

MIND DEVELOPMENT

(Citta Bhavana)

Phra Ajahn Plien Panyapatipo

Foreword

This book has been completed because of those faithful lay people who were impressed by this short and easy to understand Dhamma talk on bringing their mind to peace and concentration. They have donated the money as a Dhamma offering (*Dana*) to print this book for distribution, so now those interested in the Dhamma can study, practice, and develop their own minds.

I also hope this book will be useful to those interested in the Dhamma in general.

Lastly, I wish that all who helped by donating money for the printing of this book will be prosperous, and have a long life, good complexion, happiness, and strength. I wish that you will achieve the “*Dhamma* eyes” that see through to the insight and knowledge that lead you and others to peace and happiness.

Phra Ajahn Plien Panyapatipo

Mind development (*Citta Bhavana*)

Let us pay attention. Developing the mind is important. We are seeking virtue and wholesomeness, and trying to accumulate Perfection (*Parami*) within ourselves. We start by offering Dana. Then, keeping the Precepts (*Sila*) is another kind of meritorious action. Then, developing peace in the mind is another good thing to do. Finally, use mindfulness (*Sati*) and wisdom (*Panna*) to get rid of defilement (*Kilesa*), for this is the greatest virtue. These are the things we are looking for.

When we are developing loving kindness meditation, you have to let go of the past and the future, because the past has already gone and the future has not yet come. Consider only the present moment. Look into the mind of the present Dhamma¹. There is a saying “*Paccuppanna Dhammo*” which means “consider all Dhamma at the present moment”.

When you left home with the intention of coming here to practice, that action is called renunciation (*Nekkhamma*). You come to practice achieving independence of sensual desire and pleasure, to leave behind all worry and turmoil.

¹ *Dhamma* – The teaching of the Buddha; nature; truth and ultimate reality; virtue and right behavior; justice

While we sit here practicing, we think that we are sitting alone, even though others are sitting next to us. Do not worry about others, e.g. friends, parents, children, grandchildren. When we do not think of them, we seem to be alone. When we are alone, we can look into our minds with mindfulness (*Sati*) and clear comprehension (*Sampajanna*). Know that the mind is thinking, and know what the mind is thinking at each moment. Do you keep your mind with you, or let it go somewhere else?

Now we have to set up the subject of meditation (*Kammattana*). It can be Mindfulness on breathing (*Anapanasati Kammattana*). Breathe in “Bud-”, breathe out “-dho”. If we do not have a subject of meditation to hold our mind, our mind will wander everywhere. It will go wherever the stream of defilement (*Kilesa*) takes it. For this reason, the Buddha teaches us to have a subject of meditation to tie the mind to. So the mind has a place to rest.

Some people’s minds are very difficult to train. But it is not beyond one’s ability to learn, just do not become discouraged. To develop the mind, you have to be serious and earnest to achieve a good result. If you are too casual, you won’t get a real result. Sacrifice, patience, and not worrying about anything are the important things when practicing to gain peace.

Now let us bring the mind back to the subject of meditation (*Dhamma Kammatthana*). Tie the mind to the in-breath and out-breath. Breathe in with “Bud-“, and breathe out with “-dho”. Most teachers teach us this way. Even the Buddha, when he started practicing, used the in-breath and out-breath method. And what are we supposed to keep watching? We have to watch our mind and watch our breath, the breathing-in and the breathing-out. Breathe smoothly and comfortably. Sit cross-legged with the right leg on top of the left leg, place the right hand on top of the left hand on the lap, and make your back straight. Make a strong intent to be mindful. Close your eyes. Start to contemplate by bringing your mind to focus on the meditation subject, which is the breathing in and the breathing out. Do not let the mind go anywhere.

If the mind goes outside, we should bring it back to the breathing-in and breathing-out. Notice our nostrils, where they feel the wind during breathing. Do this continuously, but do not force the mind too much or it will become agitated and anxious. Those who are wise in doing meditation tend to use mindfulness and awareness (*Sati-Sampajanna*) to follow the mind; when the mind wanders, it knows and immediately comes back to the subject of meditation. Continue doing this until the mind is tame and calm, when it will stay only with the meditation subject, which

is the in-breath and out-breath. Continue to pay attention to the breath. Take note; be aware whether the breathing in is long or whether the breathing out is long. Take note; be aware whether the breathing in is short or whether the breathing out is short. Pay attention to the mind to see if it is still focused on the breath and nowhere else. Even if you do not feel the touch of the wind – the breath – at the nostrils, it is there because you are still breathing. We should focus our minds on the wind. Breathe comfortable, for we want to be comfortable, and like to make ourselves comfortable.

Sometimes you may feel aches and pains here and there. Pay no attention to them, but continue to keep your mind focused on the meditation subject. The leg's pain is not a kind of disease, nor is the pain in the back or the waist. Similarly, feeling hot or cold is not a dangerous disease. So don't worry about it, it is just a feeling (*Vedana*). Leave them alone. If we are brave, our practicing will go easily.

Learn from our great master. They are very old, and have been sitting meditation since their ordination until now, and they still have two legs, a waist, etc. Most of them are very healthy, and seldom fall ill. They are still walking strongly at 80-90 years old. They have been practicing regularly. So, think of them as an example. If they can do it, why can't we? We must not feel discouraged in our practice.

When we think of those great masters, we feel cheerful and joyous. They can do well. How about us? Nothing ever happens to hurt them. So we must try and meditate seriously, not be afraid, be patient, fight on, so that our minds will be calm and peaceful with concentration (*Samadhi*).

During our practice, we should focus our mind on a subject of meditation (*Dhamma Kammatthana*). When we let go of our worries we gain seclusion of the body (*Kayavivek*) and detachment from thought (*Cittavivek*). It is one of our duties to practice. When the mind (*Citta*) worries, the cause is sensual inclinations or attractions to sensual objects (*Kamachanda Nivarana*). It is a hard one to let go. The Buddha's teaching is to contemplate a corpse at different stages of decay (*Asubha Kammatthana*) as a subject of meditation. Sensual pleasure (*Kama*) is just simple illusion. Don't get involved with it. If we simply think of it in that way, we can let go easily. When the ill-will hindrance (*Byapada Nivarana*) arises, it is the feeling of jealousy and envy towards other people. When we have these feelings, we should overcome them by making an intention to spread our loving kindness to them instead of hatred or revenge. Every one of us would like to live happily, and when we think like this, the ill-will (*Byapada Nivarana*) will disappear. If another hindrance arises, such as sloth and torpor (*Thinamiddha Nivarana*), you will feel sleepy, drowsy, and

lethargic. To overcome this, we should think about how our teachers rarely feel drowsy or sleepy, or yawn like we do. We should not sleep too long, but should wake and refresh the mind to be cheerful. Think of our great teachers, the Buddha, *Dhamma*, and *Sangha*, so that our mind becomes joyful, happy, and cheerful. The hindrance (*Nivarana Dhamma*) will disappear. Another hindrance is mental restlessness and anxiety (*Uddhacca-Kukkucca Nivarana*). This is the hindrance experienced by a person whose mind does not stay with the subject of meditation. The Buddha teaches us how to overcome this by using mindfulness of death meditation on death (*Maranasati Kammatthana*), which will prevent restlessness and anxiety of the mind. Another kind of hindrance is uncertainty, indecision, and lack of conviction (*Vicikiccha Nivarana*). When this hindrance occupies someone's mind, the mind will be in doubt and unsure in choosing which meditation subject (*Kammatthana*) one should use to suit one's temperament (*Carita*) during meditation. We should have no worries about this; let go of this hindrance by making a decision to choose one meditation subject, e.g. using in- and out breathing and watching the breath only. Stop worrying about other meditation subjects.

The Buddha himself used mindfulness of breathing (*Anapanasati Kammatthana*). We use this method by watching the

breath with mindfulness and awareness (*Satisampajanna*). Breathe comfortably and let go of all hindrances (*Nivarana*). Keep your mind focused on your breathing. The breathing will become lighter and lighter, so check if your mind is still stays with the breath in and out for a while. When the mind is calm and peaceful we know that the meditation has reached Momentary Concentration (*Khanikasamadhi*). Then you can withdraw from the concentration meditation if you wish.

But you should continue to develop your meditation further by maintaining your mind to stay on the breathing-in and out. After a while, your breath will become very fine, sometimes it seems to disappear. Some think that when the breathing disappears, they will die, but don't be afraid, in fact the breathing is still there, but it is very fine and profound. Our body seems to be very light and feels very comfortable, and our mind is at peace. At this stage we can place our mind wherever we want to, such as at our tummy, or our chest, wherever you like or where you feel comfortable and happy. You can control your mind, which feels light and happy, and place it where you like and keep it there. Don't let it go anywhere else, keep it in place. The mind will be even more calm and peaceful. Now we pay attention only to the mind, and let go of the attention on breathing. Your body will feel lighter and lighter until it seems like it has disappeared. Now pleasure (*Piti*) arises,

e.g. some feel the body's hair stand on end, which is one kind of *Piti*, some feel deep and cool within one's heart, some feel tears coming out, some feel as if their body is light and floating in the air, and some feel as if their body expands and nearly fills the room. These are the various kinds of rapture (*Piti*). It does not affect everyone in the same way, and each practitioner may experience one or two kinds. If you continue meditating after *Piti* disappears, refined pleasure or happiness (*Sukha*) appears. We still keep our mind cool, calm, and concentrated at the same place. The mind will be empty and free, and so comfortable and happy. Lights may appear to some at this stage, they can be yellow light, red light, or green light. Pay no attention to them, not just yet, but concentrate on what kind of sense-object or object of consciousness (*Aramana*) has attached to the mind and created the light. Notice it.

If we understand and know this sense-object, we should continue to maintain the mind in its state and make it produce a brighter light. Sometimes a picture or clear image (*Nimitta*) will appear with the light. Most practitioners, when they experience light and images, tend to become excited. If they become excited, the light will disappear, because the mind is no longer concentrating on the subject of meditation (*Kammatthana*). But when we contemplate the mind again, calm the mind down, the light reappears.

When we wish to see the light, the light disappears, because the mind has withdrawn from the subject of meditation (*Kammattana*). So the light appears and disappears as we focus on or leave the meditation subject. When we see the light, we should not attach to it. Continue practice, have no wish to see the light, or heaven or hell, or a winning number in Lotto, etc. The more we wish to see, the more we cannot see, because our greed disturbs the mind and interferes with its calm and peace. The lights appear because your mind is concentrated, calm, and peaceful. They do not appear because of your thoughts. They occur only in some people, when they are in deep concentration.

Some people never see any light, even when their mind is calm and peaceful and in deep concentration. But they feel very light and comfortable, and pleasure (*Piti*) and happiness (*Sukha*) arise one after the other. There is no need to wish to see anything. Continue to hold on to your mind in calmness and peaceful concentration for a long time.

This stage is called Approaching Concentration (*Upacarasamadhi*); it arises after you have meditated for at least 20-30 minutes. Then one's concentration tends to decrease, and the mind wants to withdraw from concentration (*Samadhi*). So try to let your mind focus on the meditation subject to continue the cool, calm, and peaceful feelings. The longer the meditation the

better, because the cool, calm, and peaceful feelings will deepen. Keep the mind in deep concentration. Some may hear delicate voices, as if someone were talking about us in the distance, or like on the telephone. Let go of these sounds. We want to continue to concentrate on the meditation subject in peace and quiet. Place the mind where you feel comfortable.

Sometimes, during deep concentration, you may feel as if you were falling into a deep gorge. The whole body feels empty, as if there were no body, no face, no arms, and no legs. Some want to open their eyes to see if this is so. Do not open your eyes, but instead try and focus your mind and see what kind of sense-object (*Aramana*) makes the mind so peaceful and calm. It seems as if the whole body has disappeared, it feels so light, both body and mind. The mind is concentrated and still in the feeling of happiness and lightness (*Sukkha*). At this stage, the mind will be at peace for a long, long time. You feel no pain in the legs, back, or waist, you feel neither hot nor cold, nor hungry nor thirsty. You don't want anything, but wish to stay in that happy state forever. This stage of the mind is Full Concentration (*Appanasamadhi*). It is fixed, firm and strong concentration. When some noise arises, a person in fixed meditation will hear it only slightly, and let it go. They feel no annoyance, just know it and let it go, they are so peaceful. If everything is empty, one can see nothing, not even the

mind itself, only emptiness appears. One is still sitting there, but does not seem to realize anything, not know where the mind is. This is called the state of serene contemplation (*Appanajhana*) – concentration on emptiness.

In the state of serene contemplation, one knows where one's mind is. That's why, when you feel you have no body, you can sit for a long time, with all aches and pains gone, and hold on to happiness and peace. The mind is in the peace of concentration. These experiences are the result of practicing. Some can do it easily, with a good result, the mind becomes still and peaceful and one feels alone and happy. Sometimes pleasure (*Piti*) appears; sometimes happiness (*Sukha*) appears. When pleasure disappears, only happiness and emptiness remain, even the body seems to disappear. One feels very happy and comfortable. These are the various stages of meditation. Some people can't control their minds or achieve peace and concentration. They are full of agitation and anxiety, the mind goes here and there, never stays still with the meditation subject (*Dhamma Kammatthana*). These people have to use wisdom to develop concentration. Wisdom develops concentration by developing mindfulness and awareness (*Sati-Sampajanna*), by following and watching the mind, not letting it go here and there. Follow the mind wherever it goes. If it goes out, try and bring it back to the meditation subject. The

nature of the mind is to think, always to think, to think to no end. We have to follow the mind and what it thinks about. If the mind is thinking about the house, the car, a person that causes you agitation and anxiety, we have to chase the mind and try to stop it from thinking. We can do this by asking the mind; do these things that you think of or are attached to belong to you? This is the question our mindfulness and wisdom should ask the mind. If the mind answers yes, then those things and thoughts belong to you. Then, mindfulness and wisdom should ask the mind again: if they belong to you, can you take them with you when you die? Can you bring your house, car, or that person with you when you die? It is certain that when we die, we can take nothing with us. So the mind understands this answer, will settle and calm down easily, and we can gently pull it back to the meditation subject again.

If the mind wanders back to those subjects and thoughts, we must question the mind again and again. Do those things really belong to us? If it were so, we could take them with us when we die. The mind finally surrenders, and allows us to bring it back to the meditation subject for peace and happiness. We need to concentrate, not be involved with anyone, we need to be alone. This is the way for the mind to find peace from meditation development.

If the mind is still not at peace, we should not worry. Continue to use mindfulness and wisdom, and carry on repeatedly asking those questions. Finally, the mind will realize that after we die, we cannot take anything with us. Then it will stop wandering or thinking, and stay still and at peace. It will let go at the end. This is one of the methods that we use to train difficult minds, i.e. we keep on following the sense-object (*Aramana*) of the mind instead of worrying about the meditation subject (*Dhamma Kammatthana*).

Another method is just to be alone, sit alone, not bother with anyone else, or with one's work. We sit alone and try to train our mind. We call this working within to try and develop our mind for concentration and peace. When our mind is calm and peaceful, we know it. We feel the happiness clearly within. The happiness gained by wealth and material thing is not the same as the happiness when we are at peace (*Niramissa-Sukha*), the happiness that is independent of material things, i.e. spiritual happiness. We let go of all belongings, both human and material, all worries, and the mind is at peace. Both body and mind feel light and without burden. In meditation, the mind will be in deep concentration, full concentration or absorption (*Appanasamadhi*), concentration which is very firm and stable.

After you have practiced to this stage, you should understand and try to remember which sense-object (*Aramana*) the mind is

focused on at that moment. Try and remember carefully and firmly, and continue to carry that sense-object in peace. Then you can sit for a long, long time. It can be 1, 2, or 3 hours. You will feel so peaceful, and as happy as you can be. All you will see is emptiness and happiness.

When you reach this stage, you should try and practice more often. Start by trying to remember what we have done since the beginning. Remember how we sit, what we use for a meditation subject (*Kammatthana*), and what kind of sense-object (*Aramana*) arises. What type of hindrances (*Niavarana*) arises? Which method have we used to get rid of those hindrances? Try and remember every step. And when your mind stays in peace, what is the sense-object that the mind focuses on? How long does the mind stay in the state of Approaching Concentration (*Upacarasamadhi*)? What sense-object (*Aramana*) is the mind holding when the white light appears, when the mind is at peace, when some start to hear sounds or voices? Recall that when you let go of this *Aramana*, the mind will reach into deeper concentration or absorption (*Appanasamadhi*). The whole body feels empty, with no aches or pains anywhere, and you can sit for several hours in peace and happiness. We should recollect and try to remember how we were sitting and the step-by-step practice that enabled us to reach this happiness and lightness. Try and

remember it well, and practice every day and often. If one succeeds in practice at this level, one has reached the end of concentration development (*Samatha-Kammatthana*). We should be able to quickly gain concentration of the mind if we do it every day, and often. The more you do, the more experienced you become, and then you are called an Experienced Practitioner (*Vasi*). When you are experienced, you can meditate any time and do it easily, and it does not take long before you are at peace.

We should make an effort and try hard to meditate any day. You have to start at the beginning and remember what you did before when you succeed. Then the mind will easily reach peace. Do it often until you can easily reach the stage of deep meditation (*Appanasamadhi*). Then, if you wish, you can withdraw from concentration at any time you want, and not worry about anything. Then the next step to learn is called insight development (*Vipassana Kammatthana*). This is done by using wisdom, and is the method that helps us to let go of defilements and impurities (*Kilesa*).

After you have heard what I have taught you today, I'd like you to pay attention to your practice by using your own mindfulness and wisdom (*Sati-Panna*) to turn your mind to focus on the meditation subject (*Dhamma Kammatthana*) that you have chosen during practice. With patience, you will develop your mind

step by step, as I showed above. Later you can add wisdom to your practice and proceed to insight development (*Vipassana Kammatthana*). Today I only guide and teach you how to start to do meditation from the beginning until your mind is at peace and reaches established concentration (*Appanasamadhi*). From then, watch your mind with mindfulness and awareness (*Sati-Sampajanna*) until the bell rings; then you can withdraw from concentration.

The Method for Withdrawal from Concentration (Samadhi)

After you have been sitting peacefully in meditation, you have to decide to come out. Before you withdraw from meditation, you should turn your mind to breathing-in and –out. Do it gently at first, until you can feel the breathing, then start breathing normally. Then, gently remove your right hand and place it on your right knee, followed by the left hand on to the left knee. Then open your eyes and breathe normally.

This is the way to withdraw from concentration with mindfulness and awareness, step by step with happiness. Then you should stand up and sit comfortably somewhere while still at peace.

Even better, try and recollect what you did to gain this peace and make your mind happy forever.

I would like you to do what I said when you want to withdraw from concentration. After practicing concentration development step by step, most of us get up so quickly when we want to withdraw, and this means lack of mindfulness and awareness (*Sati-Sampajanna*). It is not the right way to do it. It is not the way an experienced practitioner does it. Your concentration will decline easily, and it will be hard to keep it strong and firm, as it should be. So please try and understand how to practice correctly.

Technique for Practicing Meditation

Walking Meditation

Just walk like we walk normally. It is the change from one practicing position to the other that involves meditation.

The path for a walking meditation should be about 15 or 20 metres long. But if there is not that much space available, a shorter distance is also all right. After you have walked to the end of the meditation path, stop and stand still for a little while, then gently turn around and walk back along the path to the end. Stop, stand

still, then turn around and walk back along the meditation path again. Repeat the walk back and forth.

When you first start a walking meditation, you should stand still and concentrate your mind. Raise your hands palm to palm like paying respect, and attend firmly to practice. Then start walking. You should walk for at least 15-20 minutes if you want to practice seriously, and if you are at a forest temple, you should walk for at least 30 minutes. The more you walk, the better. One hour is good. The walking gives our body a chance to change posture. We will do a sitting meditation well, after a walking meditation.

Advantages (*Anisamsa*) of Walking Meditation

1. We can walk a long distance.
2. Helps digestion.
3. Builds strong and healthy body.
4. Prevents various illnesses.
5. Makes the mind strong and helps it to stay at peace.

If we practice only sitting meditation, we may not be able to walk a long distance, and can easily fall sick, so using different positions in meditation is better. When we do walking meditation

our mind focuses on the breathing. Do not let it go anywhere else, just as when you are doing a sitting meditation.

During walking meditation, the mind does not stay at the same place. It sends a message to the leg to make the leg move, then it goes back to the breathing-in and breathing-out. But the mind must never be sent outside the body, even though it does not stay still, in contrast to sitting meditation, because the body is moving. Rapture or joy (*Piti*) arises during walking meditation, and when it comes, your pace of walking will be quicker, and you can walk for a long time. After walking for a while, the body will sometimes feel lighter and happier than before. This will help you to like walking for a long time.

Do the walking meditation until the time that you planned to stop and rest. Then, do not go and start a sitting meditation right away, have a rest first, and then start the sitting meditation. If you walked for 30 minutes, you should sit and meditate for an hour. Even that is too short, not enough. You should gradually try and increase the time of meditation more and more. Suppose we do walking meditation for an hour, but can then sit and meditate for only 40 minutes before feeling tired and sleepy, then this means you are not healthy, and there is something wrong with you.

If you do a walking meditation for two hours but then feel tired and cannot sit and meditate for very long, you should reduce the time of walking meditation.

Some great teachers can walk in meditation for four hours and then do a sitting meditation. For myself, when I strive to do a forceful practice, I walk in meditation for two hours. If we don't want to do that, we can do walking meditation for one or two hours, and do sitting meditation for three hours. Sometimes we should do walking meditation for one and a half hours and sitting meditation for four hours. Do whatever suits you.

If you choose to sit more and walk less, that is all right. But you should not walk less than 40 minutes. Activity and movement help to make the body healthy and strong, and promote good blood circulation. When we walk long distances we rarely fall sick, and have a good digestion. After a meal, you should rest for a while before starting a walking meditation, continue with a sitting meditation.

Now we are going to talk about standing meditation. We can contemplate while standing; it should be no problem, because you are not moving. But most people cannot stand for very long, because their legs start to feel painful. But standing can be used as a method for meditation. So, we can do standing meditation, walking meditation, sitting meditation, and lying meditation. But

in the lying position it is easy to fall asleep. It is the most comfortable position for the body. If your mind does not develop well, you should not do lying meditation, for you will fall asleep and make no progress in meditation practice.

So, there are three positions for meditation practice that we can use. We can practice meditation any time. Some people practice until quite late, around 11 pm, and then sleep, for it is time to rest. Before you go to bed, you should think of the Buddha, *Dhamma*, and *Sangha* (the Triple Gem), and then spread the loving kindness meditation. When you lie down to sleep, you can then carry on developing meditation similar to your sitting meditation. Do this until you fall asleep, and sleep with the meditation subject (*Dhamma Kammatthana*) you have chosen. Try it, you'll feel good when you wake up. If you wake up at 2 or 3am, bow down three times, pay respect to the Triple Gem, and start sitting meditation right away. At this time your body will feel light, because all food has been digested. Sitting in meditation between 2 and 3 am is a good time, and better than any time during the day or early at night. You can sit quite well and for a long time, and the mind will become peaceful more quickly. Sitting early in the morning is better than at any other time, because all food has been digested and your body feels very light and comfortable.

One who intends to do meditation should have no dinner in the evening. Even two meals a day is enough; have breakfast in the morning and lunch at 11 am. After that, drink only fruit juice or water if necessary. Going without an evening meal makes the body feel lighter, and you can practice well without feeling sleepy. If you intend to succeed in meditation practice, it is best to take five precepts. If you have an evening meal, you will have a hard time with your practice, for your body will feel full and heavy, and you'll easily fall asleep. You will find it difficult to progress in your meditation. So, one who intends to meditate well should do without the evening meal.

If you are sitting in meditation and feel sleepy, analyze what you have eaten during the day. If you eat glutinous rice with coconut milk and ripe mangoes, durian, fatty pork, pumpkin, potatoes, or other heavy foods, they tend to make you sleepy. You should try and avoid eating foods that make you feel heavy. If you cannot avoid them, eat less of them, to stop you becoming drowsy and sleepy. You need to be in a bright and cheerful mood to practice. We have to adapt ourselves to progress in and gain benefit from our practice.

The Buddha used to teach monks, nuns, novices, and other serious practitioners not to eat much during a meal. When you eat and feel nearly full, say, in another five bites you will feel full, you

should stop before that. Try and calculate, suppose you normally eat 20 mouthfuls and feel about full. Then instead, eat only 15-16 mouthfuls, stop, and drink water, you'll feel full and just right. If we eat until we feel full, or about right, then you have to drink water and you'll feel overfull and uncomfortable. Your body will feel heavy. If you eat glutinous rice and then feel sleepy, change to eating normal rice instead. Now you know what kind of food to eat to be a good practitioner.

Monks and serious practitioners generally realize how much they need to eat so that they will be comfortable. They usually know how many mouthfuls they need. If they are still hungry after eating, then they add just a few more bites. On the other hand if they feel heavy and sleepy after eating, they eat a few less mouthfuls at the next meal. They adjust the amount of food to suit them. Another important thing to remember, when people find their favorite food, they tend to eat a lot of it. You have to be very careful. If you can eat just the right amount of food, it will help your practice.

The beginning practitioner faces many difficulties, such as tiredness and sleepiness. Do not be discouraged. When you feel sleepy, I don't want you to drink coffee to wake yourself up. I prefer you to wake up thinking of the qualities of the Triple Gem, and of your own goodness that you have done. It is not good to

depend on coffee or medicine to keep awake. If one day you cannot find the medicine or coffee, you'll fall asleep again. The best way is to avoid them. If you normally drink coffee, it is all right to drink a little bit as usual. But do not drink a strong cup of coffee in order to help you sit in meditation for a long time without sleepiness. I don't want you to do that.

For the above reasons I gave up coffee and cocoa twenty years ago – no coffee, no cocoa. I tried cocoa once again in Wellington, New Zealand, and got a tummy ache. I have not drunk cocoa since then. So, you have to choose what to eat and drink. Whatever makes you feel sick or uncomfortable, or gives you a stomachache, you should avoid. Eat food that agrees with you, such as boiled vegetables with *nam prik* (a spicy pepper sauce), curry, etc. Lay people can find and select the food that agrees with them. Monks, however, can only choose from what lay people offer.

When you invite a monk to come for Dana (offering) at your house, don't tell him what to eat, or force him in any way, he'll choose the food that agrees with him. He also knows how much he should eat. Try not to tell him what to do.

The Buddha taught people to live happily. Those who love to eat tend to eat a lot, particularly their favorite food. They are greedy, and get sick easily. We must be careful about eating. We all like different tastes – some like oily food, some like sour tastes,

some like sweet things, some bitter, some hot, some salty, and some like plain food. Find the food that makes you feel good and comfortable, and eat that.

The Buddha also taught us about the most suitable place for practicing (Sappaya). Such a place:

1. Should be quiet.
2. Should be one where not many people pass by.
3. Should not be an unfinished building, where builders are still at work.
4. Should not be near water that people use for bathing and washing; there is no peace there, and try no to live nearby either.
5. Should not be the place where people look for poles or firewood; it is not private, and not suitable to live near.
6. Should not be a place surrounded by a flower garden, for people like to come and visit the flowers.
7. Should be a place with a suitable teacher (*Puggala Sappaya*) who can teach Dhamma.
8. Should not be on the west side of a village – but east, north, or south are OK.
9. If we have to be with a group of people, they must be of good moral conduct (*Sila*), good friends, and live in peace.

10. Must have access to suitable medicine (*Gilana Sappaya*).

So those are the suitable characteristics for a place to practice meditation. If you cannot find all ten requirements, it is all right to find at least five. If we can find a suitable place, we can concentrate our mind most easily, and this will help our practicing development. In a noisy place, the mind tends to go out and follow the noise. In a busy place with many people and no peace, the mind will go here and there all the time – we cannot see our mind at all, and it's hard to catch it and pull it back. So, we need a peaceful place for practicing.

If we can find only five or six of the ten qualities above, they should be:

1. A place where no building is going on.
2. A place where not many people pass by.
3. Not a place where people gather beside water.
4. Not a place where people look for poles or firewood.
5. A place, which has a teacher or master living there.
6. A place with enough food to eat, and medicine to cure disease.

The Buddha did not allow newly ordained monks to stay where there were many people, for they had no peace. He did not allow new monks to stay at a temple where building was going on,

neither in the dry nor rainy season. He did not allow new monks to stay at a temple where lots of flowers were growing, because people came to visit flower garden, and again there was no peace. At the riverside, people came to use the water and to play joyfully in the water, with much noise and no peace. Places with plenty of firewood or with people singing also had no peace. A temple located in the western part of the village is not suitable, for when people talk the noise travels to the temple. The temple that has no medicine is also not suitable, nor is one where the food that is offered is salty, sour, or strong-tasting, when we prefer sweet or plain food.

Some young monks are attached to defilement (*Kilesa*). They are young and strong, but when they are older, they will let go of defilement themselves. When they are beginning to practice, they have to look for something they like to support their defilement (*Kilesa*) and their temperament (*Carita*). If he likes sour tastes but we give him sweet things, he doesn't like it; we should give him sour food, or if he likes plain food, we should give him that. After he becomes happy and comfortable, and practice well. He'll start to let go of defilement himself.

Now, while sitting in meditation, look into your body. Some of you feel aches and pains in the legs or knees, and cannot sit long for the pain becomes unbearable. So, you can adjust your posture

to suit your needs, there is no need to sit cross-legged. Sit the way you feel most comfortable.

If your legs or knees become painful when you sit down, you can sit on a chair, for when we meditate, we are working with the mind, not with the body or the leg. We have to adjust how we sit to put our mind at peace. We can sit with one leg to one side, or sit on a chair. Use whatever allows you to sit longer without much pain and lets the mind quickly become peaceful. If we sit and feel sleepy, we can stand up and do a walking meditation. Don't force yourself to sit there and then fall asleep. After a walking meditation, you will feel refreshed. So come back and sit again.

When you travel, your body becomes tired and needs a rest. The mind may be alert, but the body tired and weak. So, we need to rest, and not force the body too much. To force oneself, e.g., to stay awake, do a walking meditation all night, or sit all day, is called Self-Mortification (*Attakilamathanuyoga*). To force oneself beyond one's limit brings suffering (*Dhkkho Anariyo*) to oneself, on top of the suffering of not being able to get rid of defilement, the great enemy. This is not the way wise people practice (*Anatthasanhito*). You waste the whole night and the next day also, because you are sleepy all day. It is not right. We should sleep some of the night and sometime during the day.

If we sleep all night and practice all day, or practice all night and sleep during the day, that is all right. You have to find time to rest. One who does walking meditation all day, and then does not sleep at night will soon fall sick, and their practice will not progress.

Another kind of self-mortification is to stop eating and starve yourself. But the body needs food, for without food we become sick, or worse, die. We have to know how much our body can bear. We use our body to help with our practice, so we have to keep it well enough to do that.

Self-Indulgence (*Kamasukhallikanuyoga*) delays your practice. People enjoy listening to music, going to see movies and plays. The mind is attached to sensual pleasure. They do not like sitting meditation or walking meditation, they enjoy life. They walk slowly. This is not the way wise people live – it wastes their time.

The right way to practice is called the Middle Path or Middle Way (*Majjhimapatipada*). It is not too tight and not too slow, but just about right. For example, suppose we want to go to a certain village. If we start running towards that village, and if we run in such a hurry that we fall down half way and hurt ourselves we that we cannot go any further, we will never get there. Another person may start to go to that village, but walks very slowly, or get sidetracked, so never gets there either. If we want to go to that

village, we have to walk at the right pace, so that we do not become too tired, and so that we reach the village as we intended. That is why Buddha taught us to walk at the middle way.

To practice diligently and use the Middle Way is to match your strength and ability. We are not born equally in both body size and strength. Big and heavy people can work harder, whereas small weak ones have to be content with working less, walking less, but can sit longer. Practice as befits your ability, but do not follow your defilement (*Kilesa*). Your *Kilesa* may tell you to go to sleep, but you must force yourself against that, and not do it. We have to convince ourselves to work a bit harder, e.g., if we used to sit for 20-30 minutes. We should not withdraw from meditation when we feel like it, but should force ourselves to do a bit more, to try harder.

To progress in your practice, you have to force yourself to do more than you used to do. Make a strong intention and set up a system. If you used to sit for 30 minutes, today you must sit for longer than 30 minutes. When lightness and happiness arise from longer practice, which is likely to happen by itself, then sitting for an hour won't feel long any more. When the mind is at peace, lightness will appear, so we should all try and practice diligently.

You may have heard about the Four Paths of Accomplishment (*Iddhipada*). They are the four roads to power, or, a basis for success. They are:

1. *Chanda* – will or aspiration to practice diligently for success.
2. *Viriya* – effort or exertion; try and practice diligently, both walking and sitting meditation.
3. *Citta* – thoughtfulness or active thought to practice or contemplate whenever there is time available.
4. *Vimamsa* – investigation or examination, i.e. after practicing, investigate whether your mind is peaceful and happy during meditation.

These four methods are the tools for success in whatever you want to do. You can apply them not only to meditation, but to achieve success in material things. They are important for success, particularly effort. They are the paths you have to use during your journey to reach your destination and success. You must practice all four, and not miss out even one, otherwise you will not succeed.

We can have will or aspiration (*Chanda*) to practice, but lack effort (*Viriya*), e.g., use only sitting or walking meditation but not both, our practice will not work. We may put in the effort, and have the will to practice, but if we do it only when we feel like it, and not often, then we lack thoughtfulness (*Citta*). And if we do

not review the results of our practice, we lack investigation (*Vimamsa*). So you should use all four paths to success during practice, and use them diligently. You don't have to set a time for practice; it can be in the morning, late morning, noontime, in the afternoon, or at night, for the teachings of the Buddha are timeless (*Akaliko*). Like fruit, the result can ripen at any time.

If we can make our mind peaceful, we will gain happiness now. If we are at peace at midnight, we will be happy at midnight. If we are at peace at 2 am, we will be happy at 2 am. If we are at peace during the day, we will be happy during the day. It is timeless (*Akaliko*). The Buddha allows us to practice at any time; he didn't tell us to do it only at night, that is not so.

We must continue to practice. When you wake up after a sleeping, you feel very refreshed, and then do a sitting meditation. Don't worry about others, still deeply asleep. We must do it with a strong, brave mind, but not be discouraged or follow those still sleeping. At this time we shall have a better chance to find rapture (*Piti*) and feel good. Those who still sleep are heedless, are not doing a good deed, whereas we are doing wholesomeness.

When I attend a large function or ceremony, sometimes 50 or 100 monks sleep together in a large hall. I generally do a lying meditation first, and then when the monks and novices are sleeping, I get up and sit and meditate until the sun rises. When I look

around they are all heedless, both young and old. Some of them make noises during their sleep. I feel at peace, very refreshed, wide-awake, and happy. I am not heedless, but very peaceful. I would like you to do the same, for it feels very good and happy. Diligent practice is a great thing to do. It is the way to get rid of suffering and aim for *Nibbana* – the extinction of all defilements and suffering.

If we cannot reach *Nibbana* just yet, at least we can accumulate our merit and perfection (*Parami*), and increase our mindfulness and wisdom (*Sati-Panna*). When we die at the end of this life, we will be born again next life, and we need to have more mindfulness and wisdom so we can cut down our defilement more and more. If we are born again and again, our mindfulness and wisdom will increase more quickly to reduce our defilement. Finally, we can be free of all defilement and suffering, as the noble ones – *Phra Ariya* – have done. They are free from all suffering. We have to continue to support and develop ourselves.

For these reasons, we must all strongly intend to practice diligently. If our mind needs to be admonished, admonish it; if it needs to be praised, praise it. A mind that needs to be admonished is a mind that finds it hard to be at peace, for it rushes here and there. The mind that we should praise is the mind that is already

calm and peaceful. We can carry on carefully and watch this mind to stay in meditation.

Now, about the mind that we should praise. At this moment, we are gathered together to practice meditation. Some are willing to do walking meditation, and whenever where is a suitable time, they hurry to look for a place where they can walk away from other people, like the shade under the trees of this temple. Some want to do sitting meditation, and suddenly sit down somewhere, and pay no attention to any noise. Willing minds like these find peace very easily when they practice. This is the mind we should praise and admire. When we feel like this, you have to hurry to practice. The mind will concentrate very quickly, and you should immediately follow it with mindfulness and awareness (*Sati-Sampajanna*). Watch your mind carefully, how it reaches calm and peace so quickly, and try and remember how you did that to benefit your subsequent practice.

Try to remember, during your practice, how you arrived at calm and peace so quickly, and try to use that when you next practice, to succeed in finding concentration and peace. We must be brave. Don't be afraid of becoming sick or dying. When a mosquito bites you, some fear they will be stricken with malaria, but don't be afraid; only one mosquito cannot carry us anywhere. When your leg aches, you are not getting beriberi or paralysis, and

when you feel pain at the waist, you are not getting kidney disease. Just change position, or practice walking meditation. Do not give up. If we have a problem, solve it and bravely continue practicing. Do not become discouraged. Strive forward.

Have you seen our great teachers who have been practicing a long time? They smile all day. Their old skin is wrinkled, but they have smiling faces. You are still young, but can hardly smile. If our teachers can do it, we can also. Without exception, men and women during practice find both suffering and happiness. We all have anger, love, hate, happiness and suffering, boredom and irritation. Everyone has these feelings at one time or another.

Our practice is the same. The mindfulness and awareness (*Sati-Sampajanna*) of some may act faster than that of others. If we know this, we have to build it up and improve it. Do not become discouraged and stop meditating. Have you ever watched people running a race? The one who loses the race later on goes to the gymnasium, improves their ability every morning, and tries to get fit so they can run faster. So must we do – we must train our mindfulness and awareness to be stronger and sharper, and practice diligently. If we aim to succeed, we shall succeed, and will be happy for sure.

Practicing meditation is not a heavy task. We don't have to carry any burden. We leave all bodily tasks behind.

Contemplation, or detachment from thought (*Cittavivek*) is the job of the mind. When the mind is calm and peaceful, detachment (*Upadhivivek*) will help the mind let go of defilement (*Kilesa*). And so we come to insight development (*Vipassana Kammatthana*) which is another way to let go of defilement, so that the mind becomes free and empty with happiness.
