

The Mind and its Endless Rebirth

Desana to a group of practising lay devotees on

June 30, 2013 at Khao-Chi-On

By

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For Free Distribution



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“The Gift of Dhamma Excels All Other Gifts”

- The Lord Buddha

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The Mind and its Endless Rebirth

June 30, 2013

Today, we shall talk about the mind (*citta*) so that most of you will have a better understanding and knowledge of it. There are many of us here who still do not know what and where the mind is. Mind is that which knows, that which thinks, that which receives all kinds of sensations coming from the eyes, ears, nose, tongue and body or that arise as emotions within the mind.

The mind has four properties: *vedanā* (feeling), *saññā* (memory), *sankhāra* (thinking and imaginations) and *viññāṇa* (consciousness). *Vedanā* is the feeling of pleasure (*sukha*), displeasure (*dukkha*) and neither pleasure nor displeasure. *Saññā* is memory, recognition or labeling. For instance, on seeing an image, we recollect what this image is and whether we have seen it before. If we have seen it before, then we will say that it is this or that person. This is the responsibility of memory. *Sankhāra* is that which thinks and imagines

what to do. Seeing an image of a snake, we must consider the next course of action. Are we going to move towards it or walk away? When we see the image of a snake and know that it is a snake, feelings will arise. That is the feeling of pleasure (*sukha*), displeasure (*dukkha*) or neither pleasure nor displeasure. Feeling here means liking or disliking. If there is liking, pleasure arises. If there is disliking, displeasure arises. However, if there is neither liking nor disliking, then neither pleasure nor displeasure will arise. This is *vedanā*.

That which receives images from the eyes for the mind to know is *viññāṇa* (consciousness). *Viññāṇa* receives images, sounds, smells, tastes and tactile sensations and delivers it to *saññā* (memory). *Saññā* receives and knows, then seeks out information on whether we have seen the image before or heard that sound before, whether the image is good or bad, or the sound is good or bad, or whether we like or dislike it. Once this information is known, then *vedanā* or feelings will arise. If the image is good and desirable, then pleasure will

arise. However, if the image is disliked, then displeasure will arise. This is because of the arising of pleasurable feelings (*sukha*) or stressful (*dukkha*) feelings. *Sankhāra* will arise in the form of thinking and imagination. If we like it then we will go and seek it. If we dislike it, then we will retreat and walk away. If possible, *sankhāra* will send its instructions. If we have a body, the body will receive orders from *sankhāra* such as, “Back Off! It is best to back off; there is a snake.” Then we will correspondingly walk away. On the other hand, if we see a sweet dessert or a gold bar, we will walk towards it and pick it up. This is a mind with four properties, or *nāma khandhas* (derivatives or functions of the mind) which are namely: *vedanā*, *saññā*, *sankhāra* and *viññāṇa*, and function according to their responsibilities.

The mind itself is that which receives and knows the functions of the respective *khandhas* in their area of responsibilities. It is the mind which responds with greed, hate and delusion. If wisdom is missing, then whenever we see anything delightful, we will crave it or whenever we see anything we dislike, we will be angry.

However, if wisdom is present, then we know that everything is transient and painful (dissatisfaction), and are of the nature that they cannot stay with us forever. We are not able to order or force it to always stay with us like this or like that. A mind that has correct view, called *sammādiṭṭhi*, stays in equanimity (*upekkhā*) and will not be greedy, angry or deluded. It does not crave to have, to possess, to be, nor does it crave not to have or not to be. The mind is equanimous and steady. This is the mind and issues related to the mind.

Moreover, there are people who wish to know where the mind is located. The mind is located in the supramundane world. The body is located in the world of elements. The supramundane world and the world of elements are mutually exclusive and located separately. If a comparison was made, the mind would be like people in mission control that controls and manipulates a spacecraft. The body would be the spacecraft that is sent to investigate a planet or a moon. This spacecraft would have to depend upon the instructions from the mission control to perform its functions. When the

spacecraft reaches the end of its lifespan or is damaged and ruined, only the spacecraft is damaged.

The people who control and manipulate the spacecraft remain above and beyond the world, dwelling in another place. They are not subjected to any loss or damage of the spacecraft. This is like the mind staying in the supramundane world, dwelling in another world. The body that receives its instructions from the mind stays in this world, a world of elements. The world that our body is dwelling presently is called the world of elements. Because this world has four elements - earth, water, wind and fire, our body is able to develop and grow by means of these four elements, i.e. earth, water, wind and fire.

Earth is food, such as rice and vegetables. Rice and vegetables need earth, water, wind and sunlight in order to grow. And when they are consumed by the body, they will in turn build up the various parts of the body such as hair of the head, hair of the body, nails, teeth, skin, flesh, sinew and bones. These are the parts of the body

that receive the inputs of earth, water, wind and fire from the consumption of food. Food comes from the air that we breathe, the water we drink and the heat from sunlight. Together, they produce the body. Having the body, we need to continually supply it with the four elements. Then the body will progressively grow until it reaches full maturity. Once it is fully mature, the body will gradually decline, age, decay and ultimately expire. For when the body stops working, the four elements, earth, water, wind and fire will break away and separate.

When a person dies, breath (wind) exits but does not enter anymore. Wind is discharged and will give out a bad smell. Water will ooze out and heat (fire) will go away. The body will then be cool and no longer warm like a body that is still alive. If it is left for a long time, the body will wither, dry up, decay and ultimately disintegrate into the earth. This is the body that dwells in the world of elements. But the mind that dwells in the supramundane world is not affected by whatever happens to the body.

When the body has stopped working, communication and concern between mind and body is cut off. The mind that still has craving will seek out a new body. These are matters concerning the mind and the body. As for the mind itself there are many different levels based on the merit and demerit it has done before:

A mind with **merit** (good, skilful qualities and actions) ranges in value from 0 to +100.

A mind with **demerit** (bad, harmful, evil, unskilful qualities and actions) ranges from 0 to -100.

If we make **merit**, the mind will increase its value continuously starting from 0,10,20,30 until it reaches 100. At 100, it is considered to have reached *Nibbāna*, becoming an *Arahant* (4th and ultimate state of enlightenment). At 90, the mind is an *Anāgāmi* (3rd stage). At 80 it is *Sakadāgāmi* (2nd stage). At 70, it is *Sotāpanna* (1st stage). The merits of those at the level of 70 to 100 do not regress and will not fall below 70. If we are a *Sotāpanna* already, we will continue to be a *Sotāpanna* and will not drop to the level of *brahmas*,

heavenly angels or human beings. At these levels there is no longer regression, but only continuous progression by means of meditation practice and *vipassanā* (insight) meditation. Meditation means both *samatha* (calm) meditation and *vipassanā* (insight) meditation. Both are necessary for us to reach the levels of merit from 70 up to 100.

A mind that possess generosity, virtue, and samatha meditation but does not develop insight meditation, without a heartfelt realization of *Dhamma* for oneself, without seeing the Four Noble Truths, without seeing *anicca* (impermanent), *dukkha* (stress) and *anattā* (not-self), will progress to 60 but will be less than 70 or perhaps until at most 69. Levels 60 to 50 are for those who are generous, maintain their virtue and practise *samatha* meditation. Level 60 is that of the formless (*arūpa*) *brahmas*. Level 50 is that of the form (*rūpa*) *brahmas*, for those who have attained to meditative form absorption (*rūpa jhāna*) levels 1 to 4. For those who have succeeded in attaining meditative formless absorption (*arūpa jhāna*) 1 to 4, they will attain to the

formless *brahmas* realms. Merit that is of the level less than 70, such as 60 or 50 will regress downwards until one day it is all gone. From 60 it will drop down to 50; from 50 it will go down continuously until reaching zero. Those dwelling below level 50 are heavenly angels. Between 50 down to 0 is the level of heavenly angels in different heavenly realms such as the *tusita* realm. These are the minds of those heavenly angels from 0 up to 50. Minds with a value of 0 have neither merit nor demerit and will be human beings, with the bodies of human beings.

If our mind are at a level lower than zero, they will become animals. Even further down, we will become *asuras* (demons). Further down are the *pretas* (hungry ghosts); until the lowest level which is hell. Minds can be stuck (with negative values) due to previously making more demerit than merit. Conversely, minds can be stuck in the positive range because of making more merit than demerit. When we die, our merit and demerit will be computed and finalized. If the resulting computation is positive, then we will go on to be angels,

brahmas or noble ones (*āriyas*). If the resulting computation is negative, we will become animals, demons, hungry ghosts or hell beings. But this merit and demerit will one day decrease until they are depleted. For instance, those stuck in the negative levels are like *Devadatta* who acquired his demerit (evil kamma) by hurting the Buddha three times. Demerit acquired in this manner has the heaviest penalty at the level of -100. However, once he has completely received the results of his *kamma*, he will be human again. He can return to cultivate generosity, virtue and meditation, causing positive worth to arise within his mind until reaching the level of +100, when he reaches enlightenment as a Buddha.

This is the pathway of *Devadatta's* mind that the Buddha *Gotama* foresaw and predicted. Once *Devadatta* died, he would have to fall to hell to receive the results of his *kamma*. Because of the evil he had committed, he would have to stay in the *avici* hell. After completely receiving the results of his *kamma* and coming out to return as a human, he will return to cultivate generosity,

virtue and meditation, causing positive value to arise within his mind until finally reaching the level of +100, attaining enlightenment as a *Pacceka* (silent) Buddha but not as a *Sammāsam* (perfectly enlightened) Buddha or a *Sāvaka* (disciple) *Arahant*. The difference is that as a *Pacceka* Buddha he will not teach Dhamma to others.

These are matters concerning the mind that all of us are doubtful. This mind does not die. It only moves up or down in accordance with the strength of its merit and demerit i.e. from 0 to +100 or from 0 to -100. It is all based on the actions we have done each and every day. If our actions are (harmful) demeritorious, such as killing, stealing, sexual misconduct, lying or cheating, taking intoxicants or all kinds of corrupting and degrading activities like gambling, late-night entertainment, socializing with lazy and bad people, then we accumulate demerit, accumulate bad *kamma* that is negative. Thus the negative value falls continuously from -10, -20 to -100. All this depends on the intentions of those creating the demerit and the reasons underlying their actions. Sometimes, the evil

and unskilful action is done without knowing that it is bad, thinking that doing so is not demeritorious, such as those who kill animals as their livelihood - killing pigs, chickens, cows, water buffalos and then selling them. Or fishermen who catch fish to sell and or those in businesses related to killing animals and meat of animals, taking the meat of the slaughtered animals for sale. People in these trades may think that doing so is not demeritorious but is a necessity because it is a means of a livelihood. If we act in this way, we will be reborn as an animal after death.

Demeritorious action can be done through fear of deprivation, fear of death, fear of being harmed by others. If we harm others first by killing, we will become demons. Demeritorious actions are sometimes motivated by greed, our craving for fame and wealth propels us to seek methods and ways to become famous and rich. We may even cheat, lie, kill or commit sexual misconduct just for the sake of obtaining whatever we crave. These actions done with greed will lead us to become hungry ghosts. Again if the actions

are done with hatred, vengefulness and animosity in return for injury received, then acting in this way, we will fall into hell.

We commit evil such as killing others because they have offended our dignity and we become angry, agitated and vengeful until we cannot and will not forgive them, so much so that the only way out for us is to kill them, and this will only cause us to fall into hell. This is the personal possession of the mind that dwells in degradation (ruin). That is a mind which is negative, starting from less than 0 and decreasing until reaching -100. On the other hand, a mind that dwells in happiness and skilfulness stays in a good state due to having been generous, maintained its virtue and meditated. The mind will then have merit of positive worth, starting from 0 up to +100. If the accumulated merit is above +70, there will be no regression. There is only progress until reaching +100 and remaining at +100 hence forth. In the same way, the mind of the Buddha dwells in the supramundane world is just like all of us. The only difference is that his mind remains at the level +100.

As for ourselves, we should examine ourselves to see whether we are in negative or positive territory. To be able to measure that, in most cases, it depends on whether we feel like we have more happiness or unhappiness. If it is the case that there is more unhappiness than happiness, that implies we reside in negativity. Vice versa, if there is more happiness than unhappiness, that shows the mind is more positive than negative. Another way of measuring is by evaluating whether we have good dreams when we are asleep. If our dreams are good, it means our mind is positive, in the level of positivity. Alternatively, if our dreams are bad, then the mind is in the level of negativity. These are matters concerning the minds of all of us, including those who have passed away and those who are still alive. Minds such as these always exist and do not passed away with the body. Minds of our grandparents, great grandparents, parents, *kruba Ajaans*, the Buddhas and all the *Arahants* of the past and present still exist. This is true for every single one of them. The only difference is whether their minds dwell on a positive or

negative level. If it dwells at 0, our mind is reborn as a human being. If it dwells on a level less than 0, it is reborn as an animal, demon, hungry-ghost or hell being. These are matters concerning the mind that all of us are uncertain.

Hopefully, after listening to the talk today, all of you will have a better understanding. We should then know what we should do to protect and build up the value of our mind to be positive, to be beneficial. For the happiness we experience corresponds to the positive level of the mind. When there is more happiness than unhappiness, our stress (*dukkha*) will be less and less. If (suppose) we have +70, happiness (*sukha*) will then be +70 and unhappiness (*dukkha*) will only be -30. If the level is +80, then happiness will be +80 and suffering will only be -20. Again, if the level is +100, then happiness will be +100 and unhappiness will be 0. This is the mind of Buddha or *Arahant*. They only have 100% happiness and no unhappiness at all.

The mind of an *Anāgāmi*, will have 90% happiness and 10% unhappiness. A *Sakadāgāmi* has 80% happiness and 20% unhappiness. A *Sotāpanna* has 70% happiness and unhappiness at 30%. A formless *brahma* has 60% happiness and 40% unhappiness. Form *brahma* has 50% happiness and 50% unhappiness. That's the way it is - falling and descending down in this way until it reaches the level of human beings. Humans do not have inherent happiness or unhappiness since their stored positive and negative merit is depleted and has to scramble around seeking happiness. If ignorance underlies our world-view, we will seek happiness through methods that will build up demerit and bad *kamma*. People who create demerit and bad *kamma* are also seeking happiness, such as those whose livelihood depends upon killing animals. They seek happiness by working to support their own body and then using the remaining money to buy happiness through the eyes, ears, nose, tongue and body - buying sweet desserts to eat, buying soft drinks to drink, watching movies and going out to all sorts of places. This is to seek happiness. Because as humans, happiness is not

inherent within ourselves and so we end up being ignorant and fooling ourselves into creating demerit to get happiness. When the time comes to die, the mind will fall into negativity. Dwelling on a level less than 0, the mind will have to be reborn as animals. As for those who are fearful and protective of themselves, they create demerit by hurting others who come to harm them. These people will fall even lower into negativity.

By doing wrong out of craving, desiring to be prosperous and rich, wanting sensual pleasures immensely, people will become hungry ghosts. Again, by creating demerit out of spitefulness, hatred and vengefulness, people go to hell. These are issues related to us as human beings existing right here and now. Humans have a choice of which path to take – the path of positivity or the path of negativity. Animals have no choice as to which path to take. An animal has to create demerit and bad *kamma* so as to be able to support its life in order to continue to live, except for those animals that need not bite or eat others such as those animals that feed on vegetables, leaves and other such food. These animals do not

create much bad kamma as compared to lions and tigers that eat other animals for food. These are matters concerning the mind of all of us, which is deathless. The minds of our ancestors who have passed away also do not die. Only the body dies. As to where the mind is, it depends on the value or worth of the mind: is it in a state of negativity or positivity? If it is positive, then it will dwell with bliss and happiness as a heavenly angel, *brahma* or noble one. If it is negative, then it may be an animal, hungry ghost, demon or hell being.

In this way, the mind moves up and down in accordance with actions undertaken as a human. When it dwells in other realms it does not create much merit or demerit because other realms are places where we receive the results of our good and bad actions. When falling into hell it is just like being caught and imprisoned in a jail or cage and as such the mind will not be able to do more evil. It will thus remain in prison until the end of its jail term and punishment. Once the punishment is completed it will be reborn again as a human. This human existence is what creates merit and demerit. It is

the causal realm; a realm that concocts the causes to arise. For other realms are places where we receive the results. Those making much merit, upon dying, will receive the result as heavenly angels, *brahmas* or noble ones (*āriyas*). Conversely, people who do evil (who act unskillfully) will become animals, demons, hungry ghosts or end up in hell based on the gravity of the demerit or merit done before.

The mind just moves up and down endlessly until it acquires merit at a level when it will not regress. Once it has merit at the level of +70 or above, it will never regress. There will be fewer future rebirths. An example is at the level of +70, we will at most return as a human seven times before attaining enlightenment as an *Arahant*. If we do not return as a human, we can also proceed with our practice, creating merit further in higher realms, because those who already have merit at +70 can do without a physical body. They can continue to practise in the heavenly or *brahma* worlds until finally reaching the level of an *Arahant*. At the stage of an *Arahant*, the level of *Nibbāna*, +100, the mind will never

be dragged down again. The mind will dwell at +100 forever, without ever coming to an end. This is the mind of the Buddhas and all of the *Arahants*. With regard to this some may wonder whether such minds can communicate with others. The answer is yes, communication is possible. Take *Luangpu Mun* - when he entered *samādhī*, his mind entered the supramundane world. His mind closed off the door to the world of elements and shut off the eyes, ears, nose, tongue and body, and proceeded into the supramundane world to know the *kamma* of whatever is in that world. If those in the supramundane world have any issues to discuss, they can communicate as well. For instance the mind of the Buddha could communicate with his mother who passed away seven days after giving birth to him. After she died, her mind was in a positive state and was reborn as a heavenly angel. After the Buddha's enlightenment, he could use his brilliant mind to find his mother. Since communication was possible, he could teach her until she became a *Sotāpanna*. After becoming a *Sotāpanna*, the Buddha's mother could practise on her own without a teacher. A *Sotāpanna* is

like one who has a map that will enable one to walk the path until reaching enlightenment by oneself. Those who have entered the stream leading to *Nibbāna* are called *Sotāpanna*. Comparing this to driving, it is like they have already merged onto the highway. Since they are already on the highway, they will eventually reach the destination by themselves. This highway does not split and has road signs all along the way pointing out how to get to the destination.

This is direct communication between minds. However, the mind has to be in *samādhi*, which is a state of calm. Those who are able to enter *samādhi* and have acquired this special ability will be able to communicate with all kinds of spiritual beings. *Luangpu Mun* mentioned that Buddhas and *Arahants* came to present Dhamma to him frequently. Even the current Buddha, *Gotama* had heavenly angels come listen to his Dhamma teaching every night. The Buddha taught laypeople in the afternoon, monks and novices in the evening and heavenly angels late at night. *Luangpu Mun* had heavenly angels coming to listen to his Dhamma talks

frequently in the same manner as well. But this had to be done only when *Luangpu Mun* had entered *samādhi*. This is similar to us communicating through the internet nowadays. To do so, we have to first log onto the internet for communication to be possible. Sitting here right now we cannot communicate. We need to switch on the equipment and get online in order for communication to be possible.

Those who have brilliant, powerful minds are able to read the mental responses of others. Whatever we might be thinking as we sit here, and someone else would know what we are thinking about. Our thoughts and emotions are just like radio waves. Whoever tunes the receiver to the right frequency will be able to detect the mental waves of our thinking, knowing what we are currently thinking about. At times, heavenly angels can know our thinking and may seek out the thing that we want for us. If we have merit and have been a benefactor to the heavenly angels before, or if we have had close bonds in the past, then the heavenly angels will make it happen. The angels may not be able to find

it by themselves, so they might enter the dream of another person to suggest they acquire it to ease so and so's restlessness. The dreamer wakes up in the morning and has a strong urge to quickly look for that person. Having found them in a restless state, the dreamer can help immediately. These matters are called divine and supernatural. They appear to be deep and amazing to those who don't study and practise, but to those who have studied and practised, such events will not seem so deep or amazing.

Know that such knowledge is not significant compared to building up merit to reach the level of +100. Such knowledge and matters are not able to influence merit to or demerit. The arising of merit and demerit is dependent on the actions of our body, speech and mind. However, experiential knowledge sometimes includes those who are able to know their past lives and screen their previous existences. What were we in the previous life or the life before that? In this way, they can trace one life after another continuously. This is because the mind has the power and ability to dig and sort out

memories that were buried deep within. But even then, this ability to recall past lives will not cause the mind to have more merit. It is not possible to become an *Arahant* from using this ability, nor a *Sotāpanna* or any other noble attainments. The same is true of using the ability to read the minds of others. These abilities are just means to an end. That's all. For instance, contacting the Buddhas and *Arahants* to receive the Dhamma can help by teaching us and pointing out the proper techniques to train our minds to reach *Nibbāna*. However, contact with the Buddhas and *Arahants* will not lead us to *Nibbāna* automatically. We still need to put their teachings into practise. That is, we ought to practise generosity, maintain our virtue, develop calm and insight meditation as mentioned before.

Therefore, whether we meet the Buddha or not is not significant. What is important is for us to know how we practice. Once we know this, whether we meet up with them or not is no longer an issue. But if we have not heard the Dhamma and can meet them, it would be truly beneficial and helpful. For example, when Buddhism no

longer exists in the world, entering *samādhi* to allow the Buddhas and *Arahants* to teach us would be a blessing indeed. Then we will be the only ones in the world taught by the Buddhas and *Arahants* because during that period there won't be anyone else who will be able to teach. Just like it was for the latest Buddha who did not have anyone to teach him; even though he was able to enter *samādhi*, there wasn't anyone that came to teach and point the way out to him. Alternatively, it could be that he chose not to send his mind out to know external phenomena. Maybe that's why no one came to teach him. It is like when we switch off our mobile phone and whatever message others send is not able to reach us. We have to switch the phone on if we want to receive it.

When we enter *samādhi*, there are two possible options. We can choose to open our mental faculties to receive the mental frequencies of others or switch off our telepathic. In order for us to enter *samādhi* for the sake of full and complete calm, we have to shut everything out and not acknowledge anything at all. This is

because we have to build up the mind's strength, to build up the basic foundation of the mind. This has to be *samādhi* that does not go out to know all kinds of external phenomena or issues. If it is the *samādhi* that goes out to know all kinds of phenomena, the mind will receive this information and be weakened by it causing it to lack the strength and power of equanimity that is necessary to fight against all kinds of desire, which causes us to commit demerit and leads us through this round of perpetual death and rebirth.

Those who want to reach *Nibbāna* have to destroy desire so the mind can be empty of it completely. To be able to cause desire to be utterly gone, we need to have the type of *samādhi* that closes the mind's doors, that does not receive any phenomena whatsoever. Not going on a tour of hell, not going on a tour of heaven, not contacting the heavenly angels, but instead we should stay within *samādhi* that is merely aware, equanimity without any thinking or imagination, without receiving and knowing various phenomena and issues. *Samādhi* like this should go hand-in-hand with the mind for it to

proceed to the level of wisdom, the level of insight, to be able to fight against desire, to destroy desire of all kinds so that it may be completely gone. If we have the kind of *samādhi* that opens to receive and know all sorts of phenomena, our mind will not have enough strength. When we come out of *samādhi*, we will be too weak and not calm and clear enough to fight against our desires.

This is similar to sleeping. If people dream while sleeping, they will not be refreshed and strong when they wake up. However those who sleep deeply without dreaming will be refreshed upon awakening and have the power to tackle all the issues that come their way. Those of us who need to build up the foundation of the mind, build up the power of the mind, should enter into the *samādhi* that does not acknowledge outside phenomena. For, if we are to acknowledge all kinds of phenomena, it will hinder the development of wisdom. Coming out of that type of *samādhi* we will not have the power to investigate into the Four Noble Truths, *anicca* (impermanence), *dukkha* (stress) and *anattā* (not-self). If we have not seen the Four Noble Truths, *anicca*,

dukkha and *anattā*, we will not be able to stop desire. Therefore, those who are not yet free from *dukkha* should be careful and circumspect. Do not be attached to *samādhi* that receives too many kinds of phenomena. We may perhaps choose to be open to such knowledge only sometimes according to a predetermined schedule, say once a week. This is because if we were to receive such knowledge every day, it would waste a lot of time. We wouldn't have the power to practise to the highest level, to the level of *vipassanā* (insight).

These are matters concerning the mind that is deathless. Our minds right now still dwell in the supramundane world. When the body expires, merit and demerit will enter into the balance sheet, fight over the mind for it to go up or down. If our goodness has more strength, it will pull us up to become heavenly angels, *brahmas* or noble, enlightened ones. If our unskillful qualities have more strength, it will drag us down to become animals, demons, hungry ghosts or hell beings. Thus going in this way we receive the consequences of our good and bad actions until either one of these is

finished or if both merit and demerit is equally balanced, then we will return as humans, building up merit and demerit all over again.

If we are reborn in an era when Buddhism is still in existence, then there will be people who will remind and teach us to do good and avoid evil. For instance, all Buddhas teach us to do good, give up anything unskillful and stop desire. If we believe the teachings, we will then practise accordingly and will be able to build up our mind's positivity until reaching +100. Once it reaches +100, there is no need to return and be reborn again. There is no need to return to this round of perpetual birth and death. Already at +70, there is no need to return as a human again. Future births may be in the heavenly or *brahma* realms until ultimately becoming an *Arahant*.

If there is no Buddhist religion, then there will be no one to teach people to make merit, give up demerit and stop desire. People will then continue to make demerit and not make merit. They will act according to their desire,

just like people these days who neither believe in Buddhism nor come to the temple. People who do not come to the temple will mostly dislike doing good and instead like to act unskillfully and delight in actions that follow the commands of all sorts of desires. Having done wrong by following desires of all sorts, the mind upon dying will become negative and will have to be reborn as an animal, hungry ghost, demon or fall into a hell.

Therefore, our life is considered to be very special because we have people to frequently remind us frequently to do good, to give up evil and stop desire. If we are able to do that, then when we die our mind is likely to be more positive than negative. Whether the level of goodness is more or less depends on to what degree we make merit, give up demerit and stop desire. If we are able to completely end desire, we will reach the full +100 mark, attaining total *Nibbāna*. These are matters concerning the minds of all of us, and it is our responsibility as to whether we are interested in building up positivity or negativity within our minds. It is dependent upon three aspects of our own actions,

namely to do good, give up evil and stop all kinds of desire. If we can do that until reaching the full marks, +100, *Nibbāna* will be the natural result. If we are not able to do that, hell might be the resultant consequence. There is absolutely no one else who can deliver us to *Nibbāna* or send us to hell. It all lies with ourselves as to whether we are able to do good, give up evil and stop desire. That's all there is to it.

May you take up this teaching regarding the mind, which is deathless, which dwells in the supramundane world, to contemplate and practise for the highest bliss and happiness.

End of *desanā*

Questions & Answers

Tan Ajaan: Does anyone wish to ask any questions concerning areas that are unclear to you?

Question Male1 (M1): Luangpor (Venerable Father), is selling weapons demeritorious?

Tan Ajaan: It's not demeritorious, but it does encourage others to commit demerit.

Question M1: What about selling animal traps?

Tan Ajaan: Yes, all of that is not right livelihood. It is best not to do it. We are Buddhists and it is not proper for us to encourage others to commit demerit and bad *kamma*. They may turn on us. After selling weapons to them, they may be dissatisfied with it and return to shoot us down in anger.

Question M1: What about knives and tools sold in the shop?

Tan Ajaan: If the items are not used to kill others, then there is no problems. But if they were used to kill, we wouldn't be able to help or prevent it. This is because to kill a person, a rock could also do the job.

Question M1: Is selling animals like cows demeritorious?

Tan Ajaan: Not demeritorious, but only wrong livelihood. That's all. For it to be demeritorious, there has to be killing of animals, stealing, sexual misconduct, lying and cheating. These are called demeritorious actions.

Question M1: Is selling animal meat such as beef, chicken or fish demeritorious?

Tan Ajaan: If it is not killed by us, then it is not wrong. But if we instruct someone to kill, then it is. For instance, suppose we give an order to the stall selling live chickens that we want three live chickens slaughtered

tomorrow. We sell rice with chicken and placing an order in advance for the chickens is a demerit. However, if instead we choose to go to the market and buy meat that is already slaughtered, it is not a demerit. Demerit arises from instructing others to kill or doing it ourselves.

Question M1: Doesn't this show that it is improper to sell weapons, tools, beef and other meats in the shop?

Tan Ajaan: Some items are not weapons meant for killing people. Those can be sold; if they can be used to bring benefits, then you can sell them..... (speaking to other members of the audience leaving). Make merit continuously so that your mind becomes positive and do not commit evil so as not to fall into negativity.

Question Master of Ceremony (MC): Today we have two or three questions (from Tan Ajaan Suchart's Facebook page).

Tan Ajaan: Ok, proceed.

Question MC: We have a question from Khun Deng. If one has thoughts that are demeritorious, how should one restrain or turn them around into meritorious thoughts.

Tan Ajaan: Well, see those thoughts as disgusting and revolting. Once we see it like that, we will stop that thinking. However, if we do not yet see it as disgusting and revolting, we will not be able to stop it. For example with the thought of killing another person, we reflect that we might be put into jail or be killed by that person instead. If fear arises with the thought of punishment resulting from murder, we will be afraid and not do anything. Stopping will then be possible.

Question MC: The next question comes from Khun Tim. Do *saññā* (memory), *sankhāra* (thinking), *viññāṇa* (consciousness) and *vedanā* (feelings), only exist when we are alive?

Tan Ajaan: As long as the mind is there, these will also exist. As was explained in the Dhamma talk earlier on,

vedanā, *saññā*, *sankhāra* and *viññāṇa* are properties of the mind, and arise out of the mind. If the mind exists, these also exist. For the Buddha to communicate with us, he has to use *saññā* and *sankhāra*; he has to thinking and imagination to contact us. Therefore, if the mind exists, *vedanā*, *saññā*, *sankhāra*, *viññāṇa* also exist. The only difference is whether they are in operation or not. That's all. For instance, when we enter *samādhi*, they will stop operation temporarily. It is like a car that has accessories like air-conditioning or the radio. Their operation is dependent on whether or not we use it. If the driver stops driving and shuts down the electronics and engine, then everything will shut down temporarily. When the driver returns to driving the engine, air-conditioning and radio will again start operating. It all depends on the driver, or the mind, whether these things are used or not. We think that we can solve certain problems, but there is no end to the problems that can be solved. It is just a question of whether to do it or not. If we are to sit and enter *samādhi* and be still without thinking and imagining, then *saññā* and *sankhāra* will also stop working. Once we come out

of *samādhi*, we will gradually start thinking and imagining and so *saññā*, *sankhāra*, *viññāṇa* and *vedanā* will also be working anew.

Question MC: Our next question is from Khun Anchalar. After sitting in meditation for one hour, staying with the breath and repeating the mantra “*Buddho*” with mindfulness of any feelings that arise, why was there no sudden change of awareness into stillness as taught by Phra Ajaan? As I came out of this meditation, I felt a little tired and mentally drained. Was it my poor health that caused these symptoms of tiredness?

Tan Ajaan: When we do not experience calmness and peace in sitting meditation, we will feel tired after coming out of it. This is because there is a battle between Dhamma and *kilesas* (defilement) that leaves us feeling drained. However, if our mind is calm after sitting because Dhamma gained victory, then our tiredness will disappear. A mind steeped in calmness has strength and will not feel tired. Sometimes after meditation practice, we may feel sore all over the body because of

not having any calmness. Stress and painful feelings arise out of the battle between Dhamma and the *kilesas*. Whenever Dhamma has more strength, it is because mindfulness has enough strength to stop the volitions of *kilesa* and desire. When desire stops and accepts defeat, then everything will drop into calmness and become still without any rebellion at all. Thus, not much mental strength is used. Coming out of such meditation, we will not feel sore or fatigued, even if we continue sitting longer. This is not true when we are not calm. It depends on whether the mind is calm or not. If the mind is calm already, then there will not be any feelings of strain, fatigue or tiredness, and instead we will be greatly rejuvenated. On the other hand, if we do not still our minds during meditation, fighting back and forth, enduring stress and pain, we will feel drained after the sitting. This is just like playing tug-of-war. If both sides pull with equal strength and do not relent, then neither side is victorious or defeated. But both sides will be thoroughly worn out. However, if Dhamma is victorious, there will instantly be stillness and lightness. The rope will not be taut if either end is let go. The same goes

with the mind. If the *kilesas* are willing to be defeated, then tension will melt away. Stress and discontentment within the mind will disappear completely. The mind will be cool, comfortable and light as if it is floating in the clouds. There will be only lightness and comfort. No matter how long we sit, feelings of strain or pain do not arise. This is the result that comes when the mind is calm, without which we will feel tired coming out of meditation. For the battle between Dhamma and the *kilesas* has not reached a resolution. Understand? Anymore questions?

Question MC: No more.

Tan Ajaan: Whoever has questions may post them on the Internet, on Facebook. But you will need to be patient and wait for the answer. The person who asks on your behalf will key in the answer to Facebook. This is suitable for people who live far away and are not able to come themselves. If the questions come through email, there may not be time to answer because writing a reply takes up too much time. It is not as easy as

speaking, which only takes a few moments. One minute of speaking will take up to five minutes to write. In addition, if the written reply is not clear, then one needs to ask further questions. Going back and forth in this way may take a long time and become difficult. The best way to ask questions is to come here in person. However, you may instead try to solve the problem by thinking it out first rather than asking others endlessly whenever problems arise.

We have mindfulness and wisdom just like others, so why not use it? Try using our mindfulness and wisdom first until we come to a dead end before seeking the opportunity to ask others. Do not automatically rush to ask others whenever we run into problems. Instead, try to use our own mindfulness and wisdom to investigate and see how it turns out. The more we use wisdom, the cleverer and more capable we become. If we keep on asking others, then ignorance will continually increase. Wisdom will not arise within us because we do not use it. Therefore, unless it is truly necessary, do not ask anyone. If we ask a question, we should also be able to

answer it ourselves. The question comes from us and the answer also lies in our heart. For all questions, be it about meditation practice or our life, I can say that all problems arise out of our desires. Discontentment and unhappiness only arises out of our mind. If we want to extinguish our discontentment and unhappiness, then we should stop our own desire. Ask ourselves, “Right now, what am I discontented with?” With my husband? With my wife? Isn’t it because of wanting him or her to be a certain way that we don’t have ease and happiness in our mind? If we want mental ease and happiness, then let it go. Do not want him or her to be like this or like that. Whatever way he or she is, let it go as his or her problem. We shall be stressed-free and will not have any problem with him or her. This is the heart of solving 100% of our problems, all of which arise from our very own mind, our own desires. For once desire arises, the mind is immediately agitated and unhappy. If we can stop desire, mental irritation and unhappiness will disappear. The fact is, we should see *anicca* (impermanence), *dukkha* (stress-discontent) and *anattā* (not-self). We should see our wife or husband as

ownerless, as *anattā*, because we cannot control him or her as they do not belong to us. We may sometimes be able to get him or her to do our bidding, to do this or that but it is not always possible. Sometimes, he or she will do it, sometimes he or she won't. If we really want ease and comfort of mind, then we should accept others' wishes. If he or she does not do as we requested then let the matter rest then and there. If we decide not to give out any commands or express any of our wishes that would be much better. Whatever we want to do, we just do it by ourselves. Delight in whatever is available to us. We can then be confident that there won't be any problems. He or she may smile at us, scold us, and be displeased with us or whatever it may be. Just let him or her go and see it as a matter concerning him or herself. Almost all problems arise out of our own desires. To elaborate, if we want to stop and resolve the problem, we should see that he or she is *anattā*, *anicca* and *dukkha*. If we do not bother others, we will have mental ease and comfort and will not be distressed or frustrated by them. Therefore, whatever problems come our way, try using wisdom to solve the problem. We are the ones

that cause the problem to arise, so why should we not be able to resolve the problem ourselves. We create our issues so why not solve them ourselves. Problems are born out of our own desire. The method to solve the problem is just to stop our own desire. Problems will then be gone completely. It is to this that the Buddha became enlightened, which is called the **Four Noble Truths**. Discontentment (Dukkha) in the mind is the problem - a discomforted and unhappy mind. The Buddha proclaimed that it is born out of three types of desire - *kamma taṇhā*, craving for visual objects, sounds, aromas, flavors, and sex. *Bhava taṇhā* is the craving to have and become, desire for it to be like this or like that. *Vibhava taṇhā* is the desire not to have or not to become. Not wanting it to be like this, and instead wanting it to be like that. This is called *vibhava taṇhā*. If we have desire such as this within our mind, discontentment and stress will arise. For example, we do not want to grow old, be in pain or die. These desires are all *vibhava taṇhā*. However, if we accept the truth that we will have to experience pain, old age and death, and it cannot be prevented, we will stop this desire and

not be troubled by pain, old age and death. We have to see *anicca*, *dukkha* and *anattā* - especially *anattā*. We should see that we cannot prohibit our husband or wife from doing as they will nor can we command him or her to act as we wish. Demanding that the body not age, feel pain or die is impossible. If we do not want to grow old, feel pain or die, then refrain from wanting to be born. That's it. For us not to be born, we should stop desiring because it is desire that propels us to birth. If we still have desire for sex or visual objects, sounds, aromas, flavours and tactile sensations, then when we do not have eyes, ears, nose, tongue, and body, we will seek out new eyes, ears, a nose, tongue and body as replacements. Nowadays, people who are blind can seek out new eyes, so that they can see. If people have no desire, then they just let it be. It is not necessary to have a replacement, not necessary to see. If we have desire and are blind, and artificial eyes or eyes donated by others become available, we will want them implanted immediately. If there aren't any to be found, once this body passes away, we will seek out a new body and return to be born once more. Instead, if we

were to wait, accept and live through the consequences of our kamma until they pass away, then when our mind is at a higher level, we will return as a human afresh. If we dwelled in negativity, we would first have to exhaust the resulting punishments. If we dwelled in positivity, we would first have to receive the rewards and only after that would we return to birth again. If there is no more desire, then there is no need to be born again. If there is no birth, there will be no pain, old age or death, no need to have problems of all kinds that all of us experience. We have problems of all kinds because we have a body. If there is no body, there are no problems such as old age, pain, death and separation from one another. The Buddha taught that there is no suffering and discontentment for one who has no birth. Whoever has the desire for birth within themselves will still have the potentiality for suffering. If we do not want suffering, we should act according to the teachings of the Buddha. Make merit, give up demerit and stop desire successfully. If we can do that, then we will not forever be in the round of perpetual death and rebirth.

Question M2: Should a *Sotāpanna* enter into *samādhi* and investigate just like the other levels of noble ones?

Tan Ajaan: Well, desire has ten factors altogether. A *Sotāpanna* is able to stop three factors of delusion that cause desire. The first is *sakkāya-ditṭhi*, delusion which sees that the five *khandhas* - body, feeling, memory, thinking and senses consciousness as myself, as belonging to me. In truth, they do not. The body is merely a puppet that we acquire through our father and mother. Feeling, memory, thinking and sense consciousness are conditions of the mind that arise and cease in line with various conditions and supporting factors. If there are causes that create it, it will arise. If there are causes that condition it to stop, it will stop. It is not us, and does not belong to us. If we can give up *sakkaya-ditṭhi*, we can become a *Sotāpanna*, for we will be able to remove our desire to not experience old age, pain and death. We will be able to see that we cannot wish the body to be otherwise. Wishing it not to be old, feel pain or die is not possible. A *Sotāpanna* will thus accept old age, pain and death and therefore will not be

afraid of old age, pain and death. Not fearing pain and death, they will not create demerit and will not be involved with any ritual to repel bad luck so as to safeguard their life or disperse away pain and illness. When we are about to die or are in pain and sickness, we make merit to repel difficulties. It is too troublesome to make merit at nine or ten temples so as to avert death, sickness and pain. But making merit like this is futile. If we have to die while working, we will still die. If we have to fall sick and be in pain, we will still have to experience sickness and pain.

Question M2: An *Anāgāmi* has to contemplate the body all the time but does a *Sotāpanna*, need to do the same everyday as well?

Tan Ajaan: Yes, they both contemplate the body but there is a difference. A *Sotāpanna* will contemplate aging, pain and death as something natural. They contemplate that it is just a body, not us or belonging to us, just like the bodies of other people. We need not be too troubled if it becomes old, feels pain or dies. It is not

a matter that concerns us. We are the mind, which senses and knows impartially without attachment.

Question M2: Then if we contemplate like this continuously everyday.....

Tan Ajaan: We should be able to let the body go first. Once we are willing to let the body go, we should try staying alone in the forest, staying in places that put us in situations that border on life and death. Encountering a snake or tiger, will our mind still be stable and calm? If our mind lets the body go, then we will be stable and calm. But if we are tense and panicky, it shows that our mind has not yet let go of the body. For if we can let go of the body, there will not be any doubt about the truth of the Buddha, Dhamma and Sangha. It is the teachings of the Buddha that we use to extinguish the *kilesas* that enables us to become a *Sotāpanna*. The teaching thus become real and there will no longer be any doubt about the Buddha, Dhamma and Sangha. Furthermore, we will not participate in any rituals that repel bad luck so as to extend our life or make merit when we fall into sickness

or pain to make it go away. These are just a waste of time because a *Sotāpanna* is willing to accept old age, pain and death. Even after conducting rituals and making merit we will still have to be old, feel pain and die. So it is just a total waste of time. As such, we will not have anything to do with rituals and this is called *Sīlabbata–parāmāsa*. We are not attached to any rituals or superstitions because all these activities cannot prevent difficulties or extend our life. It is just not possible.

Question M2: Would Ajaan clarify the various aspects of the third precept (abstain from sexual misconduct)? For example, should we only have (sexual) relationships after marriage or does engaging in (sexual) services break this precept.

Tan Ajaan: Misconduct here refers to the generally held views or customs of society. As they say so, so shall it be. There are people who have four wives and yet this does not go against their social customs. Do you understand? In a society that upholds having only one

wife then having two wives would be conventionally and socially wrong.

Question M2: After reaching 18 years of age in Thailand we are considered legally free from parental supervision. Would sexual relationships be acceptable?

Tan Ajaan: Well, it depends on the social norms. This precept enables us to live at ease in a society where all sorts of views and opinions prevail. Old social customs require us to seek parental arrangement and approval before marriage. Seeking marriage by ourselves breaks social norms, doesn't it? It depends on the society we live in. People in the old days would discuss and make arrangements beforehand to set up the marriage ritual. Compare this to society nowadays - we need no approval or anything, and can just marry anyone we fancy. The important thing is to stay together and be sincere with each other. If we are insincere, we may die. Do you understand? [Laugh....]

Question M2: What about the Buddha's standard for applying the 3rd precepts?

Tan Ajaan: The Buddha takes the middle way depending on the situation and the causes and conditions of each society. Whatever the social norms, we have to act accordingly. For the Buddha teaches us to understand social standards. We who live in society should know the customs and what is proper. If we want to live in that society, we need to act according to its social codes and norms.

Question M2 : These days it is widely held that “eating fruit only after it is ripe” (i.e. having a sexual relationship only after marriage) is too rigid and strict.

Tan Ajaan: This shows that the social norms and customs of the people have gone down. Desires have gone up greatly. Humbleness and restraint have gone down. We are impatient to wait for the fruits to ripen, so we eat it plain and unripe. Instead of eating sticky rice

with sweet mangoes, we eat sticky rice with plain mangoes.

Question M2: What about people not in a relationship who use sexual services? Do they break the 3rd precepts?

Tan Ajaan: What do you think?

Question M2: Well, if I do not force the other partner, and both people are agreeable, I think it would not break the 3rd precept.

Tan Ajaan: If you say it is not wrong, then it is not wrong as it pertains to you.

Question M2: What does Tan Ajaan think? A *Sotāpanna* should be pure with regards to this precept in every detail, so at times when contemplating this, I am not able to reconcile and figure a way out, for me living as a lay person.....

Tan Ajaan: We would not be different from animals by using such services. Do you understand? A dog just goes after whatever it fancies without any concern for ownership. If we wish to be like a dog, we can use sexual services - just call and make an appointment. But if we wish to be human, there will be marriage and staying together as a couple. This is the way of humans. If we wish to be animals, then just go to the bar or pub, pay and pick up anyone and go to the hotel. This is similar to dogs in heat. Have you ever seen them? Dogs in heat are many. Whoever they fancy, the stronger ones will compete and fight to have sexual intercourse with it. Weaker dogs can only follow and stand there looking longingly with saliva drooping from their mouths.

Question Female1 (F1): Tan Ajaan, I have a question. Some people say that there is no need to make merit and to just proceed straight to practising meditation. But then there is a monk who said that we should first practise making merit by giving up possessions before we can eventually let go of the body.

Tan Ajaan: By ‘making merit’ you mean giving to charity, making donations and giving up possessions, right? Making merit have several stages. Maintaining our precepts is merit; practising meditation is also merit. Giving is also merit. Which aspects of merit are you referring to?

Question F1: By ‘making merit’ here, I mean giving (*dāna*). First we give and then once we can give up our possessions, we can then let go of the body.

Tan Ajaan: Yes, if we cannot even give up something which is easy, then how can we give up something that is difficult? Do you love your body more than your money and possessions, or your money and possessions more than your body?

Question F1: How do you know how much to give up before you are ready to undertake the next practice?

Tan Ajaan : Well, take the example of the Buddha, who left his palace. You can also leave your home and stay in the temple. That's all there is to it. This shows that you have truly given up and renounced; you are totally broke with only enough money for food and requisites to support your daily existence. Doing this is giving up and truly making merit. What you are doing now (as a layperson) is just the initial practise, a little bit here and there. Say you have 100-Baht, you give up 10-Baht first, keeping 90-Baht. But truly to do it sincerely, you should give away the entire 100-Baht. Do you understand? Coming to practise meditation, we will gain good results. Maintaining the precepts will be easy and our virtue will be pure. This is because once we do not need assets or possessions, we need not make demerit. People create demerit because of wanting to have assets and possessions.

Question F2: Ajaan, may I ask a question related to meditation? When I sit in meditation, sometimes certain experience occurs. While reciting "*Buddho*" continuously, unexpectedly there was a "woop" and

everything disappeared even though I was not sleepy. It was 30 minutes later that I regained self-awareness. Repeating “*Buddho*” the second time...“woop” - everything disappeared again. Then self-awareness returned.

Tan Ajaan: By disappearing, what was it like? When it disappeared did you have self-awareness?

Question F3: No self-awareness.

Tan Ajaan: If there was no self-awareness then that was falling asleep.

Question F3: Oh! But I wasn't sleepy.

Tan Ajaan: Well, weren't sleepy because you were already asleep.....There is no need to be sleepy, for at times when the mind has nothing to do, it just falls asleep easily. If the mind enters *samādhī*, there should be self-awareness all the time, just like there is as we talk right now..... Know that right now, our mind is not

thinking, concocting or imagining. We are cool and relaxed with happiness. In this way, it is called calm and bliss. Otherwise, if it goes “woop” it will be like it was for you. This shows that you went beyond calmness and fell asleep.

Question F3: But if I am just unaware of myself....

Tan Ajaan: That is definitely falling asleep.

Question F3: There are times during sitting meditation when I see white light which is narrow and wide.

Tan Ajaan: This can arise; just do not pay attention and return back to continue with your meditation subject. Phenomena such as these can arise during the phase when the mind is entering calm, including feelings of ecstasy, the flowing of tears, and the appearance of brilliant light. We should not take any interest in phenomena like these. We should just continue with meditating “*Buddho*”. Keep going with it, until the mind enters *appanā samādhi* (a non-dual, unified mental

state), and becomes calm and peaceful where thinking and imagining, colour, light or whatever there is completely disappears leaving only *ekaggatārom* (oneness). We are the knower; just that which knows. It is only in this way that you can truly call it calm. However, if we take an interest in light, colour, images (*nimitta*) or all sorts of other issues, we have lost the way. We have stopped meditating; we have gone on tour. In meditation, we do not need to see heaven, hell or spiritual beings. There is no need for the supernatural or miracles. We only need stillness. Calmness and stillness can be the supporting means to kill off and fight against the *kilesas*. Calmness may not kill *kilesas* on its own but it does weaken the *kilesas*, enabling us to use wisdom to teach the mind to stop and kill off the *kilesas*. Therefore, while sitting in meditation, do not take an interest in whatever arises or is seen. It is not important. These are results that may arise. Some may see it, while others may not. It is not the same for everyone. The only experience common to everyone is when the mind becomes calm. It will then be still and contented, cool and relaxed, and will stay in equanimity - just that

which knows. Stay in this state and just let it be until the mind comes out of its own accord. Do not want to use it to contemplate and think in the path of wisdom. For sitting is for the sake of achieving physical and mental calmness, and by using it immediately the mind will not be sufficiently rejuvenated and will have yet to charge up its battery. Having stillness is like charging a battery - it builds up coolness, builds up contentment for the mind. With greater coolness and contentment, the mind will have greater strength to fight against desire. Coming out of *samādhi*, we will gradually be agitated and will think of wanting this or that and we will suffer. But if our mindfulness can keep up what's happening and use wisdom to teach the mind to not want it, we will not suffer. There is no end to this continuous wanting. Wanting this once will be followed by more wanting. By teaching ourselves in this way, wanting will come to an end.

Question F3: Phra Ajaan, I truly want to practise the path, and whenever I have free time I sit in meditation. Right now, I am still working. After work, I return to my

practise. Going in this way regularly, I am able to get the results mentioned before.

Tan Ajaan: Good. Before one can get the result of *samādhi*, we must first develop *sati* throughout the day, for it is mindfulness that causes *samādhi* to arise. If we choose to develop mindfulness only during sitting meditation, then it will not be enough. The strength will not be enough. We should develop mindfulness as an inherent part of our daily life. Upon waking up, we should restrain our thinking. Do not think of this or that which is not necessary. Stay with “*Buddho*” or stay with guarding and watching over our body in whatever it is doing.

Question F3: Sometimes “*Buddho*” slips off and I am aware that thinking arises, but I stop and return back to “*Buddho*”, thereby stopping thinking.

Tan Ajaan: Yes, yes.....If thinking does not stop, then use “*Buddho*” to stop it. Just keep repeating “*Buddho*”.

Question F3: Truly “*Buddho*” is much easier.....

Tan Ajaan: Yes, yes. Stop thinking and let the mind stay with the here and now so it knows equanimity, know what we are presently doing. However, while working we can use thinking if it is necessary. Thinking about the work that we are involved in, like thinking about the accounting sheet, is okay. If we keep repeating “*Buddho*”, we may not be able to work on the accounting sheet.

Question F3: Working like this, we will not be able to fully meditate and reach up to +70 and above....

Tan Ajaan: You can choose to work or.....you can instead ordain, so that you will have the time. Whatever manner you ordain is acceptable. Ordaining and staying at home is also acceptable. Taking up the eight precepts, staying at home alone, giving up your job is also considered an ordained practitioner. Depending on the temple it is often best to stay in a temple if it is peaceful and quiet. That is better than staying at home,

but that is not a certainty nowadays. It is difficult to tell which is better - your home or the temple. This is because of many causes and supporting factors. Staying in a temple with a good meditation teacher is the best. The teacher will teach and remind us frequently. By staying alone we may end up on the wrong path and without anyone to turn to when confronted with obstacles. It is good if you can walk this path. This is the best and right decision. Nothing in this world is better than this; to be able to meditate 100%.

Question F3: (Related her stay with Luangpu Jit in Hat Yai

Tan Ajaan: Well, this is good. Keep on with your practice. We have to seek out a place of practice for ourselves. When there isn't a suitable place then practise in your home. If you can stay alone, it can also lead to peace and calm. Practise in your home for a start.

Question F3: Another thing I wish to mention is that this period of meditation practice resulted in me being slow while working.

Tan Ajaan: Slow.....well the practice is going against the grain, just like a ship that hasn't pulled up its anchor. Being generous is like pulling up the anchor. Give up seeking money and using money - enough is enough. By not using money, there is no need to look for money. Not seeking money, we will have time to fully devote to meditation. If we have to use money then we will still have to work for it. If we have accumulated sufficient savings we also need not seek money. We will then have time to meditate, to stay in seclusion, to stay alone. For meditation to be good, we should stay alone in places far away from sights, sounds, smells and tastes. Well, there seems to be quite a few people here planning to quit their jobs...

Audience: Ajaan is encouraging us to ordain....
[Laughter in the audience.]

Tan Ajaan: Some of them have already ordained as *Mei Chee* (white robe nuns). Through my acquaintance, there are already three. Women have a few more difficulties, but it is not beyond their ability. There are women who can gain enlightenment. *Khun Mae Kaew*, the disciple of *luangpu Mun*. Another one is *Khao Suan Luang* in Ratchaburi. You are your own refuge (*attāhi attana nātho*). It depends on our own diligence and interest in practising correctly. No one can do it for us. We have to do it ourselves. We have to build it up. Ordaining as a monk but not practising meditation is the same as someone not ordaining at all. Some gain popularity as a monk through the wrong ways and practise no meditation. Today, our Sangha has lost its way. The vast majority does not go into the forest but delights in going to shops and department. Nowadays, it seems the laypeople have more interest in meditation than monks. Monks are more interested in “*Boon-Bang-Sangh-Suat*” (merit-funeral-offering-chanting). Do you know what that is? “*Boon*” is merit making. Wherever there is merit making, these people go in droves. “*Sangh*” is Sangha *dāna* (offerings to the monks).

“*Bang*” is *Bangsirku* (funeral services). Once the service is over, envelopes stuffed with money are then given. All these activities mentioned have only distribution of envelopes stuffed with money. These monks do not want the path (*magga*), fruition (*Phala*) and *Nibbāna*. But laypeople are more interested in the practice, studying and knowing the path of meditation. Matters such as these are individual responsibilities. This is not to criticize anyone. Whoever wishes to, go ahead to “*Boon-Bang-Sangh-suat*” as you like. Whoever delights in meditation, go ahead as well. This is merely to consider the present state of Buddhism. Therefore, we should choose to look at those who are good examples. Do not take any interest in those who are bad examples. If we cannot find anyone who is still alive who is a good example, it is better to look up to those exemplary monks who are already dead. It’s better to look up to the Buddha and all of his enlightened disciples. Study their autobiographies and take them as a guide on the path of our practice. The Buddha said that if we cannot find anyone better or equal to us, then it is better to stay alone. Do not associate with people more foolish than

us, with people whose morals are lower than ours. They will influence and drag us down. They will not pull us higher up for sure because they have no idea what higher up is. But if we associate with people who are more capable and smarter than us, they will pull us higher up. *Kalayanamitta* having a mentor or an admirable friend, is very important with regards to the practice. If we lack the wisdom to motivate ourselves, we should have a mentor. The best mentor or friend is a *kruba Ajaan* (a meditation teacher) who has practised correctly. The practice of meditation is complex with many obstacles and traps. Without the help of a mentor who has gone through it, almost everyone will be caught in a trap. Those making merit will be stuck in merit making. Those observing and maintaining the precepts will be stuck on the level of keeping precepts. Those sitting in *samādhi* (tranquillity meditation only) will be stuck and trapped in *samādhi*. Every step of the way, there are traps for us to get caught and stuck in. We should be vigilant and circumspect to check whether we are stuck or not. Some people choose just to make merit and are not keen to do other forms of practice. Hearing

any news of merit making, they go in droves. They join any activities for a birthday, funeral, *kaṭhina* or temple fundraising but they are unwilling to bother about keeping the precepts. On the other hand, those who keep to the precepts are afraid to do anything at all out of fear of causing harm. Breathing in, they fear killing viruses in the air. When taking medicine, they again fear killing the virus. We should make judgements based on cause and effect in whatever we do. Those who sit in *samādhi* will be stuck in *samādhi* and not come out to walk the path of using wisdom because in *samādhi* there is bliss and happiness. Once out of *samādhi*, the mind will be agitated and disturbed, and we will return back to *samādhi* again. When it is time to use wisdom after coming out of *samādhi*, we do not do so because we are unable to use it. If we are able to use wisdom, then look at this desire. The mind is disturbed because of this desire. Seek out and face this desire right here; release and stop it successfully, and then this disturbance and agitation will disappear. This is called using wisdom. At times however, we may get stuck using wisdom and be unwilling to return to *samādhi*.

Doing so, we may sometimes solve our problem, but when we are unable to do so, we may end up thinking and speculating endlessly. If thinking proliferates without end and the problem cannot be solved, it is only proper to stop. Enter *samādhī* first, charge up the mind's battery and to sharpen the knife for it is blunt. Enter *samādhī*, rest the mind and sharpen the knife. Upon coming out, review the previous problem and we will be able to solve it. There are many details like this, lots of them. People who do not practise will not know and will not understand. We should listen to Dhamma regularly. If we listen only once, we may forget. Listening to higher teachings that are beyond us, we will not understand. Listening to teachings at our level, we might forget. Therefore, we should listen frequently. Listening to Dhamma and practising it goes together as a pair. In the past, when I stayed with *Luangta Mahā Boowa*, there was not much business with the laypeople. He would gather all the monks every four-five days for instruction. As he got older, with poorer health and more laypeople gathering, the days between instructions became further apart. It went from four-five days to a week or ten days

at time. When he was not feeling well, it would be one-two weeks. Towards the end, it was only seeing that there was enough Dhamma talks recorded on tape that he felt some ease of mind. He need not be too concerned because we could rely on listening to the tape recorder. Nowadays, because we do not stay with *kruba Ajaan*, we have to rely on Dhamma on CD or in books. This is better than nothing. But it is not comparable to listening to live Dhamma delivered fresh & hot directly. Whatever problems we have stuck in can be resolved then and there. If there isn't "live" Dhamma available, we can still do to the best of our abilities which is better than not doing anything at all. If we have practised to *Sotāpanna* then at least we will not regress. But if we stop practising then we may regress. *Samādhi* that we have achieved before may not be possible again after we stop. Therefore, we should be careful. Do not be negligent. Do not think that having gained *samādhi* once, we do not have to continue practising. Once we stop, it may not be possible to get back again. As such, we should persevere to maintain whatever we have attained and continue to progress in our meditation. Do

not let our meditation practice regress and go downhill: We should only add more practises continuously. If increasing our practice is not possible, then at least we should maintain it. This is just like the accelerator pedal used in driving the car. If the pedal is depressed at the same level, then the speed of the car will continue as before. If we relax the pedal, the car will slow down. If we want to speed up, we must depress the pedal even more. Meditation is the same as stepping on the pedal. Meditation is what causes the results to arise.

Question M3: During meditation, I reflected on the causes leading me to anger and why I reacted in the way I did. I also investigated the good and bad consequences of being angry. For instance, I became angry after being caught in a traffic jam. I reflected on it and realized that the bad consequences were more than the good. I was then able to stop my anger during the traffic jam. There is another matter that is more significant to me, that involves working with my subordinate. I was angry and so investigated in a similar way, but it didn't go away. Even now, I am still angry.

Tan Ajaan: It is because your attachment to it is great. Whatever the situation, when your attachment is strong, resolving it will be difficult. Whenever our attachment is weak, resolving it will be easy. Whether our attachment is strong or weak is dependent on how strongly we like it, how strongly we love it. If we like or love it strongly then cutting it off will be difficult. On the other hand, if we like or love it less, then cutting it off will be easy.

Question M3: This means in cases like this, we can reduce it by cutting it part by part.

Tan Ajaan: Well, you should observe and see that everything is impermanent and will ultimately end. No matter how much you love it, the day will come when all of us have to be separated. If we see that we will have to be separated and will not be able to prevent it, we will be able to stop our attachment. The fact is we don't see that we will have to be separated. We think that we will be together on and on forever. For if we see that we may be separated today or tomorrow, then by thinking in

this way, letting go will be possible and easier. We ought to see *anicca*, *dukkha*, and *anattā*. All the answers to our questions lie in seeing *anicca*, *dukkha* and *anattā*. Only then will we be able to let go.

Question M4: A woman went through an abortion several decades ago because of difficulties in her livelihood. Is that demeritious?

Tan Ajaan: Was it her intention to have an abortion? If it was then it is a demeritious.

Question M4: It was related to difficulties in her livelihood.

Tan Ajaan: Was it? Was it because of those difficulties that caused her to seek an abortion or was it due to an accident such as falling while walking. If an abortion is unintentionally, then it is not demeritious.

Question M4: Can it be resolved?

Tan Ajaan: There is no way to resolve this. We can only wait to receive the consequences of this demerit.

Question M4: Is there no way to correct it?

Tan Ajaan: Yes, there is a way. Make lots and lots of merit, so that when we die, good merit outweighs the bad merit and we need not receive the consequences of the demerit. But then again, if we return to be born as a human, we may end up in the womb of that being whom we had aborted before. We are the one who aborted that being's birth and we may or may not be born to that person because we might end up being aborted ourselves.

Question M4: There was a monk who saw an image of a child at a door, and he understood that as the spirit of his aborted son (before he ordained) awaiting rebirth.

Tan Ajaan: This is not definitive, and could just be their personal speculations and agitations. Whether that being is born or not has nothing to do with us. If it takes

birth, it is its own responsibility. If it doesn't, that is also its own responsibility. Regardless of whether you know or not, that's just the way it is. There is nothing significant about it in anyway. The significant thing is whether our mind is tormented or not? Is our mind in fear of receiving the consequences of the bad *kamma*? We can resolve this by correcting this fear, this tormented and unsettled feeling concerning the impending bad consequences anymore by simply accepting them. Then we will not feel tormented. It is best to correct it right here. Do not correct other people. Whether he is going to take rebirth or not is not a matter concerning us. Our concern is whether our mind is unsettled or not. If we train ourselves to accept the consequences of bad *kamma*, we will not experience *dukkha*. Another way is to take this unsettled and tormented feeling to teach ourselves not to do wrong in the future. Whatever benefit we get from committing demerit is not worthwhile at all. If we conceive a child but lack the wisdom to care for it, then give the baby away. It is much better than just killing him.

Question MC: For those who had an abortion, is meditating the best way to keep the results of the bad *kamma* furthest away from us?

Tan Ajaan: If we do not return to take birth again, we will not receive the resultant *kamma*. For instance, *Angulimala*, a disciple of the *Buddha* killed 999 people attained enlightenment and only needed to receive the resultant *kamma* in that one life. After death, he was not reborn. He need not fall into hell for killing 999 people. Once he became an *Arahant*, his merit had the power to pull him up to the level of *Nibbāna*. His demerit lacked the power to fight back. The power of *Nibbāna* is very strong.

Question MC: If those who have done wrong, especially those who had an abortion continue to feel deep remorse and brood over it, the resultant *kamma* will not go away. Isn't that right, Phra Ajaan?

Tan Ajaan: *Kamma* will remain as *kamma* itself; whether it goes away or not is a matter pertaining to

itself. But it is us who increase our suffering and discontentment to no benefit at all. Dwelling and thinking on this issue, we end up creating new *kamma* within our own mind. We create new suffering because we are unable to let it go. Instead relent through reason and accept it for what it is. If we confront and accept it by thinking, “This is my wrong-doing for lacking mindfulness and wisdom and solving the problem in a way that have led to even more ruin and loss. I should take this incident as a lesson so that in future I shall not repeat it.” In this way, it is better. The suffering and pain involved is more than the happiness. Whatever benefit we get is not worth it. This then reduces the suffering and does not let it pile up even more. What is left is just the resultant *kamma* from getting an abortion. Perhaps in the next life we may be born to a mother whom we have aborted in the previous life. We are thus not born and will have to wait for the next round. This is the way it is.

Question MC: In that case, shouldn't we meditate to accept the impending consequences.....

Tan Ajaan: Well, why not aspire to not be born again? Or make sure you get to *Nibbāna* or achieve *Sotāpanna*. Before I thought that as a *Sotāpanna*, we have to return as a human, but after further consideration, I think a *Sotāpanna* can still continue practising without a human birth. Those who have a strong interest in *Dhamma* can continue practising just like the *Anāgāmī* who practises in the *brahma* plane. Therefore I don't think there is a need to return as a human. Does 'not more than seven lives' (as mentioned in the *tipitaka*) refer to births as a angels and *brahmas* for the next seven lives or seven lifespans as a human? I am not sure. But my assessment is that there is no need to return as a human because the mind can meditate without a body. For suffering lies within the mind, not the body. But having said that, a *Sotāpanna* may still return as a human being because sensual and sexual desire still exists. Yes, a *Sotāpanna* may return as a human for seven lives for the sake of sexual pleasure. But then sexual pleasure is also possible as an angel. It is the same. There is no need to use the physical body for

sexual pleasure. A spiritual body with eyes, ears, a nose and tongue can also fulfil it as well. Having examined this for some time, I don't think there is a need to be a human again. For angels can also have sex with their spiritual eyes, ears, nose and tongue. For instance, we dream while asleep. Having a good dream, is just like experiencing sensual pleasure via spiritual eyes, ears, nose and tongue. We do not use the physical eyes, ears, nose, tongue and body; we only use the mind. This topic is brought up just for curiosity's sake. Investigating certain aspects of the Dhamma is dependent on the mindfulness and wisdom of each individual.

Question MC: Angels (*devatās*) in general seek pleasure during their life-time, but Ajaan mentioned that there are angels who devote themselves to listening and practising Dhamma. What types of angel renounce sensual pleasures?

Tan Ajaan: Well, those angels who liked going to the temple when they were humans. Instead of going

overseas during a three-day holiday, they chose to come to the temple. Groups of angels like this have strong enthusiasm for the Dhamma. Whenever they hear news of monks who can communicate with angels, they will gather to listen to the Dhamma.

Question MC: If that's the case, angels who enjoy sensual pleasure but do not meditate are those who only make merit as humans and did not think of practising Dhamma.

Tan Ajaan: Yes, they make merit and maintain their virtue. They do not make demerit only merit but do not want to meditate or come to the temple for meditation practice or study the Dhamma sincerely and truthfully, and are only contented with merit making and maintaining virtue. Whenever there is free time, they go out for fun. Those who are keen on Dhamma will instead come to the temple and study Dhamma, but may not yet be practising, for they have yet to know the benefit of meditation. Instead, they take an interest in listening to Dhamma talks to increase their knowledge. Having

listened to the Dhamma, they will eventually begin practising meditation practice. With wisdom gained from listening to Dhamma as our foundation, then if we are fortunate enough, we will be like the mother of the Buddha who became a *Sotāpanna* after the Buddha came to teach her even though she was an angel.

Question MC: *Phra Ajaan*, those who have attained to *Sotāpanna* should be able to practise by themselves without the need of a guide, right?

Tan Ajaan: Yes, they have seen the Noble Truths already. They know that *dukkha* of all kinds arises out of our own desire, but they may not know the path (*magga*) and must discover it by themselves. For instance, a *Sotāpanna* is still vulnerable to sexual desire, but may initially not know the way to stop it. Later on, they will know by themselves through trial and error and come to use the contemplation of *anicca*, *dukkha* and *anattā* or *asubha* (loathsomeness of the body). Seeing beautiful and charming woman will turn on a male's sexual desire. If they want to stop it, they will have to seek

ways to do so. The way to stop it is to see the ugly side of it. Knowing for themselves, by trial and error, little by little, they will eventually find methods to progress. For they know that the essence of it, the desire, lies in the mind. The technique to extinguish this desire is to see *anicca*, *dukkha*, *anattā* and *asubha*. Seeing *anicca* is the same as seeing *asubha*, isn't it? The body is *anicca*, isn't it? Right now the body is beautiful but tomorrow it may be a corpse. If we can see both sides of the same coin, then extinguishing desire will be possible. Extinguishing sexual desire is possible. A *Sotāpanna* has escaped already and can proceed by himself. The only difference is whether he can reach the final attainment earlier or later. It is dependent on his abilities. If his wisdom is sharp, he will progress fast, but if his wisdom is blunt progress will be slow. Some people are attached and involved in other kinds of activities such as *Phra Ananda*, who from what we know was already a *Sotāpanna* but was stuck taking care of the Buddha for 20 years. There was no time for him to meditate, to develop *asubha* (loathsomeness) or other practices. But once the Buddha had let go of his

khandhas and attained final *Nibbāna*, it took *Ananda* just three months to attain enlightenment. This is because he had the time to practise; there was no need for other work. This applies to all of us as well. We work outside, wasting our time and missing a valuable opportunity. However, if we choose to work inside and not to work outside, attainment is perhaps possible within seven years just as the Buddha proclaimed. It all lies with us to practise more or less. If we don't practise then surely it is not possible. The cause is just our practice. We do not practise but instead seek money and get involved in other activities, caring for our father, mother, elder and younger siblings etc...Some people consider this the result of *kamma* to be stuck with our father and mother for they are the ones who raised us. Forsake them not! We ought to care for them such as when they have lost their mental and physical faculties and are not able to help themselves. How can we forsake them, isn't it? Similarly, *Phra Ananda* was also stuck taking care of the Buddha. If we go along making merit in line with our circumstances, we will still not be spiritually bankrupt. Even though we have to stay taking care of our father

and mother, we still can be generous, maintain our precepts and meditate as well. It is not that we have to take care of our parents 24 hours a day. Whenever there is free time, we can still meditate. The only thing is that we will not be able to achieve as much as we might without responsibilities. That's just the way it is.

Question MC: Is it possible for a monk who has attained to *Sotāpanna* to later disrobe to be a lay person?

Tan Ajaan: Speaking from a theoretical perspective, it is possible. For a *Sotāpanna* still has sexual desires. A *Sotāpanna* can have a wife but monk cannot. A monk who wants a wife should disrobe.

Question MC: Regarding those who die in youth or old age - does their passing have anything to do with demerit?

Tan Ajaan: Demerit in some aspects leads us to have shorter or longer life-spans. People who have shorter

life span may have created bad *kamma*, but demerit is not the only cause of shorter life. Carelessness, inattentiveness, drinking alcohol and being intoxicated by drugs, can be the causes of road accidents, and are not a result of past demerit but rather bad *kamma* created in the present moment. All of these are the result of not being careful and circumspect. Even mindless thrill-seeking can cause us to die earlier such as teenagers who race one another on motorcycles. This may not be demerit of the past but demerit of the present moment for lacking circumspection and mindfulness. However, in some cases we may be circumspect and careful and yet still die, like falling down while walking and breaking our head. Occurrences such as these are not caused by demerit but are just accidents or unforeseen circumstances beyond our control. Death can be the result of many possible causes. It can be due to bad *kamma*, carelessness or unforeseen circumstances beyond our control. It is not important that we should know why, but it is enough to know in general that creating demerit can result in a shorter life-span. That does not necessarily

mean that by not creating demerit our life will be long. It is still possible for our life to be shorter, for if this world is to be destroyed today, everyone will have to die. Isn't it like this? Suppose, today is the last day of this world. All will die - people who created merit as well as those who created demerit. Death is something that has many possible causes.

Question MC: With regards to developing the loathsomeness (*asubha*) practice, should we just observe it as *asubha*? I have doubt about this practice. Suppose we are to observe a person and see the intestine, rectum, etc, but I still have many doubts regarding the various aspects of it. If we see it just like that, is it real or not? Should we initially use our imagination before we can truly see it? I observed one lady and stared at her backside. My eyes got fixated and I imagined her backside. No matter how long I stared at it, I still did not see an image but had a feeling that started from her backside and went further inside, including the rectum, faeces, and intestine. I do not know what to make of it.

Tan Ajaan: Well if it can ease our emotions and sexual urges we can use it.

Question MC: So it is not necessary to see an image?

Tan Ajaan: It's not necessary; it depends on the individual. Some people are suited to practise seeing images and by doing so continuously the image will eventually be buried in their heart. In the past, there were no pictures so people had to see it at the cemetery. Use the image that we have seen at the cemetery to remind ourselves when we see someone with a beautiful face to reflect on what she will be like when she passes away. Furthermore, when we see a young lady, we can also imagine her aging, with white hair, a bent spine and wrinkled skin. Remind ourselves that in the future she will be like that. Whatever techniques that can extinguish our emotions are acceptable. In general, sexual desire is aroused by just looking at the front side. Well! Why not look at the backside too? We only see and think about the front. Try

thinking of her unattractive backside (buttocks)...and foot also. Only looking at the face but not the foot, not seeing what is inside (the body) is delusion. If we can remember some loathsome images, this will greatly help extinguish sexual desire. For this to be effective, we should train ourselves beforehand, just like memorizing the multiplication tables or ABC's in elementary school. If we do not practise until we memorize it, when the time comes to use it we will be unable to do so. Practise is something vital and must be buried within the heart. When the time to extinguish sexual desire comes, this practice will come in handy. But there are times when our sexual desire is aroused, and no matter how hard we recollect, loathsomeness just doesn't come up. We cannot see it at all.

Question MC: Shouldn't we use memory and imagination to practise (*asubha*)?

Tan Ajaan: Memory is just like memorising the multiplication tables. Similar to chanting, we had to

chant repeatedly and eventually when we have memorised it, it will 'flow out' anytime.

Question MC: So there is no need for there to be an image. Just the feeling is ok?

Tan Ajaan: Yes, whichever way is ok. However, in most cases, the image is seen with our eyes closed. For instance, right now you think of your father and you see something of your father, but it is not a vivid image. We still know how our father or mother looks and it is similar with *asubha* practice as well. We need not see a vivid image like the way we see with our naked eyes. For internal eyes, it does not have to be an image. It can also be a memory that arouses various feelings to arise.

Question MC: Because sometimes those who listen to Tan Ajaan's teaching about the *asubha* practice are uncertain as to whether the image should be distinct or just a general idea and feelings.

Tan Ajaan: Both are possible. Sometimes while sitting in meditation we may see the image distinctly, just like watching a movie, or it can also happen in our dreams while asleep. It is possible and similar in both cases. In our waking state, we may or may not see these images. We may recollect a skeleton and see it there and then, right through the skin and flesh. If not that, we may also 'see' it through our recollection, not in the form of an image, but by reminding ourselves to “see a heap of bones right underneath the skin and flesh”. The problem is we do not think about the things that we don't like, but instead think about those things that we do. Those things that we don't like, we ignore completely. This causes sexual desire to arise. However, if we reflect and think about things that we dislike, that are unattractive, sexual desire will cease.

Question M5: Currently, I am watching a TV program series about ghosts. I like it very much. A person named Ah Dee can see and communicate with ghosts. Is it real?

Tan Ajaan: You should ask him; I'm not him..[Laughter]... Does he speak the truth? I don't know. The Buddha said don't believe what people say 100%. Listen with the ears and leave it at the ears. Examine whether his claim can be verified and tested. If we cannot verify and test it, then don't believe it 100% because it may allow us to be cheated. The Buddha himself said that we shouldn't merely believe but must prove and verify it. This teaching of the Buddha points out that we should not believe except when we can test and verify by ourselves. It is the same as receiving medicine from the doctor. Have faith in the doctor's good intention and integrity that this medicine can treat our illness. But we do not truly know if it works until we take the medicine as prescribed to verify it. We should believe in this manner. If we cannot verify it yet, then we should wait and see. (With regards to the TV program) Wait until we can see the ghost ourselves, then we can suppose that perhaps he can see it too. If he can see it, so can I. If I can see it, maybe he can too.

Question MC: If we can see the ghost but became deluded, is it possible we may lose that ability?

Tan Ajaan: Seeing things like that gives no benefit in eradicating the *kilesas*. That's just it, but it may lead us into delusion. This ability that we talk about is common people's knowledge and is outside the scope of Buddhism. By turning it into a profession, it can be used as a livelihood. By appearing on a TV program, we can get paid, isn't it? This kind of special ability can be used as a livelihood, but it cannot be used to extinguish the *kilesas* and lead us to the path and fruition (*magga* and *phala*) right up to *Nibbāna*. All these abilities are not helpful for those who want to seek deliverance from this round of perpetual death and rebirth. Therefore, when we see such phenomena in meditation, do not take any interest. Otherwise, we may be fooled by the *kilesas* and be led away into a trap. Thus we end up not meditating, not investigating with wisdom, not seeing *asubha*, *anicca*, *dukkha* and *anattā*. After only seeing a pretty and charming woman, a monk just disrobed, wasn't it? An example of this happened not too long ago. This is

definitely because of not contemplating loathsomeness (*asubha*). Had he been contemplating *asubha* he would not have been deluded and lost his way. Enough for now.....the time is up. Come again next time.

Audience: *Sadhu!*

Glossary

The following is a list of *Pāli* and Thai words as used in the text together with a brief translation and comment when necessary.

Ajaan, Ajaan, achaan, etc.: (Thai). Teacher; mentor. Equivalent to the *Pāli* ācariya.

Akusala: Bad, demerit, unskillful.

Anāgāmi: Someone who has reached the third stage of the path, the stage before *Arahant*.

Anicca: Impermanence, transience, instability.

Anattā: Not-self; the truth that all phenomena are devoid of anything that can be identified as “self”. This means that none of the physical and mental components of personality (the 5 *khandhas*) make up an entity, either individual or collective, nor can a self-entity be found anywhere within the heart (*citta*).

Therefore, what is experienced as being an abiding self is no more than a phantom personality born of ignorance and delusion – inherently transient, unstable, and bound up with suffering.

Appanā: Full-absorption *samādhi*. In *appanā samādhi* the *citta* completely ‘converges’ to the very base of *samādhi*. Perceptions of body and mind totally disappear from awareness at that time, leaving only the essential “knowing nature” of the *citta* alone on its own. Clear, bright, and expansive, the *citta* simply “knows”. There is no object, no duality, just “knowing”. The previous sense of dividedness is replaced by a wholly unified mental state, and a feeling of pure and harmonious being that is so wondrous as to be indescribable. This is the advanced stage of *samādhi*.

Arahant: One who is worthy, one who reached the ultimate state of *Nibbāna*.

Āriya: Noble.

Arūpa: Formless.

Asurakāya: The population of *Asuras*. The *Asuras* are in the realm below the human realm and they consist of warlike beings, constantly at war with the gods.

Asubha: Unattractiveness, loathsomeness, foulness. The Buddha recommends contemplation of this aspect of the body as an antidote to lust and complacency.

Bhikkhu: A Buddhist monk; a male member of the Buddhist Sangha who has gone forth into homelessness and received the higher ordination. In Theravāda countries today, *bhikkhus* form the nucleus of the Buddhist community. Living entirely off donations of food and other basic requisites, their monastic lifestyle is based on the principles of poverty, celibacy, virtue, and meditation.

Bodhi: Awakening; enlightenment; transcendent wisdom. *Bodhi* is equated with perfection of insight into

the Four Noble Truths and the realization of Nibbāna, the cessation of all suffering.

Brahma (brahmasā): Celestial beings who inhabit the first three realms of the Fine Material World. Beings reborn into those sublime realms are said to have some experience with the meditative absorptions (*jhāna*). Consequently, *brahmas* have extremely refined bodies composed of pure light and experience extremely refined degrees of mental pleasure. When the good *kamma* that sent them to those realms is finally exhausted, these beings pass away and are reborn again somewhere else, in a realm of existence suitable to their remaining *kamma*.

Buddho: Supremely enlightened. A traditional epithet for the Buddha, *buddho* is a preparatory meditation-word (*parikamma*) that is repeated mentally while reflecting on the Buddha's special qualities. In its simplest form, one focuses attention exclusively on the repetition of "*buddho*", continuously thinking the word "*buddho*" while in meditation. One should simply be

aware of each repetition of “*buddho, buddho, buddho*” to the exclusion of all else. Once it becomes continuous, this simple repetition will produce results of peace and calm in the heart.

Citta: That underlying essence of mind which manifests as feeling, memory, thought and consciousness. In its pure state it is indefinable and beyond *Samsāra*.

Dāna: Giving, making gifts.

Demerits: Bad, unskillful ,corrupt.

Desana: The Teachings of Dhamma; Dhamma talks.

Deva; Devatā: An angel like being of the *Deva*–realms which are immediately above the human realm.

Dhamma [Skt. dharma]: (1) Event; a phenomenon in and of itself; (2) mental quality; (3) doctrine, teaching; (4) nibbāna. Also, principles of behavior that human beings ought to follow so as to fit in with the right natural

order of things; qualities of mind they should develop so as to realize the inherent quality of the mind in and of itself. By extension, "Dhamma" (usu. capitalized) is used also to denote any doctrine that teaches such things. Thus the Dhamma of the Buddha denotes both his teachings and the direct experience of nibbāna, the quality at which those teachings are aimed.

Dukkha: Stress; suffering; pain; distress; discontent.

Ekagattārammana ; Ekaggataarom:

Singleness of preoccupation; "one-pointedness." In meditation, the mental quality that allows one's attention to remain collected and focused on the chosen meditation object. *Ekagattārammana* reaches full maturity upon the development of the fourth level of *jhāna*.

Jhāna: Various states of meditative absorption, including the four *rūpa* and the four *arūpa-jhānas*.

Kamma: Lit: “action”. But in Buddhism, action of the body, speech or mind which has a moral content of good, bad or neutral. Such action brings back a corresponding result.

kaṭhina: A ceremony, held in the fourth month of the rainy season, in which a sangha of bhikkhus receives a gift of cloth from lay people, bestows it on one of their members, and then makes it into a robe before dawn of the following day.

khandha: A heap, but usually referring to the five *khandhas*, these being, the body, feeling, memory, thought/imagination, and consciousness.

kilesa: Defilement — lobha (passion), dosa (aversion), and moha (delusion) in their various forms, which include such things as greed, malevolence, anger, rancor, hypocrisy, arrogance, envy, miserliness, dishonesty, boastfulness, obstinacy, violence, pride, conceit, intoxication, and complacency.

Kubar : Phra or Bhikkhu, (Isan) north eastern Thailand way of addressing junior monk.

Pāḷi: The canon of texts (see Tipiṭaka) preserved by the Theravāda school and, by extension, the language in which those texts are composed.

Luangpu; Luangpor: Central Thailand word for Venerable Father.

Luangpii : Central Thailand word for Junior Monk.

Merits: Good, virtuous, skillful.

Nibbāna: The ultimate goal of Buddhist training. Lit: “Extinguished”.

Nimitta: A sign. In meditation practice, a mental image which is usually visual.

Paccekabuddha: Private Buddha. One who, like a Buddha, has gained Awakening without the benefit of a teacher, but who lacks the requisite store of *pāramīs* to teach others the practice that leads to Awakening. On attaining the goal, a paccekabuddha lives a solitary life.

Parikamma: Preparatory practice. Preparatory meditation.

Preta: (*Peta* in *Pāli*); The dead, departed, a hungry ghost.

Rūpa: Form, shape, the body.

Sakadāgāmī: The second of the four stages culminating in *Arahant*.

Samādhi: Absorbed concentration which has many levels and kinds.

Phra: (Thai). Venerable. Used as a prefix to the name of a monk (*bhikkhu*).

Sādhū: (exclamation) "It is well"; an expression showing appreciation or agreement.

Sakkāya-dit̥ṭhi: Self-identification view. The view that mistakenly identifies any of the *khandha* as "self"; the first of the ten fetters (*samyojana*). Abandonment of *sakkāya-dit̥ṭhi* is one of the hallmarks of stream-entry.

Saṃsāra: Transmigration; the round of death and rebirth.

Sangha: A group of at least four Bhikkhus, the order of Bhikkhus.

Saññā: Memory.

Sankhāra: Formation, compound, fashioning, fabrication — the forces and factors that fashion things (physical or mental), the process of fashioning, and the fashioned things that result. *Sankhāra* can refer to anything formed or fashioned by conditions, or, more

specifically, (as one of the five khandhas) thought-formations within the mind.

Sīla: Morality, moral behaviour.

Sīlabbata–parāmāsa: usually translated as attachment to rules and rituals”. But many who practise the way of Buddhism are not satisfied with this and feel that it concerns morality more than rules and rituals.

Sotāpanna: Stream winner. A person who has abandoned the first three of the fetters that bind the mind to the cycle of rebirth (see samyojana) and has thus entered the "stream" flowing inexorably to nibbāna, ensuring that one will be reborn at most only seven more times, and only into human or higher realms.

Sukha: Pleasure; ease; satisfaction. In meditation, a mental quality that reaches full maturity upon the development of the third level of jhāna.

Supramundane : Transcendental; beyond this physical world.

Than, tan: (Thai). Reverend, venerable.

Theravāda: The "Doctrine of the Elders" — the only one of the early schools of Buddhism to have survived into the present; currently the dominant form of Buddhism in Thailand, Sri Lanka, and Burma. See also Hīnayāna.

Taṇhā: Craving — for sensuality, for becoming, or for not-becoming (see bhava). See also lobha (greed; passion)

Tipiṭaka [Skt. tripiṭaka]: The Buddhist (*Pāli*) Canon. Literally, "three baskets," in reference to the three principal divisions of the Canon: the Vinaya Piṭaka (disciplinary rules); Sutta Piṭaka (discourses); and Abhidhamma Piṭaka (abstract philosophical treatises).

Upekkhā: Neutrality, equanimity, indifference.

Vedanā: Feeling — pleasure (ease), pain (stress), or neither pleasure nor pain.

Vipassanā: Clear intuitive insight into physical and mental phenomena as they arise and disappear, seeing them for what they actually are — in and of themselves — in terms of the three characteristics (see *ti-lakkhaṇa*) and in terms of stress, its origin, its disbanding, and the way leading to its disbanding (see *ariya-sacca*).

Viññāṇa: Consciousness; cognizance; the act of taking note of sense data and ideas as they occur. There is also a type of consciousness that lies outside of the *khandhas* — called consciousness without feature (*viññāṇam anidassanam*) — which is not related to the six senses at all.

Related Websites for Further reading

More teachings on Theravada Buddhism and the contemporary Thai Forest Tradition can be obtained from the following websites;

www.kammatthana.com , www.phrasuchart.com

Recorded Mp3 teachings of Ajaan Suchart Abhijato in English and Thai.

www.accesstoinsight.org

- English translation of *Theravada Tipiṭaka*
- Some translation of the teachings from the Thai Forest Meditation Masters

www.forestdhamma.org

Translation in various languages on the teachings by *Luangta Mahā Boowa*