

18 BETWEEN THE OBSERVER AND THE OBSERVED

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The Buddha said that anyone who fulfils the *ānāpānasati* meditation also completes the four *satipaṭṭhāna*. So that means that anyone who wants to do *satipaṭṭhāna* meditation can just carry on watching the breath. *Satipaṭṭhāna* meditation is *ānāpānasati* meditation. It is useful to remember that *ānāpānasati* according to the Buddha equals *satipaṭṭhāna*. Even the first four stages of *ānāpānasati* fulfil *kāyagatasati*, the mindfulness of the body. The Buddha said you don't need to do anymore. But what does that truly mean?

This evening I want to explore the meaning of *sati*. There are two parts to mindfulness that you should always bear in mind. One part is to understand that mindfulness is the power of the mind to see what's going on. It is part of the brightness of the mind, the power of the mind to be alert, to be aware, and to pick up what is going on. Many people make the mistake of thinking that mindfulness is just mindfulness, and they don't understand and appreciate that it has different degrees of intensity and power. The normal mindfulness that people carry around in their daily lives is so weak that they hardly see anything at all. Ordinary mindfulness is the mindfulness of the ordinary person going about their daily business; sure they're aware, but they only see a portion of what's out there. One of the reasons for that is because their mind is not empowered yet. It's like going through life in semi-darkness. All they see are silhouettes and shapes; life has no texture, no detail. They've missed too much of what's going on out there. It's called dullness of the mind.

When you've experienced a *jhāna* your mind is empowered and you understand what mindfulness can be. It's so sharp, so penetrating, that it's like a big searchlight. Whatever it looks at, it picks up everything. I've noticed that when I'm shaving in the morning, if there is not much light, I can't see my stubble, but if there is a bright light, if the light in the bathroom is in the right position, I can see so much stubble on my cheeks and chin. That's a little example of how, when there is little light you can't see what's really there, but when you put your glasses on and there is a big light you

see so much detail. It was always there but before you couldn't notice it. That stubble stands for the defilements; they are the stubble on your *citta* making it unbeautiful and ugly.

So, that is the power of mindfulness. Another important thing is where you focus that mindfulness, where you direct it. Some people say you can be mindful of anything. You can be mindful when you are sweeping the ground, and when you are eating. Some people even say you can be mindful of sex and all these other crazy ideas. But this is only being *aware* of the object of your consciousness. You can be aware of sweeping, you can be aware of laying a brick, you can be aware of putting food into your mouth, but that is not where mindfulness should really be put. I'm going to be really controversial here. *Mindfulness should not even be on your body*, that's not the point of what we are doing.

We all know the Buddha's teaching on meditation if we read the *suttas*. According to the Buddha – in essence – meditation is all about overcoming the five hindrances – suppressing them, smashing them – to get to the *jhānas*, so that you can see the way things truly are. Meditation is suppressing the five hindrances, but what has mindfulness to do with the five hindrances? The path can also be described as abolishing and smashing the *kilesas*; that is greed, hatred and delusion, or *lobha*, *dosa* and *moha*. The Kruba Ajahns always talk about greed, hatred, and delusion. Here we don't mention those things enough. Certainly in my days as a young monk every talk would drum it into you: greed, hatred, and delusion. There wasn't a talk where it wasn't mentioned ten, twenty, or thirty times.

The Right Place for Mindfulness

The point is, where do greed, hatred, and delusion live? Where do the five hindrances live? Do they live in your body? Do they live in the food you eat? Do they live in the bricks you lay or in the broom or the leaves that you are sweeping? This is an important point not only to your success as a monastic and to your harmony with friends and other monks, but also to your progress in meditation. Those hindrances do not live in the broom, nor do they live in your *citta*. They live between you and those objects. It's that space between the observer and the object that needs watching.

It's not what you are doing but how you are doing it that is important. That is where Māra plays. That is where the defilements live. That is the playground of greed, hatred, and delusion. Too often people put their mindfulness on the object or they put their mindfulness on the observer. They don't look at the middle – in between them – at 'the doing', 'the controlling', 'the ill will', and 'the aversion'. That's the reason I told somebody today the story of Ajahn Sumedho. When he was first in Wat Pah Pong he was having a hard time, and Ajahn Chah asked him, "Is Wat Pah Pong, suffering? Is Wat Pah Pong *dukkha*, Sumedho?" Ajahn Sumedho wasn't an Ajahn then. It was of course obvious to Ajahn Sumedho that Wat Pah Pong is not suffering.

So, what is suffering? Is the *citta* suffering? The suffering was how Ajahn Sumedho was regarding suffering. At that point he was adding it onto the experience. And if we don't put mindfulness in its right place then we miss that. We think it's Wat Pah Pong's fault, so we want to leave that monastery. We think it's our fault so we want to destroy ourselves or get into a guilt trip. This is wrong mindfulness; we're putting it in the wrong place. It's not the monastery's fault, and it's not the fault of that monk who is upsetting you. You are putting mindfulness in the wrong place if you put all of your focus on the object and think that is the cause of suffering. If you think the way to find liberation is to put mindfulness on the objects of your senses or to put it on who's watching or what's watching, that will never get you anywhere. We have to put the focus of our mindfulness on the space between the observer and the observed. That's where you find the play of greed and hatred, desires and aversions, wanting and disliking, and that's where you start to make something of this world which is not inherent in it.

In the very early days when the villagers had just discovered generators, amplifiers and loud speakers, there were big, noisy parties close to Wat Pah Nanachat in Bung Wai village. It was so loud that it would be like having a 'ghetto blaster' playing loud music right inside your hut. You couldn't sleep and meditation was very hard. The noise would go on until three o'clock in the morning, and by the time they had quietened down, that was the time the bell went for you to get up. So we hardly slept when those parties were on. First of all we complained to the villagers and said to the headman of the village, "Look, we are monks and you are supposed to be looking

after us, yet there is this loud music all night. Please turn it down or at least stop at twelve o'clock to give us two hours sleep." But they would never listen to us. We thought they might listen to Ajahn Chah. So we asked Ajahn Chah, "Can you please tell those villagers to turn the music down for a couple of hours." They would probably have listened to Ajahn Chah, but all Ajahn Chah said was, "It's not the sound that disturbs you, it's you disturbing the sound." That was a powerful teaching on mindfulness: the world never disturbs you; it's you disturbing the world. It's what you put in between you and the world that creates the problem. It's not the fault of the world, and it's not your fault; it's the disturbance that your delusion puts in the middle.

Looking at the Hindrances

When you put your mindfulness in the middle, then it's not what you are doing that matters but how you are relating to it. So please, put your mindfulness into the relationship that you have with the objects of mind in every moment. When you know where mindfulness should be put, the path of meditation, the path of Liberation, becomes very clear to you. You are looking directly at the hindrances; you are looking directly at the defilements.

Desire is your relationship between the *citta* and what you are experiencing, and the same for ill will 'I want, I don't want', craving, that's where the attachments are. It's the link, the unwholesome link that you make with the objects of your mind from moment to moment that causes delusion to grow and grow and grow.

The hindrances are the food of delusion. So it's not what is going on in this moment, it's not what you are experiencing. But don't misunderstand this to mean that you can be mindful of sex. This is missing the point. If you are mindful of what's between you and that act, you will see that there is craving there, there is fear, there's a lot of wanting. If there wasn't that wanting and that desire, you wouldn't be able to do anything like that. If there is peace, tranquillity, letting go, stillness, kindness, loving kindness, there would be no possibility of that sexuality ever arising in your mind. Mindfulness is focused on the wrong thing; just like Ajahn Sumedho's mindfulness when focused on Wat Pah Pong and all its faults, was focused on the wrong thing.

That's why Ajahn Chah said, "It's not Wat Pah Pong's fault; it's the way you are relating to it, the way you are looking at it, the way you are regarding it".

I have been practising that in my life for a long time now, especially when I have to do things every moment – when I have to do a job, travel, talk to people, relate to people, answer stupid questions, in particular when I am tired. Whatever it is, it's not the experience that is the cause of suffering to me, it's how I look at it, and how I am relating to this thing I am being asked to do. It's what's in between the observer and this thing, this task at hand. Even this talk now, it's not the talk itself but how I am relating to giving this talk that I am focusing on: I am making sure that it is a pure relationship. The mindfulness, the awareness of that can actually see where craving comes from, where desire comes from, where pride comes from, where ill will comes from. and where fear comes from because that is its breeding ground. If I'm tired when I start meditating, the tiredness is the object of the mind. It's what is between me and that tiredness that matters. Am I getting angry and upset at that tiredness? Why am I so tired? If you are angry or upset you are actually feeding the hindrances. It's not the tiredness that is the problem – tiredness is natural –but the disturbing of the tiredness. So, I have learned from Ajahn Chah's teaching: it's not the sound that disturbs you; it's you disturbing the sound. The problem is not that life or *samsāra* disturb you; it's the disturbance that you put in between the observer and the observed that is the problem.

Once you start to look at that you find out how easy it is to meditate. I don't know what you do when you sit down and you close your eyes, but don't just look at the object in your mind, look at how you are looking at it. Are you actually creating peace, are you creating freedom? Or are you just creating more desire, more wanting, more ill will, more frustration, or more fear? Look at where those things arise from, and once you get the idea of putting your mindfulness in that space between the observer and the observed, you will see the play of all the defilements. Where are they coming from? They are coming from the stupidity of the mind. It's only because you don't look in the right place that delusions can grow. Once you spot that area which is the cause and source of these defilements and hindrances, you can put your mindfulness there and see this whole process happening.

When you start to see that, it's so easy. Whatever you have to experience, even if it's a sore throat right now, a disappointment, or something that doesn't go right, who cares! It's not the event you have to experience; it's how you are experiencing it. So even if it is pain or things I don't like, I make sure I watch between the observer and that unpleasant experience and put peace and freedom there. I never put craving there, or desire, or wanting it to be different. I never put ill will there or the thought "Why me? This is not right". I never put control there, thinking I can do something about it. It's about 'non-doing', putting a piece of 'non-doing' between me and the object that I am looking at. It says in the Buddha's second sermon, the teaching on non-self, the Anattalakkhana Sutta (SN XXII. 59), that if these objects of the mind were yours to control, you could say to them, "May you be like this, may you be like that". These objects are *anattā*: not me, not mine, not a self; "you can't do anything about them", said the Buddha. So leave them alone, let them go. Whether it's *rūpa*, bodily things, material things, or whether it's feelings, perceptions, mental formations, or consciousness, leave them alone. They just arise and fall according to their conditions. It's not me, it's not mine, it's not a self; it's just an empty process, nothing to do with me. So, I can put that freedom between myself, as the observer, and the object.

This is just one way of looking at it. By saying the observer is not a self or an essential me, and by putting that peace between the observer and the observed, there is no possibility for the hindrances to grow. The hindrances are suppressed by that means. By focusing my mindfulness there rather than on my breath or whatever else, I'm suppressing the hindrances. When the hindrances are suppressed, especially desire and ill will –the wanting, controlling, doing – I also suppress all of the other hindrances. Sloth and torpor always comes – as you've heard me say before – because you have been controlling so much. You've been doing so much your mind is actually tired, and worn out. It wants to rest; it wants to turn off because it has no energy left. So if sloth and torpor is in front of me I just put peace between myself and the sloth and torpor. I do not put one of the first two hindrances between me and that sloth and torpor; I don't put desire, ill will, or fear there, and I have no sense of shame because I'm tired. It's just the body that's all. It's just the mind that's all. It's the five *khandhas* doing their thing, nothing to do with me. So I never feel any sense

of self with the sloth and torpor that comes up from time to time. I make peace with it, I allow it to be, and I let it go. I don't fight it, and by not fighting it I'm not cultivating the first two hindrances. Because I'm not cultivating the first two hindrances, mindfulness starts to grow in intensity. And because I am not feeding this 'doer', the mindfulness gets all the energy, the knower gets all the energy. The knower is mindfulness, and I'm energizing mindfulness.

Sloth and torpor don't last very long these days, I work so hard and sometimes can't find time to sleep. I should be the monk nodding most in this monastery due the amount of work I do, but I find I can go on retreats and sit in front of hundreds of people meditating and I feel awake. The reason I can do that is because I don't feed the defilements. Mindfulness is right there, not on the sloth and torpor, not on the knower, but in between them. I want to see what I'm doing with the sloth and torpor. Am I reacting with controlling? Am I just being one of the allies of Māra, the 'great controller'? I don't do that; I put my mindfulness between the sloth and torpor and the observer, making sure I'm being kind to the sloth and torpor. Kindness overcomes the ill will. Too often when you have sloth and torpor it is aversion that feeds it. It is the thought, 'I don't want it', that actually feeds sloth and torpor and makes it last longer, because it is taking the energy away from knowing.

It is the same with restlessness and remorse, when the mind is thinking all over the place. How are you relating to that? What are you doing with it? Put the energy of mindfulness between the knower and that restlessness. Don't put your mindfulness on aversion or on desire – 'I don't want to be restless' or 'This restlessness is good. I am thinking of all these fantasies and plans, about *Star Wars* or whatever' – but notice instead how you are regarding that thought pattern in your mind. If you see ill will or desire, those first two hindrances, stomp on them, stop them. If you see them as soon as they arise, then it is very easy to stop these things.

If you are not looking in the right place, you can't stop them. So once you put your mindfulness in the correct place, between the observer and the observed, between the *citta* and the restlessness, it's very easy to see why these things are going on. We can very often say that restlessness comes from discontent and that discontent comes from either ill will or desire, wanting something else, wanting something more, not wanting

this. So if we see where that discontent arises, that is, between you and that restless object, then you can stop it. It's fascinating to see how soon restlessness disappears, sometimes within seconds; you can just cut the thoughts that easily. But don't use force and effort, because that's aversion. You can't cut restlessness and remorse by being heedless, by waiting for them to stop, because underneath you want these things to carry on, you desire them, and you want them to happen. Look at what's between you and that thing, and then you see what's feeding them. So you put your mindfulness there, and then restlessness doesn't last very long. Nor does remorse, because remorse is always reacting to the past with desire and ill will.

It is the same with doubt, another form of restlessness. Look between you and the object that you are aware of and put peace in there, put acceptance in there, put patience in there. and you'll find out later you don't need to ask that question right now.

Tranquillity of Body and Mind

So, these beautiful qualities called patience, freedom, loving kindness, letting go, and peace, are the opposites of the first two hindrances, but you cannot put them in if you don't know where they go. You have to insert these qualities like a pill, or an injection, between the observer and the observed. Once you can see that space, you can put these things in there. Mindfulness sees that place, right skilful effort inserts that peace, that letting go, into that space, and the hindrances get suppressed. As the hindrances get suppressed, mindfulness grows in intensity simply because you are not feeding the restlessness or the sloth and torpor. Mindfulness becomes brighter. You're not doing anything so the energies of the mind are not wasted. Mindfulness gets brighter and brighter, and you can see much more of what I am talking about. You're more clearly aware of the space where mindfulness can be most effective. You find the object of your mind starts to become still, peaceful, and beautiful. Your meditation is going well; it's moving in the right direction.

Don't try to control things or you're putting your effort in the wrong spot. You are trying to control the object when you should be controlling what's in between, in the sense of stopping the hindrances from arising. The right effort is making sure you don't do anything stupid. We do stupid things all the time because we are not looking

in the right place. If we don't do anything stupid we find this meditation becomes so simple, so powerful, and so deep. It doesn't matter what you start off with. Sometimes I don't even watch the breath; I just watch the present moment, whatever's happening now. How am I watching it? By making sure I make peace with this moment and by putting stillness into it. I make sure those five hindrances don't get involved, especially the first two hindrances, because they're the key ones. They are the hindrances that underlie the other three. By watching out for those first two hindrances, by being mindful, whatever object I'm watching just gets brighter and brighter. Whatever I see, I see in more detail. It becomes more peaceful, and because I see it in more detail, it becomes more beautiful.

The object of the mind is not so important. You may even watch an ugly skull, and you may think, 'why would a skull ever turn into an object that I can use for *jhānas*?' But once your mindfulness grows and gets strong, that skull can turn into a *nimmitta*. It becomes the most beautiful skull you have ever seen in the world. You can do that with a piece of shit as well. I've never done this meditation, but it could obviously happen. I don't mean to offend anybody, but if you just put a bit of shit before you and watch the space between you and that object, making it still and peaceful, while visualizing it, after a while your mindfulness gets so strong that even that shit will turn into a *nimmitta*. Because your mindfulness is so strong whatever you look at becomes incredibly beautiful. Some of you have had that experience; it's a common meditation experience. The most unlikely objects can turn into beautiful *nimmittas*. Why does that happen? It's nothing to do with the object – it's not Wat Pah Pong that is suffering or Wat Pah Pong that is the path to *Nibbāna*, it's just the suppressing of the five hindrances, overcoming those defilements, the *kilesas*, and making the mind very strong.

Once you get into this practice the mindfulness gets strong. It sees where it should be focused. It focuses there and gets stronger. It sees the place where it should attend more and more and it becomes a self-supporting process. As it becomes still it becomes more powerful. As it becomes more powerful it becomes even more still. You have got this whole process, which is the path to *Nibbāna* that is repeated again and again in the *suttas*. Once you get joy coming up, which is the strength of

mindfulness, you get *pīti*, more joy, and then *passaddhi*, the tranquillity of the body and the mind. All these things happen simply because you are looking in the right place. Things start to quieten down, you are not moving anything, you are not doing things, and you are not disturbing anything.

The hindrances disturb the whole process; they create not just sloth and torpor but also restlessness and doubt. Without the first two hindrances you see that mindfulness gets strong; you see where you are disturbing the whole process. You get *passaddhi*, and as mindfulness gets stronger and stronger you get *sukha*, bliss, and that turns into *samādhi*, into *jhānas*.

It's an easy path; so if you haven't got those *jhānas* yet, why not? Are you putting your mindfulness in the correct place? Is the mindfulness getting stronger and stronger, more and more powerful? What is the problem with your meditation? Sometimes you say, "I've been watching the breath for years, why isn't it working?" It isn't working because of how you are watching the breath. You're watching the breath with controlling, with aversion, with wanting something. It's not the breath's fault or Wat Pah Pong's fault, it's the way you are regarding Wat Pah Pong and it's the way you are regarding the breath. So look at how you are watching the breath. Certainly that was very clear to me. When I was watching the breath, when I was trying to get somewhere, it would never settle down. It's obvious to me now that I was feeding the hindrances; I should have been watching out for the hindrances rather than the breath. Now I know how to watch the breath with peace and tranquillity, without expecting anything, showing loving kindness to this breath, however it is. It's good enough for me; this is good enough! Remember all those great teachings like Ajahn Gunhah's, 'just being in the beautiful breath'. It's *how* you're breathing in the breath and *how* you are breathing out the breath: that is Ajahn Gunhah's great teaching and that's the important part. You put your mindfulness right there; it's not what you're breathing in, but how you're breathing in now.

If you are watching your body and doing body meditation, it is how you are watching your body that matters. You may be going through the thirty-two parts of the body, but how you are relating to those thirty two parts? What are you doing it for? Why

are you doing it? What's between you and that exercise? Unless you investigate you will never get to the goal of this path. Remember: hindrances, hindrances, hindrances – they are the essence of the Buddha's teachings. We have to suppress those hindrances, and to eventually eradicate them fully. The hindrances weaken not just wisdom, they also weaken mindfulness. You can understand how they do that: any desire, craving, controlling or ill will takes the energy away from the mind and reduces the natural brilliance of the *citta*. The radiance of the *citta* is what you might call the sign of strong mindfulness. When you experience that strong mindfulness you understand the sort of mindfulness which is necessary for Enlightenment. This is why the Buddha said to empower that mindfulness, mainly through *samādhi*, and then you will see things as they truly are.

The Path to *Nibbāna*

When you see things as they truly are, you can see the playground, the place where these hindrances arise, where the defilements grow, and you understand what delusion is. Once you see the fuel source it's just so easy to stop it. Once mindfulness is strong and directed to the right place, you see how Māra works. 'Māra I know you!' You can see Māra in that space between you and what you are experiencing; this is where Māra lives. If you notice that, you can let go. By knowing it's Māra, then Māra just disappears. Once you can see that space between you and what you are experiencing, make that space beautiful, pure, peaceful, compassionate, free, liberating; don't allow any greed, hatred, or delusion there. And then the path is open for you. It is the path to *Nibbāna*.

Keep that up; maintain mindfulness in that place, and maintain the effort to keep that space pure of the hindrances. If you keep it pure from the first two hindrances the other three will also be kept in check, and you find that whatever you watch becomes so peaceful and that the mindfulness grows more alert, more powerful, and more happy. It doesn't matter what you are watching. Sometimes I'm sick, and even recently I've had a bad cold. Still I've been able to perform at my top level, for the last couple of weeks, doing all this work and travelling. The reason I can do that is that I put the attention in that place between me and what I am experiencing. I make that pure and then this cold can't bother me. By doing that you can keep on going:

you can meditate, you can teach, because the cold is not a problem anymore. It only matters how I react to that irritation of the body. If I keep putting peace there, putting freedom there, if I keep putting compassion there, if I keep putting non-controlling, non-aversion there – If I keep that place empty and pure – it means that the energies of my mind are really strong. When the energies of the mind are really strong there is brightness, there's happiness, and that happiness and brightness is the power of mindfulness. That mindfulness being so powerful can even take that cold that cough, and make it into a beautiful object. This is how we use mindfulness. And when that mindfulness is so strong that the five hindrances have gone we gain the *jhānas*, and now mindfulness is incredibly powerful. That's when we start to understand that this body, these feelings, this *citta*, these objects of the mind, are not me, not mine, not a self.

First of all we empower our mind and make mindfulness stronger by obliterating the five hindrances. The mindfulness is not just strong; it's a powerful, brilliant, still mindfulness. The five hindrances have gone, and you can take up any object and see so deeply into it. It's blissful, and it's powerful. Sometimes you wonder why it has to be so blissful and then you understand that bliss comes from the energy of the mind. Without that bliss, without that power of mindfulness, not only would it not be able to penetrate, but it would not be able to overcome the inherent fear of seeing something that is going to destroy your basic delusions.

The power of mindfulness is so important because of the fear of losing your 'self', of losing your ego. Your sense of identity is so strong that it is probably one of the last barriers to overcoming *saṃsāra*, one of the last barriers that you have to overcome to become an *Arahant*. The fear of complete disappearance is a barrier that very few people get over. One of the ways you can get over that barrier is with the power of mindfulness and its bliss, because bliss is an incredibly great energy. It empowers you: you are just so blissed out that nothing can make you afraid; you just go right over those barriers of fear. Who cares if I disappear; who cares if there's nothing left afterwards. The bliss is so strong you just go right through. This is mindfulness being so empowered, so courageous, so strong, that you go against all your illusions, preconceptions, and habitual views. Mindfulness is just so powerful that all those

things you want to believe cannot exist and all the things that you are too afraid to accept open up nevertheless. You just go right over them or right through them. That's how Enlightenment happens. That's what insight truly is.

All the really good insights, the ones that are worth something, are just like the biggest kick up the butt you have ever had; but it's a beautiful, blissful kick up the butt. What's happened? My god something's different! You are shocked and moved you into a new way of looking and thinking. This is the power that is necessary. So, with right mindfulness, the first job is actually to empower it and make sure you are placing what little mindfulness you have in the right spot. You can't afford to waste your mindfulness. Do not be concerned about what you are experiencing: the problem is not this monastery, the food, the body, or these words. Don't put your mindfulness there. Put your mindfulness on how you are reacting to your experiences. What are you doing with them in this very moment? Are you at peace with them? Even if you don't like what's happening, even if it's wrong, that's not the point; the point is just to be at peace with it. When someone calls you a pig or a donkey, when someone says you are the most stupid, lazy, arrogant, proud monk in this whole monastery, it doesn't matter. What matters is what is between you and those words. Put peace there, put compassion and emptiness there; then the hindrances will not arise. The world will no longer move you. There will always be peace no matter what happens, even if you are being tortured. Whatever you are experiencing put peace and tranquillity between you and that feeling. Make peace with it. It's just nature to have extreme *vedanā*. If you put peace and tranquillity there, the hindrances can't survive and even torture becomes beautiful. In other words it just disappears; it's not torture anymore.

When mindfulness is in the right place the mind becomes incredibly strong, brave, and courageous. The *jhānas* just happen: you can't stop them because you've seen the hindrances that stop *samādhi* happening. As mindfulness grows, the hindrances can't survive. You have this incredible anti-virus that is focusing on just the correct spot and when you hit that spot, the place between you and the experience, it's amazing what happens. The hindrances can't survive for very long. The *kilesas* run out of food, mindfulness gets strong. and bliss starts to come up. Stillness happens

and restlessness cannot survive. There is powerful mindfulness, bliss, and absolute stillness. When that builds up it is called *jhāna*.

A good description of *jhāna* is incredible bliss, stillness, and intense mindfulness. You are building up these things so that you are making them into a *jhāna*. Afterwards when you come out of that *jhāna* and a little bit of the stillness has gone, you see that the mind can move, but not very much. The mindfulness is now so strong, so penetrating, and so courageous that you see where those hindrances come from. You understand that they come from this delusion of ‘me’ and the ‘doer’, thinking that you’re in control of all of this. You can focus on the Anattalakkhana Sutta: the five *khandhas* are not me, not mine, not a self. If they were I could make them like this, make them like that. I could tell my body, ‘please, don’t have a cough’, ‘please, don’t get sick’, ‘please, don’t sleep so much’, ‘please, be fit and don’t get old’. You can’t do that. You can’t do that to your *vedanā* either: ‘please, only have pleasant feelings, no coughs, no bad sounds from other people, and no criticism’. You can’t do that. ‘May I have a monastery that is nice and warm, not too cold, one where I don’t have to work too much.’ You can’t do that! Let go for goodness sake! When you see that there is no one in here controlling any of it, that there is only emptiness – no me, no mine, not a self, no ‘doer’, no ‘knower’, just a process with no essential me – that’s freedom. It’s wonderful: at last there is no one in here, no one to get reborn to suffer, to give talks, to travel to Singapore, or to give ordinations. There is no one to listen to these people ringing up every evening with their problems, no one who has to get up in the morning and go through it all again. It’s beautiful to know that there is no one left in there. So you can say that this is your last life. End it all, that’s wonderful; just bring along with you as many people as you can.

Conclusion

The trick to make right mindfulness grow is to put it in the right spot. See more clearly and get empowered. When you are empowered through the *jhānas*, you can put your mindfulness onto the five *khandhas*, the six sense bases, the body and the mind, and you see through it so easily. Once you see through it, it’s not just that the five hindrances are suppressed, they are smashed to smithereens, and they can’t arise again. That way your mindfulness is always just right there in the space between the

seeing and the seen. There is no attachment left now; in its place it is just this process, this dance of *saṃsāra*, cause and effect, cause and effect. When you see the process of *kamma* you can undo it all: through the ending of delusion comes the ending of the *kamma* formations. You stop making hindrances between you and the objects. There is no *kamma* being made, you don't do anything – no desire, no aversion, no doing – you are just making natural peace in every moment between the observer and the observed. No *kamma* formation is what is meant by *saṅkhāra nirodha*, the cessation of *saṅkhāra*. That means there is nothing to give rise to a new life, a new consciousness; the *viññāṇa* in the next life won't arise, and neither will the *nāma rūpa*. The objects of consciousness in the next life are ended, done with. A good job done!

So this is mindfulness put in the space between you and what you are observing. You will never get upset at anything that happens to you in this monastery again. You will never have craving for anything in this monastery. You get food and you just eat it with no desire or aversion. When you give up desire and ill will, sloth and torpor won't have any fuel, restlessness and doubt will be gone, and you will get into deep meditation, *jhānas*, Enlightenment, the whole works.