with that perception. Start your walking meditation with the thought that there’s nobody else here. The Buddha said that the ‘controller’, the ‘doer’, the ‘knower’, is just a process, not a person, not a thing, not a being. So just walk, just sit, and see what happens. When you start with that perception, that perception of true Dhamma, it’s amazing how easy it is to meditate.

It’s only because of delusion that meditation is hard. It’s only because of not seeing things clearly or forgetting that you get frustrated and lost in your meditation. If you put that *anattā saññā* right in the beginning, as a perspective from where to start, then how can you fail in you meditation? There can be no failure at all. because there’s no one to fail. So how can you even call it failure, or good meditation, or bad

meditation? All this doing and measuring and controlling is cut off by that perspective.

When you train yourself to look at your meditation, your walking meditation, your sleeping, eating, or whatever else you do, from that perspective, then you keep the perspective of nobody in here throughout the day, *anattā saññā*. When eating, it's just food going into the body, that's all. There's nobody tasting this food, just tastables tasted by the tongue: the two coming together and making contact. The contact generates a feeling, that's all it is. Keep those perspectives. Cold is just body feeling: when that body comes into contact with cold air *vedanā* arises as a result. It's just the process, that's all. Big deal! Pain in the body is just body consciousness and body object coming together. There is contact and because of that there is feeling; that's all it is. Look at life like that. Look at each moment like that.

Remember *anattā saññā*. It makes life so much easier when there is no one in here. And if you do that – *anattā, anattā, anattā*; no self, no controller, no doer, no knower, nothing in there, just emptiness, just a process – imagine what would happen if you then sit down to watch the breath: it would be so easy to do, because there's no one doing it. Just the same, too often we get involved in something and we just mess it up. If we let the tree grow by itself, it grows very well. But if we start to mess around with it, pulling it this way, bending it that way, making it like this or that, we usually mess up. When we get involved with nature we usually mess it up. Certainly that's the case with meditation.

When we get involved in trying to do a little bit of controlling, it doesn't go well. If you try to watch the breath with control, the breath is never smooth. When you just leave the breath alone, when you are busy doing something else, then you don't control it at all and the breath is so smooth and natural. For many people, when they first start breath meditation, they start by watching the breath and they are controlling it at the same time. That's why it gets uncomfortable. They can't see themselves controlling. People have asked me, "When I watch the breath, it's so hard and painful. When I don't watch the breath, it's nice and peaceful. What's going on?" I tell them that when they are watching the breath, they are controlling it, because

they've got into that habit. Whatever we watch, we get involved with; we control it as if it was ours. Whatever we feel is ours, whatever we sense is ours, we feel we have to do something about it, we have to control it.

When you think, 'This is not mine, nothing to do with me'; it is the same as the simile that the Buddha gave about the grass, sticks, and leaves in the Jeta Grove (SN 35, 101). Somebody collects them and burns them. Who cares? Because they do not belong to you, you don't care. It is the same with your meditation. Does your meditation belong to you? Does your mind belong to you? Does your *vedanā*, will or consciousness belong to you? Can't you look at your mind and the body like the grass and leaves outside? They don't belong to you. They are not yours.

So, why are you striving so hard in this meditation? What are you doing? Who is doing it and why? When you actually look at it from the perspective of Dhamma, from *anattā saññā*, you can understand what your mistake is. You are controlling things. You are building up through striving and controlling this huge ego of a 'self'. You become the meditator. You become the one who strives. You become the person who's putting all this effort into your meditation. When you do that, you find you get frustrated because you can see that *anicca* is so uncertain. Whatever you want it to be, it becomes something else, something different. You just can't do it. You can't succeed in your meditation. You try for years and sometimes you get it right, but often you get it wrong. So, what are you doing wrong? You are 'doing', that's what's wrong. Leave it alone, don't do anything – disengage, detach, renounce!

Renunciation

The second factor of the Eightfold Path is Right Intention, *sammā saṅkappa*. Right intention is *nekkhamma saṅkappa*, the intention to renounce. What a beautiful word that is, 'to renounce'. Some of you are monks, have you renounced yet? Many people say they are 'renunciants', but in fact they have only renounced some things. Maybe you have renounced some things. Maybe you have renounced TV and sex? There are many other things you could yet renounce. Renounce your body. Renounce your mind. Renounce your meditation. So, just let go!

Whatever the mind wants to do, that's fine, because it doesn't belong to me. "Mind, you are just like the twigs, grass, leaves, and sticks of the Jeta Grove, you don't belong to me. You are nothing to do with me. You are not mine, because the Buddha said there is nothing that is mine, there is nothing that belongs to me."

If we can abandon and let go of all this, it doesn't mean we just abandon meditation and sleep all day. We abandon sleep as well. We abandon everything. The abandonment becomes the movement of the mind that frustrates Māra the controller. *Nekkhamma* (giving up the world) is the metal stake through the heart of Māra the demon. It kills Māra, because Māra can't stand renunciation. We give up, renounce, abandon. With that renunciation in our meditation, we sit there and just renounce everything: "this isn't mine, nothing to do with me". That renunciation, non-doing, non-controlling, takes away the movement of mind. The reason why the mind is restless and tired, the underlying cause of the hindrances, is seen and abandoned. The hindrances just unravel. Sensory desires, where can they come from? Ill-will is gone. Restlessness is just doing things. Worry is about the past. Who cares about the past? That's all gone. Sloth and torpor just fades away because the cause of sloth and torpor is 'doing'.

We are tired, we think a lot. We do the work in the office or the work of being an abbot. The more we do, the more tired the mind becomes. That is the nature of the mind. When we don't do anything, the mind gets so bright. When I am on retreat there are days when I just sit there doing nothing in the mornings and afternoons. All the energy starts to build up and I can feel it. These energies build up because I am just sitting there doing nothing. I just watch. All the energy of my life is just going into 'knowing'.

Be very careful not to allow any of that energy to go into controlling or doing anything. As an abbot, I have to do that controlling for the rest of the day, but there is a time for non-doing, non-controlling. There is a time when I meditate; then I am not an abbot, I am not in-charge. That is the time when I completely let go and abandon everything.

As the Buddha said in the Indriya Saṃyutta (SN 48), if we make this abandoning the main thing, make it our *ārammaṇa*, our mind state, we attain *samādhi*, we attain one-pointedness of mind. That's what the Buddha said, and the Buddha didn't say things that don't work. We make abandoning our practice by abandoning the thought that I am in control of this meditation. We abandon all of this doing business, this measuring, this judging good and bad. "I am going to abandon all of that", and then, the Buddha says, we get *samādhi*, we get one-pointedness of mind.

Try it! It works, if you've got the guts to go against Māra. The trouble is we still want to control a little bit. We still want to be the one who is doing this. We want to be the 'me' who gets the *jhānas*. We can't do that, but when we disappear, get out of the way, give up all hope, all wanting, then real letting go, real renunciation, real *nekkhamma*, just happens. That's what is needed. We can use *anattā saññā* to help us push that letting go button. We fill our minds with non-self.

The Buddha's teaching in the Anattalakkhana Sutta (SN 22.59) clearly says that the five *khandhas* are not mine. So, what is this thing we are trying to control? We are trying to control things that just do not belong to us. Get out of the way! No wonder you get frustrated. No wonder suffering comes. We are trying to control things that aren't ours. What do we expect but suffering. We are doing things that are absolutely stupid. This delusion is so intense with many of us. You keep on meditating and then you complain to me that it's not working, and you are fed up. How stupid can you be? How can there be suffering for us if we disappear and there's no one left? It's not suffering anymore; it's just cause and effect, the world coming and going, the five *khandhas* going around. Now they're happy, now they're sad. There's no mental suffering left when we let go and disengage. We disengage from *saṃsāra*, we disengage from the world. The five *khandhas* are just the world of the five *khandhas*, nothing to do with us; they're *khandhas* that's all. It's just like the weather – storms, rain, wind, and then sunlight and peace again. It's cold and then it's hot again. You can't control these things. So why don't you shut up and just stop arguing with nature? Stop arguing with the nature of your body, the nature of your mind. You know what I mean by arguing? It's the argument, which keeps on saying, "Come on, get in there, do some meditation". "That's not good enough." "That was a good

one.” “Come on, the next one will be a good one.” “Come on, meditate longer.” “Don’t sleep so much.” “Do it this way”.” You are arguing with nature, with your non-self. Forget all of that. Abandon! Let go! Sit there and do nothing and you’ll find that the mind does start to become still.

Abandoning the Hindrances

The five hindrances are the cause for the lack of *samādhi*. The lack of *samādhi* is not caused by lack of effort. For most people in the West, we make too much effort. We just don’t know how to let go, how to relax. Lack of *samādhi* is caused by the hindrances being too active. So, put your focus on what those hindrances are, how they are caused, where they come from and why. The hindrances are the fuel for *avijjā*, delusion. The Buddha said that delusion does not have a cause, but is fuelled by the hindrances. The more the hindrances are present, the more delusion is solidified, strengthened, and sustained. So abandon those hindrances by abandoning the underlying cause of the hindrances, which is ‘doing’ and controlling coming from the sense of a self, and you will find that delusion vanishes. Like the mist in the morning, it just dissipates and clears. That happens when you start abandoning hindrances through the reflections of *anicca*, *anattā*, and even *dukkha* (impermanence, non-self, and unsatisfactoriness). Keep those clearly in your mind and the hindrances won’t have much of a chance.

When the hindrances aren’t present, there is nothing between the mind and the *jhānas*. You know that! That’s what the *suttas* and the Kruba Ajahns say; you have heard that from me many times. Many of you know from your own experience that when the hindrances go, you get into deep meditation, even *jhānas*. So the hindrances are the problem. It’s not you, your ability or lack of ability. It’s not that you aren’t trying hard enough, or meditating hard enough. Look at which hindrances are present; focus on them, understand them, get to know them. They are the enemy. They are the ones that need to be overcome, so understand how to overcome them. Craving and ill-will arise from doing things all the time. Present moment awareness and silence will undermine craving and ill-will. When we get into present moment awareness and silence, craving and ill will are almost dead. Our restlessness is almost gone as well. The sleepiness that many of you complain about, don’t worry about it. Don’t worry

about anything because worrying is just more controlling. That's old *kamma*: you've done too much and the mind is not bright. Mindfulness is weak simply because we have not been putting energy into the right place. So just allow it to be. Be with sloth and torpor. If we really leave it alone, it just vanishes. It's a marvellous experience to have that happening. Just be patient, don't do anything. Be kind and be compassionate. Don't control, let go.

The Buddha said in the Anattalakkhana Sutta, "If the mind with sloth and torpor were mine, then I could tell it not to be this way. But because the mind isn't my 'self', I can't control this mind". So leave it alone; allow it to be and don't get involved. Don't go making more delusion. After a short while, it's fascinating to see sloth and torpor dissipate like the mist in the early morning or like darkness when the sun comes out. You don't have to wish the darkness away in the morning. You know if you just wait, soon due to cause and effect and the laws of nature, the sun will come up. The sun comes up and you start to see clearly without your flashlight. This is actually what happens with the vanishing of sloth and torpor. When this happens you get this beautiful, peaceful strength of mindfulness – mindfulness which doesn't move; it's just there, just watching. It doesn't move because there's no illusory self pushing it backwards and forwards. This house-builder – the controller, the doer, the illusion of a self which thinks, "I am in control, I am in charge of this whole process of meditation" – is completely taken away.

Just be still, and wait in that stillness. You are not asking for anything, you are not expecting anything. You don't want anything, because all expecting and wanting is the movement of the mind that takes you away from stillness. You are into peace, into stillness. If you get peace and stillness, that's good enough. You just sit there watching, and the peace will consolidate. The stillness becomes even more frozen. Just watch as all these stages of meditation happen. The stages of meditation are not something that we make happen. They are just sign posts on a journey. It's just like when I'm sitting in the van going into town. I don't do the driving; I just watch. Now we go through Serpentine, now through Byford, now through Armadale, now through Perth and into Nollamara. They're just stages on the journey. We watch, literally doing nothing, being still one hundred per cent, being peaceful. We see present moment awareness. Now there's silence. We didn't do that; the silence came by

itself. And then the breath comes up. We didn't do that; the breath just came. It is just the territory we are passing through. Now the breath is beautiful. It's OK. That's neat, but we don't do anything. Now the *nimmitta* comes up. We never looked for it, we never asked it to come; or told it to go away; it just happens naturally. The *nimmitta* is just so brilliant and beautiful. Then we are in *jhānas* and we keep on going. All these things just happen naturally, all by themselves. We didn't do a thing. All we did was to maintain our peace. We kept the stillness, and so the hindrances never had a chance. Māra the controller is completely confounded. We went in a different direction, the direction of a Buddha, not the direction of the world. We went according to *anattā*. There's no one in here, so how could we do anything? We didn't follow delusion; we followed wisdom, the path of the saints. That's how we meditate. That's how we get this beautiful, powerful mindfulness.

Once we get into this way of meditation it is so easy. It's an easy thing to do with so much joy. There's no pride because there's no self. There's no saying, "I am a great meditator" or "I am a terrible meditator". There's no frustration when sometimes the meditation doesn't work; it's just cause and effect, it's not our meditation. You're content, peaceful, and still. You keep doing the work which is no work. Peacefulness and stillness, these things happen by themselves. It's just like the worker who goes to work everyday and on Friday receives his pay package. He doesn't expect the pay package every day. Nature is that way. You can't get paid every moment. But you can be at peace with every moment; you can be still and content with every moment. You can renounce doing and controlling every moment; and confound Māra every moment. You just say 'no' to the controller, 'no' to Māra, and let go, do nothing. No one is in here. There's nothing! That way, we can really get into this meditation. We find that this is so easy. Anytime you get that powerful meditation, it blows your mind away.

Stepping Over the Stream

Follow that path. Sit in your hut. You may have been meditating for years and still you haven't seen it, and then suddenly you let go and my goodness, you bliss out. That is how it is. It's so easy! This is how you get into the *jhānas* like the great monks and nuns of old, and the great monks of today. Delusion is the problem; not

seeing clearly. Sometimes people get insight and become full *Arahants* in just one moment. They get that insight after the *jhāna*, that's the point. Even for an *Anāgāmi*, *jhānas* are so easy. Why are *jhānas* so easy for an *Anāgāmi*, let alone for an *Arahant*? *Jhānas* are easy for them because they see 'non-self'. They are not controllers anymore. Ill-will and the *rāja* of sensory desire just disappear. They see that there's no one in there – no self. That's what makes the meditation easy.

Remember that this meditation of non-self has two important things that go together: concentration (*samādhi*) and insight (*vipassanā*), they are not separate things. Ajahn Chah always said that *vipassanā* and *samatha* (calm) are two sides of the same coin. When we have insight and we use that insight, that knowledge and understanding of the *suttas*, we recognize *anattā*, non-self. If there is nobody in charge, then who is meditating? If there is someone meditating then the hindrances are just around the corner. You are undermining it already; you are feeding those hindrances. The hindrances in turn are feeding the delusion and it keeps on going. One day you will give 'giving up' a try by not doing anything, just sitting there with no expectations and no measuring.

People sometimes come to me and say they tried that and it didn't work. What do you mean it didn't work? It didn't work because you want it to work. Why do you want anything? Give up all wanting. Give up all these expectations and this measuring, and then it happens. When you don't want something, then it comes. So, give it up, abandon, renounce. That's what the Buddha said we should do. You've heard that before and you know it's true. Stop messing around by trying hard. Go back to your huts, get inspired, and just sit there, and remember that there's no one in here who is going to do anything. You just stop.

The story of the little novice comes to mind. Ajahn Chah was giving such a long talk and the little novice thought, 'When is Ajahn Chah going to stop?' 'The Rains Retreat has been going on for four weeks, when is this Rains Retreat going to end?' 'When am I going to get *nimmittas*?' Stop for goodness sake – stop wanting. That novice stopped. He was just a little novice who had not been meditating for any longer than some of you. The little novice just stopped and went into a *jhāna*. He

came out afterwards as probably the happiest novice in all of Ubon. He was blissed out. He had pressed the ‘letting go button’. If he had been smart, he would have understood lots about *anattā*. He would also have understood how to ‘bliss out’, how *jhānas* happen, and how to get into them.

All of you who are still driving your meditation, steering it this way and that way with your foot still on the pedal, let it go. Our new monastery car has cruise control you press a button and take your foot off the pedal; this is like *jhāna* meditation. It’s all cruise control. Press the ‘letting go button’ and take your feet off the pedals. Then your car just goes smoothly along the freeway to *Nibbāna*. That’s what happens when you let go.

So, this is what we’re supposed to be doing. Do it! Stop! We find that the mind goes into *samādhi* by itself; it goes in and in, because peace starts to build up. That peace is happiness and happiness is power. We get into this ‘letting go’ business. But be careful, because sometimes if you are not used to abandoning, you can get into controlling again. Some people get *nimmittas* and they think, “Wow”. Then they try to make it this way and that way, and they wonder if it is the right or wrong *nimmitta*. Stop that! Just be at peace whatever happens. You can get the most stupid, ridiculous *nimmitta*, but just be at peace. Who cares? It’s just nature, that’s all. Things arising, things passing away, they are nothing to do with you. So it’s just the same as the grass and leaves in the Jeta Grove, they are not me, not mine. Here we are just sitting: stupid and beautiful things happen in our mind, but they are nothing to do with us. Beautiful *nimmittas* arise, but they’re not ours. Leave them alone, and then the *nimmitta* will stay with you. If you try to own them, grab them, possess them, they disappear. Leave them alone and they just develop, grow, and blossom. You will go into this wonderful place of non-self, where the ‘doer’ has gone and the potential to do has also vanished.

The potential to do has completely vanished. That is a signpost of the *jhānas*, especially the second *jhāna*. Oh, what bliss! Nothing to do and you can’t do anything. Imagine the peace and stillness – nothing moves. The energies just keep building up, just bliss upon bliss upon bliss. The energy of stillness is now so strong.

There is just so much happiness. That happiness is the power of the mind. We come out of those power stages and we still maintain lots of power. Want to remember past lives? It's easy. Psychic powers, this is where they come from. Use that super-power mindfulness. You can remember what has gone on in your *jhāna* and see the beautiful, profound teachings of the Buddha, how true they all are. We see how it is that the Buddha is such a fantastic teacher. He taught and taught, banging on people's heads all the time, but still people often don't see it. There it is, in black and white, so obvious and clear. And what do people do? "Right, I am going to do Enlightenment now. Right, I am going to strive now. I am going to struggle. I am going to get this. I am going to do... I, I, I". Just abandon all of that silly stuff if you want to walk in the footsteps of the Buddha. Otherwise you can be here for 30, 40, 50, 60 years and still be going in the wrong direction.

It's just a path to Enlightenment. The Buddha's simile is crossing from this shore to the other shore. This shore to the other shore is narrower than the stream which runs through our monastery. You can step over from one side to the other side, it's so narrow. The trouble is people keep going up and down the banks in the same old direction. Going up is wanting and craving. Going down is wanting to get rid of things, ill-will. Now wanting now wanting to get rid of; desire and aversion; going up and down in the same way. Not seeing the other way of going at right angles to the way you are used to go. It's a way of acting which you have never tried before – going at right angles to everything you have been conditioned to or done in the past. It's doing something that is really original: stopping. And then we find that we can just step over the stream and we get into *jhānas* so quickly. If you understand what that step is, you understand how to let go and how to get *Nibbāna*. Do that plenty of times and you know that the way across the stream is by abandoning, letting go, renouncing, non-self, freedom, liberation.

Conclusion

So, there it is for you. Don't mess around. Don't do anything. See if you can be the courageous ones, the ones who do things that no other people do. Don't go in the way of the ordinary person. Go the way of the *Ariyan* – the way of those who have abandoned their 'self', the empty ones, those who are free.