

MORNING TALK, 18 SEPTEMBER 2019 · PRACTICE MEANS LETTING GO, NOT GRASPING

Don't ask what you get. Look at what grows less · Ajahn Jayapañño (จายปาญโญ ภิกขุ), Sakon Nakhon · Translated from the Thai · with the teacher's blessing, sādhu

[00:00] A small reminder of the Dhamma (the Buddha's teaching) for the morning. Today the weather here is clear, while our companions in birth, ageing, sickness and death (our fellow human beings) in some places are in hardship right now (because of the floods). In a situation like this it shows who is a true friend, one who helps in hard times. And the false friend too, who waits to take advantage of other people's distress, comes to light when suffering appears.

[00:52] Disaster, suffering, bodily hardship: if we look closely with mindfulness, we see the truth (the Dhamma) showing itself in them. We see which person is a true friend and which is a false one; in hard times it comes out.

[01:12] We live in the world, in society, and we have to know whom to associate with. Consider with mindfulness and wisdom: which people should one keep company with, which should one avoid? That we weigh up with mindfulness. Good friends lead to good things; we can support one another. With good friends much is accomplished.

[01:49] We walk the path of life. Where there is an obstacle, where it is dirty, we step aside and know how to keep ourselves safe. For we cannot make the whole world smooth and beautiful, we cannot do that. Like this morning on the alms round (the monks' morning walk, on which the villagers give food): here and there the path was waterlogged and muddy, and we stepped aside. Be watchful, have wisdom.

[02:33] Live in an ordinary, simple way. Don't try to impose conditions on life. Choosing whom to associate with is important. That is why there is the saying: keep company with fools, and fools lead you astray; keep company with the wise, and the wise lead you to what is good.

[02:59] What is a true friend? A friend who supports you, helps and sustains you. A friend who looks after you and protects you and warns you when you carelessly head for a bad path. One who shares happiness and suffering with you. One with whom there are no secrets between you and who does not carry your secrets to others but keeps them. A friend who protects you when bad people set upon you. People of this kind we should keep company with.

[03:46] People who have the Dhamma (integrity) in their hearts associate in order to support one another out of kindness. People without Dhamma in their hearts associate because they share interests or hope for some gain. They hold together for the benefit, not out of sincerity. That cannot be called friendship, because the word «friend» (mitta) comes from «kindness» (mettā): wishing each other well, caring for each other, wanting to support one another.

[04:21] In our country, in society, we see it: some are only good at talking and flattering. Some drag you along into ruin. Whoever gossips about others when he is with us will gossip about us as soon as he is with others. Such people are good only with the mouth; one should keep out of their way. They talk to benefit themselves; they hold a small favour over you in order to get a big advantage in return. From such people we should keep our distance.

[05:00] Associating with such people is like being near a snake whose fangs have been pulled: it will not bite, but it stinks. In a careless moment their dirt (what is bad in them) comes over to us and sticks to us.

[05:17] Live in an ordinary way, with mindfulness, with wisdom, reflecting. Don't let yourself be baited by sweet words and carried away by your own thought-constructions. Look closely: some speak sweetly and are not sincere. You can see through that if you look, and choose accordingly. Don't fall for praise and flattery. Make life simple, without complicated ceremony, and clear away whatever is stuck in the heart.

[06:04] Coming to the monastery, coming here to let go, practising according to the Buddha's teaching: don't ask what you get out of it. You get nothing, nothing at all. Instead, look whether your greed has grown lighter, whether conceit, delusion and suffering have loosened their hold on your heart a little. Check that bit by bit. One does not come to take in (to accumulate something). What you take in only makes you heavy.

[06:46] Real practice means practising so as to arrive at the ordinariness of nature. Whoever still strikes poses and clings to the form so that people see it is still far from the principle of practice. The same applies to us: whoever comes to the monastery should not pose as a practitioner and should not parade what he does here before others so that they praise him. That is a low thought, something low arising in the heart. All of this defiles the heart. A wrong view like this defiles it. In truth there was nothing there from the start (no self that could be anything); only because we are lost in wanting to be something do we suffer.

[07:42] When we study the Buddha's teaching, it is in order to let go, to give out (the opposite of taking in) and return to nature: ordinary, nothing special, plain and normal. Be ordinary, see nature as it is. Don't lose the way, don't be slaves of thoughts, don't get lost in your own thoughts. Look until you see what makes it light: being able to let go. Let go, give it away. Don't cling, don't take things so seriously that you get lost in cause and effect (caught up in what you take for cause and effect).

[08:25] To reflect like this, to be mindful and watchful like this, without any Pali names at all (without the technical words of the old language): that is practising according to the Buddha's teaching. For all things that lead to weariness and to the fading of lust, to contentment with little, to giving out, to liberation, those are the things of the upright (sappurisa). But all things that lead to accumulating, to showing off knowledge, to conceit and pride, to taking in, those are the things of the unupright. These defile the heart.

[09:13] Every minute that passes, be mindful and watchful and look into your own heart. Catch (what arises there) in time, see it, and stay with the ordinary. Don't get lost in wanting to be this or that, don't cling to the form. It is the same with monks: some adopt an air so that people trust and revere them, yet inside they harbour low thoughts and hope for gifts and honour. Of such the Buddha says that they are rotten inside, like a fig: beautiful to look at on the outside, full of worms within.

[10:05] We don't want to be like that. Outwardly we carry on quite normally, without pretending, without putting on a show. Keep life normal, carry on normally, but with mindfulness and clear comprehension (sampajañña), recollect, catch it in time. Then that leads to lightness, to simplicity, to nature, to being nothing.

[10:40] Every day we wake up, we gather mindfulness from the moment of waking. We look into our heart: is anything murky there? If there is time, sit down, do concentration (samādhi), examine and survey the heart. Set the compass straight in the morning. For if the mind is good, good things come to it. If the mind is not good from the ground up, everything that touches it turns bad. Whoever wants to meet good things must make this mind good. The good lies here inside, not outside. If it is good inside, everything is good.

[11:28] On waking, check the heart. In the first moment you come to yourself, look at your body: what position is it in? Don't be careless. Move and shift with mindfulness and watch while doing so. Sit down, train the mind, practise concentration, let the mind become still. Then the mind becomes clear and fresh; clarity arises. When you come out of concentration, mindfulness carries the mind on and guards it.

[12:13] So it goes through the day until it is time to sleep, so that the body can rest. Then check once more whether something murky has crept in and settled in the heart. Practise concentration before sleeping and sweep your house (the heart), then life is easy. Day after day, minute after minute: whoever acts like this is developing the noble path (ariyamagga). It does not take long for the fruit (the result) to appear. The Buddha's Dhamma is beyond time (akālika): it can be practised, it bears fruit, and that is not bound to any time. It is not something merely to talk about.

[12:57] And if we are mindful and watchful in every posture of the body, no mistake can happen. The mistakes that do happen, whether through ear, eye, nose, tongue, body or mind (the six sense bridges), happen because there is no mindfulness going along and protecting. But when mindfulness goes along and we recollect, life runs simply. We do not get stuck in obstacles. Even when an obstacle comes, we see the way through it. Whoever is not lost gets past every obstacle.

[13:41] What happens, happens as it is. Whether an event weighs heavily or lightly depends on the value we give it. If we take it on our shoulders, it is heavy. Taking the whole world on our shoulders, that is heavy. If we do not carry, nothing is heavy. Because in our delusion we ourselves give things a convention (*sammuti*, a label) and a value, suffering arises in the heart. Don't get lost in the cause, not in the effect, not in the knowing (don't get caught up in them). Wanting to be this or that, that is what leads us into suffering. It (the suffering) breaks out because we want something, because craving (*taṇhā*) is in command right there.

[14:21] But if we manage the whole round, from waking to going to sleep, then we see: there is no longer any moment in life that is heedless. Whoever cultivates mindfulness of the body (*kāyagatāsati*), mindfulness that dwells in the body, whoever recollects within this body, of him it is said (in the discourses) that he tastes the deathless (*Nibbāna*). We see the non-arising, the non-creating, the non-being. We stay empty, just being there, in emptiness, but watching. Mindful, and we look.

[15:05] Whoever does not watch is careless. Without mindfulness one is careless: one carelessly grabs at this, at that, snatches that up, wants to be this. This lack of mindfulness is heedlessness, and it leads onto the path to death. For what has arisen (in the mind) dies: everything the mind creates (*saṅkhāra*). That does not mean only the body, not only the outer things, which by nature decay; the moods, thoughts and feelings too, everything the mind creates here inside, decays.

[15:42] Even our body is decaying all the time, but we don't see it, because we don't look. This body is not a block, not a lump, as we think. It is made up of countless cells, and they are decaying all the time. Our skin does not last; it dies and arises. Head hair, body hair, nails, teeth, skin (the first five body parts of the contemplation): they are dying all the time, decaying all the time, only we don't see it.

[16:19] Therefore don't cling to anything. There is nothing for us to hold on to. Lay down the clinging and don't grab again. Don't want to be an owner (of anything), don't want to be this or that. Stay ordinary, a plain life: calm, content, modest, simple, as it comes from causes and conditions. Tend your heart, look after it well.

[17:03] Whom we associate with also has an influence on our practice. Good friends bring our life to flourish. If we choose bad friends, they drag us along onto the path of decline, into the lower realms (*apāya*, the states of misery), down into the depths.

[17:32] If we can carry the mind like this, hold it with mindfulness like this, then we see: unwholesome kamma (cause and effect; here: bad deeds), whether in thought, word or deed, is no longer committed. There is no more unwholesome kamma that bears bad fruit. The becoming (*bhava*, becoming somebody) that arises from our deeds will be a higher becoming. In becoming, consciousness is like a seed and becoming is like the field. Into whatever field we have, the seed is sown, and there it sprouts.

[18:27] When bad kamma is stopped, the bad side of kamma restrained, because there is mindfulness that catches it in time, then the lower realms are closed. They are closed through action, through being able to let go. We don't talk about old kamma, we don't talk about past mistakes. Everyone still has the chance, for none of us is so depraved as to commit one of the gravest deeds (*ānantariya-kamma*, such as killing one's father or mother) that bar path and fruit (the stages of awakening), heaven and *Nibbāna*. As long as one has not committed such a deed, one should eagerly develop insight (*vipassanā*), abandon the (bad) deeds and close the lower realms for oneself.

[19:14] We see it even with the venerable *Ahiṃsaka*, *Aṅgulimāla* (the bandit who had killed many people and then became a monk): he had done a great deal of wrong, but his wrong did not reach the gravest deeds, the heavy

kamma that cuts off and destroys (the path to awakening). But whoever commits heavy kamma like Ajātasattu (the king who had his father killed) falls into hell even while he is supporting the Buddha with gifts. Let us use this opportunity, this good fortune we have, to develop our mind and find the way to close the lower realms.

[19:48] If no bad thoughts arise in the heart, no becoming arises inside (in the mind), and then there is no becoming outside (in the world) either. If good thoughts arise, a becoming arises inside, and outside a good becoming arises. That is all there is. Everything goes out from within, everything comes from within. Forgive yourself what you have done wrong and start afresh: practise anew, correct yourself anew, change your own behaviour. That is how kamma is remedied according to the Buddha's teaching.

[20:31] When the fruit of a deed we once did shows itself and we catch it in time, don't run away, don't fight, don't pick anything up and hold on to it, then it is over. That fruit is merely a reaction according to causes and conditions. No one owns it. Suffering has no place to settle. Where there is no self (attā), we see: it is nothing at all. Stay empty, stay in the middle, don't fall to the left, don't fall to the right.

[21:06] In his first discourse the Buddha spoke of the middle way (majjhimā paṭipadā), of practising in the middle, without going to the extremes (indulgence and self-torment). Whatever society we live in, we should adapt body and heart to the circumstances, with clear understanding, not stubborn and conceited, not wanting to stand out, not wanting to be different. Whoever wants to stand out is still clinging in delusion, very strongly attached to «my self». That way there is no path to the true state (to reality as it is).

[21:42] In practice we keep to the middle way. Know the cause, know the effect, know yourself, know the measure, know the time, know the place, know the people. Whoever knows these causes and effects is called wise, a knower, one with full understanding (pariññā; the Thai word for it is also the word for an academic degree, and the teacher plays on that). True full understanding is knowledge of everything the mind creates, knowledge of the whole heap of suffering. This body and this mind are the world we are to study. Study here inside, then you will see. Don't get lost too much in wanting to be something. Whoever is deeply lost gets out with difficulty. Being nothing is best.

[22:32] Whoever is very big (has a big self) also suffers a great deal. A large piece of ground holds many things (so a big self carries a big load). Much self, much suffering. Go towards the ordinary, live according to nature, according to causes and conditions, with mindfulness as support, with wisdom: know what to choose, what to use, what to leave, what to avoid. Whatever brings no benefit, don't get involved with it. Whatever benefits only you and harms others, don't do it. Whatever benefits both us and the others, do that quickly.

[23:18] Don't forget: we are in this world only for a while. Every person, all things in this world must break apart in the end. Don't get lost in the good (don't take yourself to be good), not in holding on. For as long as what has long been steeping and fermenting in the mind (āśava) has not run dry, becoming and birth go on being created. Where there are becoming and birth, there is dying. Becoming is the field, consciousness is the seed, and birth comes forth from them. What is born dies. That is all there is. For the cause of dying is being born, in the material as in the mental.

[24:07] In us too: thinking, considering, creating arises here (in the mind) and dies here and arises there again (in the next thought), without pause. Without mindfulness that catches it in time, it arises and dies on like that, arises and dies, and so one suffers. Don't get lost in the form, not in the world, not in conventions. Be who you are, but know and see nature as it is. For this understanding (of nature) shows itself within; it has nothing to do with the outside.

[24:41] Live in an ordinary way, quite ordinary. There is nothing wonderful, nothing extraordinary there, only catching it in time. Then life runs according to causes and conditions: no happiness, no suffering, only Dhamma (here: phenomena) showing itself. It depends on causes and conditions, is created and continued, one after the other. When the causes are spent, it is over. There is nothing more than this.

[25:10] Practise so that it (suffering) comes to an end, not to take in. Giving (dāna), virtue (sīla), mental training (bhāvanā): all of it must lead to letting go, to getting out of deluded clinging, not to taking in. Only then does it count as the Dhamma of the Tathāgata (the Buddha), as the Dhamma of the Teacher, as the truth he proclaimed. It is not

hard, if we really intend to do it. It is not too hard for a human being to know. That we don't know it is because we are lost: we stray away from the Buddha, we grab in our delusion and think this is the way. So it stays heavy, without pause. If you take it (what you took in) out, it gets lighter and lighter, and in the end it is used up.

[26:05] You get nothing from coming to the monastery. But you have to know what has been used up: has greed faded? Has anger faded? Has the delusion of wanting to be this or that grown lighter? Has mindfulness become more complete? Do you catch it in time? Whoever can do it like this stays with the wholesome (with what is good) all the time. To recollect with mindfulness like this is the developing of the four foundations of mindfulness (satipaṭṭhāna: contemplating body, feeling, mind and Dhamma).

[26:41] As mindfulness becomes more complete, wisdom ripens along with it. As the faculty (indriya) of mindfulness becomes more complete, the faculty of concentration becomes more complete, and the faculty of wisdom becomes more complete. When wisdom has fully ripened, it destroys the delusion, like the sun that rises in the morning and drives away the darkness. That is how darkness and light stand to each other. Ignorance (avijjā) fades; that is all there is.

[27:16] A small thought for the morning, as a reminder, as a prompt to mindfulness, for reflection: live in an ordinary way, understand nature, don't get lost too much in wanting to be this or that, for that is suffering. I wish you all, each and every one, happiness and prosperity always.