

This gives one great insights into a world which we cannot know unless we have been there. These worlds, these *samādhi* states, are so strange compared to the external world that they are very difficult to describe. Those who have not been there find it very difficult to even understand that such states can exist.

One has to start from the very beginning. Having practised some sense-restraint there comes a time when one sits down on one's cushion or stool. Sitting very still, one starts training the mind. That initial training of the mind should begin with what the Buddha called the *iddhipādas*. The *iddhipādas* are the four roads or bases of success or power. The *iddhipādas* are what empowers you to actually succeed in this process of meditation. The *iddhipādas* are the arousing of a desire for the goal. The first *iddhipāda* is *chanda samādhi* – the maintaining of desire for the goal. This is a prerequisite for gaining any success in this meditation. If you do not set yourself a goal, then you will not set up the desire or movement of the mind to achieve that goal, and there will be no results. You do not get to a ‘one-pointed mind’ by allowing the mind to wander around. The wandering mind will never get close. It needs to be directed, to be pointed in the right direction, and that direction, that ‘pointedness’ of the mind, has to be done through a very clear resolution.

The most important thing about the *iddhipādas* is that this resolution has to be maintained throughout the course of the meditation. If you make a resolution and you maintain it, then you have got a hope for success. If you make that resolution and after one or two minutes you forget what you are supposed to be doing, what you are aiming for, then it is very easy to turn a corner and go backwards or go sideways and waste a lot of time.

These are very profound states and they need a degree of effort. Not immense effort, but constant effort. So we take our goal and keep it in mind. That generates energy to achieve the goal, it generates the application of the mind onto the goal, and the investigation of *dhammas* that go along with the desire for success. This investigation of the Dhamma is *vīmaṃsa samādhi*, the maintenance of investigating which demonstrates that the path of *samatha* and *vipassanā* is the same. In order to gain

success in meditation you have to also use wisdom. You have to use the desire, the energy, the application of the mind, and the wisdom faculty generated through investigation and inquiry. In order to gain success all of these factors need to be functioning, and they need to be maintained throughout the meditation.

When I define the word *samādhi* as the sustaining of these things, you can see that if you sustain the *iddhipādas* – these roads to success, these functions of the mind – then your meditation will be successful. If you do not maintain these functions of the mind, then the meditation does not succeed – one forgets.

Setting the Goals

It is very helpful at the beginning of the meditation to set a goal clearly in mind – it should be achievable but at the same time test you rather than just sitting down to meditate to see what happens. What happens is that you will probably see a wandering mind, especially if you have not had success in deep states of tranquillity before. Set a goal that becomes the means to generate the *iddhipādas*. Do not be afraid of desiring a goal.

We just chanted the Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta (SN 56.11), the first sermon of the Buddha. In that sermon, the Buddha talked about the noble truths. The second noble truth is the cause of suffering, *dukkha samudaya*. The cause is craving, which leads to rebirth, which seeks delight here and there, and which is associated with pleasure and lust. That craving is called *kāma taṇhā*: the craving for the delights of the world of the five senses, the craving for existence, and the craving for annihilation. These are the cravings that give rise to rebirth. In contrast the desire or aspiration for *jhāna* to the end of rebirth and is part of the *iddhipādas*, because it generates the Eightfold Path and the Seven Factors of Enlightenment.

When you have a chance to meditate, make clear what you want to gain from the meditation and keep that goal in mind. *The goal that I encourage is to gain the first jhāna*, because that will equip you with an experiential knowledge of some other-worldly-state. It will also train you to let go of those coarse defilements that we call the hindrances. The coarser defilements are the ones which keep us attached to the

rūpaloka, even though we are only abandoning them temporarily. We have to abandon things temporarily so that we can get used to being apart from them, and then eventually we can abandon them fully. It is just like a person who comes to a monastery temporarily, then goes back into the world again, then returns a second time and a third time, until he gets used to abandoning the world. He can then abandon it fully and permanently. But first it is important to abandon the world at least temporarily, to see what that is like. So, this is the goal that I encourage you to aim for during this Rains Retreat: to gain a *jhāna*, just the first *jhāna*. Having made first *jhāna* one's goal, one then develops the desire, the energy, the application of mind, and the investigation to gain that goal.

Application of the mind is called *citta samādhi*. The mind has many functions; one of these functions is *sati*, or mindfulness. You have to maintain mindfulness throughout the meditation period. The maintenance of mindfulness means that one maintains full knowledge of what one is doing. Always, as it were, checking up on oneself – not on a verbal level, but just by knowing what one is doing and fully experiencing the content of one's consciousness from moment to moment. Mindfulness also means remembering what one is *supposed to be doing* and the goal that one has assigned to the meditation. Mindfulness is maintaining the desire for that goal, the energy, the application of the mind, and the investigation.

If you do not keep a map with you on the journey you will get lost. You need to maintain that map in your mind. That is why it is helpful – in order to maintain the goal and the instructions – to very carefully make a resolution to yourself at the beginning of a meditation. It is well known, even to Western psychology, that if we carefully make a resolution to ourselves we will remember it. For example, by making a resolution three times with as much care and mindfulness as we can, we find that we recall it, and we remember it for a long time. The more effort we put into making that resolution the more impression it makes on our mind and the longer it stays in the mind. By making that firm resolution at the beginning, it shows that we are meticulous in the process of meditation. We will not waste time with the wandering mind.

The Experience of Breathing

So, having made a resolution, this is what you are aiming for: to keep the *iddhipādas* going, to maintain the desire for this state, to maintain the energy; the application of mind, and the investigation. At that point you can start looking at your meditation object. The easiest meditation object you will find to gain *jhāna* will be the breath. You can try other things, but I would encourage you to keep the main object of meditation the experience of breathing. That was the meditation that the Buddha used and that the forest monks in Thailand use. It is the most popular meditation object and there is a reason for that. It is the most convenient way into the *jhāna* states. Other ways may be used, but if you can't sustain your attention on the breathing it is very unlikely that you will be able to sustain your attention on other things. It is the ability of the mind to sustain attention that is the function of *samādhi* and it is that which leads one into *jhānas*. The meditation object is not as important as one's ability to hold it.

If one is going to use the breath, then there are a couple of tricks that are extremely useful. The first 'skilful means' is to make sure that you are watching the feeling of the breath, not the thought of the breath. There is a great difference between experience and commentary. If you get accustomed in your meditation to knowing and staying with the experience and discarding the commentary, then you will find that your meditation becomes much easier. You can discard the commentary throughout the day. Make a resolution that you will try to restrict the commentary you make on life and become more attentive to the bare experience of life. The making of that resolution will arouse the mindfulness necessary to stop the inner conversation. You do not listen to it; you are not interested in it. You are more interested in the actual experience.

Secondly, when you are watching the breath, have the full experience of the breath. Do not think about it. Do not note it; do not say anything about it; just know it. The simpler you can make the meditation object, the more powerful it will become. This is the reason why I encourage you to put your attention on the breath and not to concern yourself about where the experience or feeling is located in your body. If you are concerned about where the breath is located in the body, that concern brings up

too much body-awareness. With body-awareness disturbances of the body will arise, such as painful and pleasant feelings, heat and cold, itches, aches and pains, and other feelings. Whatever those feelings are, this body is a mess of painful and pleasant feelings. It is a cacophony of different sounds, never giving one any respite or peace. So the quicker one can take one's attention from the physical body, the better it is for success in meditation. Just know the experience of breath and do not concern yourself with where it might be in the physical body.

The way to use the experience of breath to take you into a *jhāna* state is as follows. The first task is to be able to sustain your attention fully on the breath. This is getting into *samādhi*, the sustained attention on the coarse object of breathing. This should not be difficult for anyone. If you cannot sustain your attention on the breath, which is a coarse object, then it is impossible to sustain the attention on anything finer, such as the *samādhi nimitta*, the sign of concentration, which arises later. It will be impossible for you to sustain your attention on any aspect of the mind – such as the *khandhas*, the aggregates associated with the mind – enough to gain true insight into their nature. These are very refined things and to be able to fully know them you have to hold them before the 'eyes' of your mind long enough to fully penetrate their depths.

We have to start by developing the ability of the mind to sustain its attention on the coarse breath. This is *a process that requires lots of endurance and persistence*, but here are some helpful hints. I have already mentioned one of them, that is, remembering what we are supposed to be doing, to make sure that mindfulness is very clear. Very often in our meditation the mind wanders off because it forgets what it is supposed to be doing. Imagine there was someone, as it were, just behind you watching every moment and as soon as you wandered off he reminded you, 'You have lost the breath'. You'd find that you would not wander off far. You would be training the mind to stay with the breath. No one else can do that for you, only the mindfulness that you establish through your resolution.

However, there is another important trick, a skilful means that can help you maintain the awareness of the breath. It comes through understanding why the mind wanders

off in the first place. Know the ways of this thing we call the mind. The mind seeks pleasure, happiness, and contentment. If the mind can't find contentment with the breath, it will try to find it elsewhere, it will wander off. Sometimes, no matter how strong our mindfulness is, we find that by trying to force the attention to remain with the breath it just creates tension. This happens because we are forcing the mind against its will to stay in a place where it does not want to be – with the breath. The way to overcome that problem and remain with the breath without needing to constantly apply enormous amounts of mindfulness and will power is to make it enjoyable.

Make the breath a pleasant abiding so that the mind finds happiness and satisfaction by remaining with the breath. We do that by developing the perception of a happy breath, a peaceful beautiful breath. That is not too difficult to do with training. If you can remind yourself, when meditating, to develop the perception of joy and happiness with the breath, you will find that the mind remains on the breath with very little difficulty. One way of doing that is to develop loving kindness towards the breath. Loving kindness towards an object sees only the joyful, beautiful, and positive aspects of that object. If you can develop that positive way of looking at the breath when it comes in and goes out, you will find that the mind will naturally just want to remain with it. It will not be so interested in those other sensory phenomena that try to steal your attention away.

Once one can develop a perception of the breath as a beautiful abiding, one finds it easier to achieve the goal of full awareness of the breath. This goal is achieved when the mindfulness remains continuously with the breath from the very beginning of an in-breath right to its end, noticing any gaps between the in and out-breaths. See the out-breath from its beginning to its end. And so on with the next in-breath, for breath after breath, after breath.

You may notice certain stages in this full awareness of the breath. The first stage is when you are actually holding it with a little bit of force. The reason you have to hold the breath with some sort of force, at this particular time is because the mind is yet to be settled on the breath. The indication of this is that you are aware of other things in the background. This shows you have awareness of other objects – sounds, feelings,

and thoughts – apart from the experience of the breath. It means that the mind is yet to be fully involved in the breath. The mind is still keeping these other things on the backburner, so to speak, ‘just in case’. It has not yet fully abandoned interest in those other objects.

One way of overcoming this problem is to maintain the attention on the breath by putting the breath in the centre of your mind’s ‘field of vision’. I am using ‘field of vision’ as a metaphor. The mind does not see, the mind experiences, but we have to use a metaphor from the world of sight to talk about the mind. The central object in your mind should always be the breath. If there are any disturbances – disturbances mean anything other than the experience of breath, including thoughts and orders from yourself – keep them on the edge of your awareness. Keep your mind fully focussed on the full experience of the breath, developing joy in this breath. This will keep it centred.

We find that when the mind wanders, it wanders from what was once our centre to one of these peripheral objects. Those peripheral objects, as it were, take over our mind, become the object of our attention, and the breath just disappears off the edge of the screen, like something falling off the edge of the table into the great void. We have lost the breath! However, if we keep the experience of the breath in the centre of our mental screen and maintain our attention there, then it is only a matter of time before all those peripheral objects themselves will fall off the screen and disappear. This is because the result of focussing our attention on one thing is for the mind to narrow down, for the field to get smaller and smaller, until it just sees what is in the centre. What was on the edge becomes completely out of vision and you are left with just the experience of the breath. This is the way one drops attention to the body, drops attention to sounds and such things as thoughts, which can roam around in the mind.

If one focuses just on the breath, on the experience of the breath, and maintains that long enough, everything else disappears, except for the experience of the breath. If everything else has disappeared and we only have the full experience of the breath from moment to moment maintained for a long time, then we know that we have the first level of what really can be called *samādhi*. We have an object and we have

maintained our attention on it. When we have attained to this stage our attention should be relatively effortless because we have already abandoned the disturbances. They have fallen off the screen. We have full attention on a coarse object, the breath. In the Ānāpānasati Sutta (MN 118) that stage is called *sabba-kāya-patisaṃvedī*, experiencing the whole body of the breath. The whole body of the breath means *just the breath*, fully on the breath. Fully means that there is no room for anything else. All other disturbances have no door into the mind at this stage.

It is not all that necessary to develop a perception of a ‘beautiful breath’ at this stage. It is so peaceful just watching the breath from its beginning to its end. The thoughts have been given up. The sounds have disappeared and the body is no longer disturbing you. Just gaining this much is a great release for the mind. The mind has let go of a lot at this stage, in fact it has let go of many of the hindrances. It has only a little bit of restlessness left to truly overcome.

Once we have got to this stage, we need to know it and maintain it. We need to start the fourth practice in the Ānāpānasati Sutta: the *passambhayaṃ kāya-saṅkhāraṃ*, the settling down and tranquillising of the object of meditation. Once we have *samādhi* on the object – *and not before* – we tranquillise or calm the object. If you find that you are unable to maintain your attention on such a fine object, make the object a bit coarser. I remember Ajahn Chah once teaching that if you lose attention on the breath and you cannot find the breath, just stop breathing for a few moments. The next breath will be a very coarse breath and you will find it easy to watch. You have been breathing but the breath became very refined, too refined for you to notice. So you have to stay with a coarser object and keep on that coarser object until you can really maintain full attention on it. Sometimes this is a bit restraining and restricting, because very often at this stage you are getting very close to very beautiful states of mind.

Sometimes you may want to rush forward into a *samādhi nimmitta*, or rush into a *jhāna*. But you will find that if you do not make this stage of full awareness of the breath solid, a *samādhi nimmitta*, once it arises, will very quickly disappear again; and if you do go into a *jhāna*, you will bounce straight out again. That is because the

faculty of the mind to sustain and hold an object for a long period of time – enough for the *jhāna* to fully develop and to maintain itself – has not been developed. We have to constantly train the mind at this stage, on the full awareness of the breath, until we have that ability. If we can maintain full awareness of the breath and all other objects disappear, then we can start to quieten the breath down. We allow the breath to settle, until the physical feeling of the breath starts to give way to its mental counterpart.

The Passive Mind

With experience we begin to see that there seems to be a physical part and a mental part to any experience. When that physical part disappears it reveals the mental part. We begin to experience how the mind ‘sees’ the breath, not how the body feels the breath. The function of body consciousness disappears. The last of the five senses in their very refined form disappear. The eye, the ear, smell, taste, and bodily feeling have all shut down, except for just the feeling of the breath. The five senses have, as it were, only one thread left, this experience of the breath. Now we are also shutting that one down, as we quieten the breath down.

This is the stage where the *samādhi nimmitta* starts to arise. Only if one has been able to maintain full attention on the breath for long periods of time, will one be able to handle the *samādhi nimmitta*. The ability to maintain attention on the breath for long periods of time needs the passive aspect of the mind. One can say that the mind has two functions. The mind has the passive function to receive information from the senses, what we call ‘the function to know’, and it also has the active function of interacting, what we might call ‘the function to do’. In this meditation, when one gets to these refined stages of mind, the main function has to be just to ‘know’. The ‘doing’ function has to be almost dead, with just the last little piece left, which is finally going to guide the mind into a *jhāna* where the function of ‘doing’ is completely suppressed and abandoned. In a *jhāna* one just ‘knows’, one cannot ‘do’. The function of the mind that is active has passed away and the function that ‘knows’, or receives, is the only thing left. So remember that the mind has to be passive in these states, it has to be like a passenger, not a driver. Once one can do this with a coarse breath one can manage to do this with a *samādhi nimmitta* when it arises.

I should mention that the so called *samādhi nimmitta* is not a light but that is the closest description the mind can give to this experience. *It is an object of mind consciousness*, not an object eye consciousness. However, because of its intensity it very often appears as a light. However it is perceived, it is something very pleasant and appealing. The mind has to be able to hold its attention on the *nimmitta* without moving and to do that it has to be very passive. Because any action of the mind to interfere, to control, to do; to order. to make, will disturb that tranquillity of the mind and the *samādhi nimmitta* will disappear. You will be back on the breath or you will go way back to the beginning of your meditation.

I talk like this to plant the instructions in your minds, and so hopefully at the right time, you will remember the instructions and act accordingly. You have to remember at this point that instead of trying to interfere with the *samādhi nimmitta*, you leave it alone and just hold it in your mind. You will then find that you have the ability to hold the *nimmitta*. It doesn't disappear and it doesn't start to change. It is just there from moment to moment to moment. At this point you don't need to put effort into trying to hold the *nimmitta*; the effort will come from the mind itself. The *samādhi nimmitta* will always be attractive to the mind. It's a peaceful experience, a joyful experience, sometimes very blissful, but the sort of bliss that is not going to disturb the mind. If you have *samādhi nimmittas* and they are disturbing the mind, it means that the mind does not know how to hold them when they are very strong. It cannot leave them alone. It is not that the *samādhi nimmitta* or the *pītisukha* disturbs you. It is you disturbing the *pītisukha*. It's just like Ajahn Chah's simile, 'Noise does not disturb you; you disturb the noise.' *Pītisukha* is never disturbing; you're the one who disturbs the *pītisukha*. If you leave it alone it remains because it is the mind doing this.

The Gateway into the Mind

Those of you who like to investigate a lot (*vīmaṃsa*), who have a very well developed faculty of wisdom, will notice at this point that there is a difference between the mind, *citta*, and the delusion of 'self'. All of the disturbances come from your delusion of 'self', that which thinks, controls, and manages. However, the nature of *citta* by itself

– and this is a natural phenomena – will be to go towards the *samādhi nimmitta*, hold on to it, and enter into a *jhāna*. It is you, in the sense of the mirage, which causes the problems. This is one of the reasons that the more one has let go of the sense of ‘self’, the easier it is to gain *jhānas*. For someone who is a *Sotāpanna*, a *Sakadāgāmī*, an *Anāgāmī* or an *Arahant*, the higher one's attainments, the easier *jhānas* become. For this very reason one should let go of this control that comes from *avijjā*, ignorance, especially from the *avijjā* that is the delusion of a ‘self’. The ‘self’ always wants to control, to speak, to act, or do and it is afraid to let go of very much, simply because that means letting go of itself. So, if you have a very strong wisdom faculty, investigate this point. Not by asking about it, but by observing, and asking yourself, “Why is it that the *samādhi nimmitta* is not stable?” If you can let go of the sense of ‘self’, just completely abandon all effort to control, to comment, and be completely passive, then the *citta* will do the work. The mind will go on to that *nimmitta* by itself.

The *samādhi nimmitta* is like a gateway into the mind. Because you have just come from the realm of the five senses, the *kāmaloka*, you interpret the *samādhi nimmitta* with the language of the five senses. That is why it appears to be a light. As you maintain your attention on the *samādhi nimmitta*, if you go further from the world of the five senses, the perception of the *samādhi nimmitta* changes. The perception of light disappears and you go to the heart that is just a very pleasant experience which we call *pītisukha*. You do not need to think, “What does *pītisukha* mean?” “What is *pīti*, what is *sukha*?” You cannot know the answer to those questions by looking at the *suttas*. The only way to know what *pītisukha* means, as it appears in the first *jhāna*, is to gain that first *jhāna* and know that at this stage it is the object of the mind. It is the object of mind consciousness, the one thing the mind is aware of. Because *pītisukha* is extremely pleasant, peaceful, and satisfying, the mind finds it very easy to find contentment in that one mental image; so the mind does the work at this stage.

You have to let go not only of *kāmaloka*, the world of the five senses, you have to let go also of that function of ‘self’ which tries to control. You cannot do any controlling in these *jhāna* states. It is wonderful to behold that experience which is beyond the control of Māra, that Māra which manifests as the delusion of ‘self’. Māra is

blindfolded in these states. The illusion of a ‘self’ wants to struggle to ‘be’; and by being, it does, acts, orders; controls, manipulates, and manages what it thinks is its home – that is existence. All that is abandoned. That is why, by gaining a first *jhāna*, you have let go of an enormous amount of the world of suffering, of existence. At this stage you will still be fully aware. The mind is still there, the mind still ‘knows’. But at this stage the knowing is a very profound knowing.

The Different Mind

These *jhānas* are very powerful experiences and they will certainly impress themselves on the mind enough for it to very clearly remember what those experiences were when, after some length of time, you emerge from the *jhāna*. The mind stays in *jhāna* because it finds full contentment. At this stage it is satisfied with the *pītisukha*, with the joy of this state. However, there is a defect in that first *jhāna*. You will not notice while in that *jhāna* what the defect is, but you’ll notice it after you emerge from the first *jhāna*. The defect is that the mind is not completely still. The mind is moving, towards and away from *pītisukha*, as if it were oscillating around *pītisukha*, because it has not yet fully entered into that state. It is still on the journey into *samādhi*. The mind has not fully settled down. It is still wobbling, echoing, and vibrating from what was happening before in the realm of the five senses. That wobbling of the mind is what we call *vitakka* and *vicāra*. It is not coming from you. It is the mind. *It does not manifest as what we call thinking.* The mind moving towards *pītisukha* is called *vitakka*. The mind holding on to *pītisukha* is what we call *vicāra*. After a while the mind moves away from *pītisukha* and then it has to move back on to it again. It is a very gentle and hardly perceptible movement, to and from *pītisukha*. The mind cannot go very far away; the *pītisukha* remains fully in the mind's eye. It never goes so far that the *samādhi* state is broken and one feels the body.

The *suttas* actually say that the ‘thorn’ of the first *jhāna* is sound. It will be sound, as the first of the five external senses, which can break the first *jhāna*. Within that state you will be unable to hear what people are saying next to you, because the mind is fully involved in the *pītisukha* object. If a sound is heard, it means that the *samādhi* of that *jhāna* is already very weak and one is about to exit the *jhāna*. When I say fully

involved I stress the word ‘fully’. There is no space for the mind to receive any other input. It is fully taken up with the joy and happiness of the *pīṭisukha*. It does not let it go enough to notice anything else.

These are strange states to experience. It is a mind very different from the mind that has so many things to deal with in the external world. The normal mind has one thing come to its attention only to disappear, and then something else comes up and disappears, and then something else again. The mind normally has such a heavy load, such a burden of information to deal with, but here the mind has just one pleasant object. It is the pleasantness of that object which keeps the mind attached to the *pīṭisukha*. Do not be afraid of that attachment. It is the attachment that led the Buddha to Enlightenment, which led many *Arahants* to full Enlightenment. At this stage you can’t do anything about it anyway. This becomes the experience of the first *jhāna*.

Later on that *vitakka-vicāra*, that last wobbling of the mind, is abandoned. Remember that the first *jhāna* is just less than the second *jhāna*, just less than full *samādhi*, that full ‘one-pointedness of *mind*’ on the object.

Venerable Sāriputta describes a *jhāna* just in between the first and second *jhānas*, where the movement of the mind onto the object has been abandoned. In that *jhāna* there is no *vitakka*, all that is left is *vicāra*. (See A IV 300 & 440 f, S IV 360-363, D III 219, M III 162). That state is when the mind has *pīṭisukha* fully and does not move away from it but, as it were, grasps the *pīṭisukha*. The mind holds on to it, not realising that it doesn’t need to grasp it or put forth any effort to hold it. The mind is doing this, not the illusion of ‘self’. At this stage it is very common that the mind will let go of the holding and stay there by itself according to natural causes and results. The cause is the inner contentment of the mind, being with the beautiful *pīṭisukha*; the beautiful happiness and one-pointedness of mind. The mind remains there as a solid object. The mind comes to oneness, comes to a ‘point’ as it were. These are not things that one knows in this state; it is only when one emerges afterwards – because the experience has impressed itself on your mind – that you can recall it very vividly. It is just as if you remember a very vivid dream. Even more vivid are the experiences

of *jhāna*. You can remember them very clearly after you emerge. It is on emergence from a *jhāna* that you see the *jhāna* mind as different from anything you have experienced before, in the sense of being fully one. It cannot move. It is like the point of a rock – strong, powerful, blissful, completely immobile – the immovable, immobile mind of the second *jhāna*. You can only know these states afterwards; during the experience the mind remains immobile, just as one thing, as one object. The continuance of the mental object does not change; it just remains one thing moment after moment after moment. The mental object is neither expanding nor contracting; it is not changing in quality but just remaining with that sameness. This I call the ‘one-pointedness in time’ of the *nimmitta*, the sign of mental consciousness.

We see what is possible with consciousness, with the mind. The only way we can know mind is by knowing its objects. Its objects are what define the mind. Once we know the different objects of the mind, including the *samādhī* objects, then we get some enormous insights and understandings into what this mind truly is, what it is capable of, and what happiness and suffering are. Once we start to get into these states then we know what the Buddha meant by a pleasant abiding. The Buddha sometimes called these states ‘*Nibbāna* here and now’. The Buddha would also very often equate *Nibbāna* and *nirodha*, cessation. Even though it is not true *Nibbāna*, it is close. Why is it close? It is close because a lot of cessation has already occurred. In these very refined states a lot has ceased, by ceasing it has ended, disappeared, finished. That is why it is very close to *Nibbāna*.

As we develop these states, not only does it give us a pleasant feeling, but it also makes our lives as monks secure. Only when we have the knowledge and experience of *nirāmisā sukha*, the happiness which is apart from the world of things, can we fully have contentment in monastic life. If you have not had the experience of the *nirāmisā sukha*, the happiness of renunciation, your renunciation will always be a struggle. You may be able to renounce on the surface and on the outside, appearing to others to be an excellent monk, but inside the mind still yearns for happiness and satisfaction. You will not stop the mind from searching for that happiness and satisfaction in the world when it hasn’t got any other recourse. In one of the *suttas*, (MN 14), Mahānāma, one of the Buddha's cousins, came up to the Buddha and said that even

