Be With Yourself First, Then Know the Mind · The first door is the breath, everything else comes after

Evening talk, 29 October 2026 · Ajahn Jayapañño (ชยปญฺโญ ภิกขุ), Sakon Nakhon · Translated from the Thai by Daniel Schwörer, with the teacher's blessing, sādhu

[00:29] (The opening echoes in the hall; only single words can be made out.) The monastic rules, the verses of the Dhamma (the Dhammapada): you ought to hear a little about those too. The teaching itself is there. But how do we live so that life does not become suffering? We learn to understand suffering so that we ourselves no longer suffer.

[01:01] One thing is suffering (dukkha: tension, stress and suffering). We suffer because we hold on. If we hold on to having, we suffer; if we hold on to not having, we suffer too. A moment ago the Ajahn (the teacher who spoke before me) talked about the hindrances (nīvaraṇa), the five hindrances. I will take the opportunity to carry that on. Most people ask: the teachers say the five hindrances are defilements (kilesa), but how do we deal with them? In truth it is not hard. If we have presence of mind (sati) and are aware of ourselves in the present moment, the hindrances do not arise.

[01:49] Whether it is sensual desire, ill will, doubt and wavering, or dullness, yawning and drowsiness (and restlessness): they do not arise. They arise because we have no presence of mind; we are inattentive, we do not know. Do not forget: the teaching the Buddha proclaimed belongs to the one with presence of mind, not to the one who is lost (who lives without presence of mind). We suffer because we take delight in things. If we do not take delight, if we are not foolish, we do not suffer. Suffering only shows up because we are foolish, because we do not catch it in time (notice what comes up in the mind before it takes hold).

[02:28] So we train our presence of mind. We look for a way to train it so that it catches things in time, so that it knows the body and knows the mind. If we do not know body and mind, we do not know the teaching. We can study the whole canon of scriptures (the Tipiṭaka) and still not see the teaching; we see only letters. The real teaching is the truth, right here. But we do not look. We look at this person, at that person, at the teachers, at the books. Then we see books, we see teachers. But we do not see the truth.

[03:14] If we look at our own body and mind, we see the truth as it is. Dhamma (the teaching) is nature. The word "nature" comes from "truth" and "arising". That is a village translation. Whoever wants it translated by the grammar should ask a learned monk (a Mahā, one who has studied Pali). This is the countryside translation: nature, that from which things arise, the ordinary course of the world.

[03:47] (Isan dialect, the language of the north-east) You see it often: what happens to us is seen as something ordinary. Whoever understands that it is ordinary is at ease. He makes little of it. Whoever does not understand makes much of it. He thinks it up himself. Suffering too is something we think up ourselves. Stop thinking, and all is well. Then you are not sad. But: catch it in time. Because the five aggregates (khandha, the five parts we consist of) keep working. Know that they keep running according to cause and condition: (the body,) feeling, perception, what the mind creates, consciousness.

[04:35] Because the five aggregates are still there, we need presence of mind to carry and hold (the mind) and to catch things in time. Luang Por Yai (the great venerable father) said: aware, awake, glad; the knower, the awakened one, the glad one. These three: be aware of yourself, know wakefully, catch it in time at the moment the mind knows. How do we come to know this? We have to look inside. We have to look at the body, restrain the mind and look. If presence of mind carries our heart, it does not wander, it does not churn, it does not create, it does not think. But we never stay in that state.

[05:38] (Isan dialect) In practice: as soon as someone sits well (in meditation), sits long, he counts as accomplished. But what his heart is like, nobody knows. Isn't that so? That sort of thing (counting a person as accomplished because he sits long) exists only in the land of Sarakhan (an invented country). So if we want to look at how life does not become suffering: let us not make it hard for ourselves. Put fewer conditions on life. Do not keep building up more conditions. A little contentment already leads to calm, leads to not living in excess. If no presence of mind watches over our heart, the heart is lost; then we run after it.

[06:32] That is the thing about practising the teaching: people talk about it a lot, but do little. For the most part one does not even want to talk about it. (Isan dialect) The duckling practice, have you seen it? When there is a loud bang, bang, bang, bang, the mother duck flaps, and the ducklings all flap after her (without knowing why). The word "concentration" (samādhi) means a heart that stands firm, and does not simply mean "calm". Calm, yes, but that is not all of it. The calm part is the calming practice (samatha).

[07:31] The fruit of the calming practice, the fruit of calming down, is calm. But the concentration the Buddha speaks of, correct concentration (sammā-samādhi): look in the noble path (ariyamagga, the eightfold path). It must be joined with correct presence of mind (sammā-sati); only then is it correct concentration. Presence of mind is there, and the heart stands firm. It does not flow away with the contact (of the senses), it does not run out after things. When something touches the heart, it does not waver, it does not scatter. Presence of mind carries it. That (which carries) is correct presence of mind.

[08:12] The first thing we have to do is practise being aware of ourselves. Practise being aware often; first of all come back and be aware. For that we take the basis the Buddha laid down: the breath is what we practise knowing on. To know, to have presence of mind, means: to know when we breathe in; to be aware of ourselves when we breathe in. In our everyday language: breathing in, be aware; breathing out, be aware. Know with the in-breath. If we know like that, it (the mind) does not think. Nothing comes to mind, it does not think, it does not feel. Do you see? There is only the knowing and what is known: the breath.

[09:00] What I am describing here are the five aggregates. Feeling would be feeling (vedanā), but liking and disliking do not arise now. Something coming to mind would be perception (saññā). Thinking would be what the mind creates (saṅkhāra); that does not arise either. Do you see? There is only form (rūpa): the breath, the body. Form and mind (nāma-rūpa) depend on each other. This mind rests its knowing on the breath, on form. Then it cannot (at the same time) know in feeling, in perception, in creating. That is the point of being aware of oneself. "He constantly contemplates the body in the body" (from the discourse on the foundations of presence of mind) means: he knows this breath. The body in the body is this breath.

[09:52] Why must it be the breath? Because one begins with mindfulness of breathing (ānāpānasati). At first it is mindfulness of breathing. Then it develops into the four foundations of presence of mind (satipaṭṭhāna). The four foundations of presence of mind are correct presence of mind. Only then does one come to correct concentration, and that is the noble path. Now I am already talking about the noble path. These are Pali words, scholars' language. It is not that one understands the teaching just because it is spoken. So if we really want to study the teaching, then besides the books and the teachers we have to learn from our own body and mind, so that we are aware of ourselves. That is the first door.

[10:44] If you are not yet aware of yourself, do not say that you know the mind. As long as awareness, the sense of oneself, is not yet steady, you have no business using the words "knowing the mind". Even if you know the mind once, it is not complete; it flickers and is gone, it does not last. The task of this stage, mindfulness of breathing, is to learn to watch the breath. The mind that otherwise churns outward lives outside; the Ajahn called it before a vagrant in search of a birth (sambhavesī, a being without a home, looking for a place to be born). This mind gradually gets a home. It no longer roams.

[11:22] That is the vagrant: now here, now there, now with this thing, now with that, because it has no home. If we practise watching the breath, the very first thing we do is build a house for the heart. We build it a house to live in.

Even when we build it a house, it may not yet want to stay in it. That is normal: a mind we have not yet trained likes to roam. So we have to tame it. We cannot give in. Do not let it fool you. You have to be strict with it, force it too: practise knowing with the breath.

[12:05] At the start this is very hard. In practising concentration, the beginning is the hardest part. But whoever manages the beginning is like a child learning to stand. Once it can stand, it will soon walk. If it cannot stand yet, there is no point even talking about walking; that is impossible. So watching the breath is hard at the start. It tires you. Knowing the breath is no easy thing. Watch for a long while and sometimes the chest feels tight, sometimes you feel sick, sometimes everything goes black. But you do not die of it. As long as you are breathing, there is nothing to fear.

[12:53] Just know. Breathing in, know. Breathing out, know. Follow the breath and know. There is no need to know anything more. Know like that for long enough and the knowing comes by itself. At the start you need the intention to direct the knowing to the breath. Without intention it (the mind) does not stay with the breath. It watches the breath for a moment, then it slips and is gone. That is why some people ask: I do know the breath, so why does it still think? Because the knowing does not last the whole way. Like riding a bus.

[13:31] The bus goes to Kalasin. At Kumphawapi (a town halfway) someone absent-mindedly gets off. Then he does not arrive in Kalasin. If he stays seated the whole way and does not get off, he reaches his destination. That is how it is with knowing the breath at the beginning. When you direct the knowing to it and follow the breath in and out: how far it goes in, how far out, how much in, how much out; short or long, know; coarse or delicate, know. Keep watching and watching, and bit by bit a fondness arises. You like to watch. Zeal (chanda) arises.

[14:11] Once zeal is there, what is still hard? However hard it may be, if you like it, you do it. (Isan dialect) Whoever feels like it gets a spicy papaya salad, and he eats it because it tastes good. Isn't that so? If it is not tasty (spicy enough), you put it in your mouth and just taste it first. So once you have found a liking for the practice, it becomes easy. Whether others practise or not does not matter. When there is time, the mind comes back by itself. It comes back and stays with itself. That is enough. When it occurs to you again, you come back, come back, come back. More and more and more often.

[14:48] Then the breath and the presence of mind we practise no longer have to be dragged along with effort. Gradually the deliberate directing of the knowing loosens. But it knows. It is a knowing that no longer has to be willed, a knowing without intention. Presence of mind dwells in the body. Whether you stir, change posture, with big or small movements, move to and fro: presence of mind catches it in time. The knowing is present throughout the body. So you begin to study the body, the body as a foundation (of presence of mind). Now I am talking about the four foundations of presence of mind: the contemplation of the body.

[15:33] Which way the contemplation goes needs no book any more. It no longer follows the book. It contemplates on its own. If someone's temperament leans toward contemplating the body as unlovely (asubha), he contemplates it that way. Contemplate the body as something put together (of parts), fine. Contemplate it as impermanent, fine too. Wherever it goes, it goes. It is not fixed. It happens by itself. There is no intention to see any particular thing. If craving (taṇhā) is still there, it is not insight (vipassanā). If intention is still there, if you cannot lay the intention down, wisdom does not arise.

[16:11] If you can lay it down, it sees by itself. What is seen is not something to be grasped at. But once you have seen, the firm holding that this body is me comes to an end. It is still there, but it gradually lessens. Our view changes. We do not practise the teaching to change anything. We practise to change our view. The view (diṭṭhi) is what matters. Because there is a view, there are thoughts. Do you see?

[17:03] If the view is correct, correct view (sammā-diṭṭhi), then the thoughts go in the correct direction: correct thinking (sammā-saṅkappa). See correctly, think correctly, speak correctly, act correctly: that is the noble path. Where else would you get it? If not at body and mind, where would you get the noble path? Turn back and become

knowing here, at yourself, and you will see. In words it is not hard at all. But you must understand it too: watch the breath, look in, just know, watch the breath.

[17:48] In truth the practice of the teaching does not need much instruction. Today everyone is "accomplished"; nothing but people who have realised the Dhamma. They teach all the way up to nibbāna (the extinguishing, the goal), as if the listeners could not see for themselves. For in truth you have to know it yourself. The states of the mind you have to see for yourself. But the method, the way of practising, we have to study until we understand it. And there are not many principles. What the Buddha taught is the first door: go through this one first. That is the practice of mindfulness of breathing. Mindfulness of breathing is the starting point.

[18:26] Whoever does not get through this first door need not talk about mental cultivation (bhāvanā). This is not meant to disparage anyone. Whatever school it is: whoever is not yet aware of himself should not say that he knows the mind. Nor talk about "knowing", "catching in time" or "merely knowing". There is no need to talk about it; you cannot do it anyway. Today everyone is accomplished, and people like it. These teachers make people believe that realisation is easy; that just by listening you realise. And they do realise, if the faculties (indriya: confidence, energy, presence of mind, concentration, wisdom) are ripe. But most of them only imagine they have broken through.

[19:03] They argue without end, these knowers of the Dhamma, these realised ones. Knowing without being able to let go, what use is that? Knowing without being able to use it, what does it mean? To study the teaching, to practise the teaching: you must also be able to use the teaching. The teaching relieves suffering, it purges suffering, it is a medicine against suffering. Whoever practises and suffers more and more, gets more and more stressed, is on the wrong path. The medicine is good, the medicine of the Buddha. The textbooks, what is written, all of it is good. But the one who takes the medicine does not know how to use it.

[19:43] He has a headache and takes a remedy for stomach ache. That only raises the doctor's bill. Whoever does not know what illness he has and takes medicine, how is it to cure him? With the teaching it is the same: do not grab at random. You must know how to use a medicine. So before we take a medicine, we have to know what is wrong with us. Do you see? Even when we go to the doctor with a fever, the doctor first asks what is wrong with us. He is the doctor. Why does he not tell us what we have? Why does he have to ask us first? Because he does not know either. Do you see? And what does that mean for us?

[20:26] Everyone runs after the Dhamma, but they do not even know what illness they suffer from. They do not even know what they are suffering from. Will that heal? Not in this life, not in a hundred lives. That is how it is. So first we have to look at ourselves. First come back and be aware of ourselves. Do not meddle with others. Try to be more aware of yourself. Practise knowing, watch the breath. As far as you get, that is how far you get. Whoever wants the result does not get it. But if the causes are complete, you get it without wanting it. Because it follows the causes. We make the causes.

[21:14] "We practise the Dhamma, we practise the Dhamma", and one does not know where to practise. One practises at the mind, at one's own heart (mind and heart are the same thing here). If presence of mind watches over our mind constantly, if we are constantly aware of ourselves: when it thinks something bad, we see: now it is thinking badly. And we can drop that thought. Unwholesome states that have arisen, we drop. Presence of mind carries; it does not let the mind think in a bad way. Unwholesome states that have not arisen cannot arise. Wholesome thoughts that have arisen we keep in the heart. Wholesome states that have not arisen will arise.

[22:10] What is this? You can call it the four correct efforts (sammappadhāna). You can look it up in the noble path: correct effort. Whichever name you like. If you can carry the heart, the path grows by itself, the noble path. Its eight factors do not come along one at a time. It is a working together that gathers in this heart. All eight factors drive each other, support each other, turn together. Like a wheel with four or eight spokes: when it turns, all the spokes turn at once. Each factor supports the other. They do not work separately.

[23:00] That is it. Once you have entered the noble path (I do not want to reach too high, or I lose you), you are out of the lower realms (apāya, the states of woe). The Buddha calls such a person one who can no longer fall. Why? Because he can no longer do evil. He cannot do bad, so for him there are no lower realms. Why can he not? Because presence of mind has become more complete. It catches things in time. When he thinks bad, he does not do bad. And the bad thoughts gradually disappear from our heart. Intention is what kamma (cause and effect) is measured by.

[23:41] Do you see? Whoever does no evil: if this mind must be born again, it has no place in the realms of evil. Do you see where this is proved? The teaching the Buddha set out does not have to wait for the next life. You can prove it at once, right now. Born or not born, that is decided now, if we look in here. When presence of mind carries like that, it becomes more complete, more and more. It carries and holds: that is the cultivation of the noble path.

[24:20] When presence of mind dwells in the heart like that, then this is what shows: because the sense bridges (āyatana: eye, ear, nose, tongue, body, mind-sense) are still there, there is contact (phassa, when a sense meets something). Where there is contact, there is a rippling (a first stirring in the mind). Contact, feeling. The ear meets a sound, and at once it is in the heart: like, dislike, pleasant, unpleasant, annoying, not annoying. The eye meets a form: seen, pretty, not pretty, good, not good. Already judged. It all arises in the heart. Do you see?

[25:07] Now, if you catch in time what arises at contact: it is seen most clearly on the side of aversion (dosa). (From the discourse:) "Presence of mind dwelling in the body, with clear comprehension (sampajañña), with presence of mind, having put away greed and distress towards the world." Liking and disliking: know that it likes, without getting lost in the liking; know that it dislikes, without getting lost in the disliking. In the four foundations of presence of mind this is the section on feeling: pleasant feeling, unpleasant feeling, neither pleasant nor unpleasant.

[25:57] So you enter the four foundations of presence of mind. And this section is insight (vipassanā). No more fixing the gaze on one object, no more directing, as with mindfulness of breathing, with watching the breath. It is the continuation of mindfulness of breathing. I stress: only from mindfulness of breathing. When mindfulness of breathing is complete, the four foundations are there, the four foundations of presence of mind. When the four foundations are complete, the seven factors of awakening (bojjhaṅga) arise. When the seven factors are complete, true knowledge (vijjā) arises. When true knowledge is complete, liberation (vimutti) is complete. That is the noble path.

[26:40] No need to look anywhere else. Whoever only thinks about it until he dies never gets it, as long as he does not see it in the moment of thinking. That is why the noble path in the books, on paper, is useless. Because we do not make it arise in our heart. We study only the outside, because we do not study ourselves. So: turn back and study body and mind. For we study the five aggregates, and that is the path that leads us out of suffering, out of foolishness.

[27:20] If we are aware of ourselves, in the moment we are aware in the present: is there liking? Is there aversion? Is there happiness? Is there suffering? Are there others? Are we there? Is there birth? Is there death? None of it. There is one single, lasting truth, the one thing: the present. Try it and you will know; in the end you will know. Where is the thing we call "I"? What is "I"? Is there one? If there is no I, there is no you either. If there is no I, where would happiness settle? Where would suffering settle?

[28:11] So. Suffering is cured in our own heart, in our own view. That is why we turn back and carry and hold the heart, so that suffering grows less. If we are aware of ourselves in the present, suffering does not arise. How many days this body still lives, when it dies: not our business, no reason to worry. We do not go back over the past; we do not worry about the future. We only know in the present. "Atītaṃ nānvāgameyya, nappaṭikaṅkhe anāgataṃ" (a verse of the Buddha): the past is gone, the future has not come. So no daydreaming.

[28:58] It is the same with good deeds, with merit (puñña): there is a fruit in future times. But set it aside, it has not come yet. Take the fruit in the present. If our view is correct, then every action of ours, every action on the Buddha's

path, serves giving out alone (giving away, letting go). The Buddha taught it plainly. He did not say there is no heaven; he said there is. Whoever does good and gives earns merit and is born rich. But that is not the highest aim. The highest aim is to cleanse our heart.

[29:44] Doing in order to have nothing (any more). Doing so that it (suffering) comes to an end. Why do we have to do it? Because it is not yet at an end. If it were at an end, we would not have to do anything. So we scrape away at our heart. Also through giving, giving out. That we give gifts, give every day, is a practice in giving out. But most Buddhists do not know the practice; they do not know how to use it. They only hope to gain: "Sādhu (so be it), may I become this and that." (Isan dialect) Some say: after death, may I not be born again. But after death he is born again all the same (the wish alone does not do it). He asks to die and asks not to be born. Isn't that so?

[30:38] So. We do it to cleanse our heart. It clears away our selfishness. That our life is so troublesome: nobody makes it troublesome for us. We set the conditions ourselves, out of lack of wisdom. Someone says one word we do not like, and we are angry for three days and three nights. You savage! Well, I'm just as hard! You're somebody? So am I! There is someone who thinks himself accomplished in everything and does not notice he is a fool. Deluded that he really is somebody: "I will never forgive you, I'm better than you." And suffers all the while, because he cannot let go. He carries it around and even goes boasting about how accomplished he is. Do you see?

[31:26] But if we do it for giving out, the conditions in our life grow fewer. The burdens, the conditions of our life grow fewer. Life becomes simpler. One lives with science, that is, with understanding, and with art, that is, with beauty in the conduct of life. Our present life we do not see. We only chase the turmoil: religion is this and that, how rich one wants to become. The big stories that are in the news every day all come down to money, don't they?

[32:17] Suffering because one has a lot exists too. Not good. One is raided by robbers, another has a son who squanders everything, a third has a husband who carries the money to his mistress, because there is money to carry. The more a person owns, the more suspicious he becomes. The truly rich, those with really a lot of money, are not happy. They suffer from the much they have. Afraid of being robbed, afraid of being plundered and killed. In the end, afraid of dying before their wealth (and having to leave it behind). Do you see? And do you want to be like that?

[33:05] So we seek the way out of suffering, so that suffering fades from this heart. Why do we suffer? We suffer because we hold on. Suffering exists because we hold on. Why do we hold on? Because we want. Holding on exists because we want. Why do we want? Because we are foolish. Ignorance (avijjā), craving (taṇhā), clinging (upādāna). We keep patching at the end of the chain, at the consequences. That is like a monkey untangling a net: it never ends. You have to cut at the root: at foolishness. Drop foolishness and you drop everything. Then there is nothing left to say. There was nothing there from the start, so there is nothing.

[34:05] So what the Buddha teaches is nothing out of reach: the practice of mindfulness of breathing. But most people think it is too high, too far, beyond reach, and do not practise seriously. They regard it as something lofty to be venerated and worshipped, but they do not do it. Try it: be aware with the breath, and then ask again: happy? suffering? Only bare knowing remains. Just knowing, arising together with presence of mind, with recollection (another word for presence of mind). It is the awake state.

[34:49] That is why the Buddha (buddha, the awake one) is in every mind. In every heart there is the awake one. No need to seek him anywhere. No need to wait longingly for the path, the noble path, insight. They are in the heart. Wake up the awake one. Wake up the awake state. A little, a bit, and then more and more and more. It is not that we do it once and it succeeds at once. We rely on doing it often. Practise often, know often. Standing, walking, sitting, lying, stretching, bending, eating, drinking, relieving oneself: all under presence of mind, under recollection. That is mental cultivation (bhāvanā).

[35:44] So if we want to get out of suffering, we have to learn the teaching of the Buddha and practise it. Not just know it. Bare knowing is useless. Like someone who knows how to take the fever medicine but does not take it. He holds the leaflet, holds the medicine, and sits there reading the leaflet. The fever does not go. If he takes the

medicine, he has a chance of getting well. So one must practise in earnest. Practice is not a game, not a joke. And it is nothing to think up. I keep saying: the Dhamma cannot be thought up. It is a truth beyond thinking, even beyond learned knowledge.

[36:36] You see, there is no explanation for it. Because the words used to explain are only convention (sammuti). But when we see it, we understand by ourselves, we realise it ourselves. For instance: if we have presence of mind that knows right at the start, we catch it in time. At contact we see: aversion has arisen. It ripples, and at once there is aversion, our anger. It is stopped right there, it does not develop further. If you catch it in time at this point, it stops. You can no longer scold, no longer abuse, no longer kill with a look, no longer wound with a look, no longer do harm in any way. The fire inside is not brought out.

[37:30] So we live as people without fault. We live without doing harm, without stirring up enmity. Do you see? Whoever catches it in time can live like that, because presence of mind stops the current. But if you are inattentive, it goes in through the eye and out through the hand, in through the ear and out through the mouth. You do not yet know that it has struck here (at the eye), and it is already there (in the deed). It is very fast. (Isan dialect) People sit together peacefully, and a while later they are arguing and throwing things at each other. True, isn't it? It is very fast. But if we catch it in time, we can stop it.

[38:12] And the displeasure grows lighter and lighter the faster our presence of mind catches it. Bit by bit it loses its force, until at contact only a slight irritation arises; but it stays there, it does not turn into anger. That is a person in whom aversion has already thinned out. Here I say something different from what people say: the books say that one who has reached the first noble fruit (sotāpanna, the first stage of awakening) has put aversion aside. But in truth: when presence of mind catches it in time and drops it, that is the path (the practice). When aversion no longer arises at all, that is the full level of the first fruit (the result).

[39:04] Whoever gets this far in this life, there is no need to talk with him any more. He has become his own refuge. There is no need to teach him further. For whoever has entered the path knows his way by himself. Once he has it, there is nothing more to teach him. (Constant teaching) is nothing but blind belief. Once he has been shown how it is done, he sees the fruit for himself. The one who walks sees and knows the practice by himself, because he is walking. Like walking: we walk from here to the destination. If we can walk, we just take step after step, left and right. There is no third leg. But with every step we take, it gets better.

[40:00] So the practice repeats itself at this point. It only grows finer and finer, that is, presence of mind becomes more complete. The more wisdom ripens, the more refined the states of mind become. The sharper wisdom gets, the more finely it penetrates the defilements. So wisdom and presence of mind polish each other. The practice is not complicated at all. Today people talk about this and that. Leave heaven out, leave hell out, talk about the present. If you act well now, then wherever you go after death, never mind.

[40:46] You need not ask for anything, vow anything, worry about anything. If the present is right, you need not fear the future. Certain in the present, no anxiety about the future. So when we train our presence of mind until it is complete, then we can carry the mind until it stands firm in concentration. The mind that used to like and dislike does so less and less, until it stands in the middle: no liking, no aversion, no leaning. That is the middle (majjhimā). The mind is in the middle, presence of mind carries it, it stands firm, in the middle. Only then does it come to the cultivation of wisdom, of insight.

[41:45] If you do not get this far, it is not insight. Today most practice dies of "imagination" instead of insight (a pun: vipassanā, insight; vipassanük, where nük means "to imagine"). People imagine: I am this and that, I have seen this and that. Already carried off by thoughts, already scattered. So: trust the Buddha. We do not need to know much. Take a single sentence the Buddha said as encouragement: "Mindfulness of breathing, cultivated and practised much, leads to nibbāna." This one sentence of the Buddha alone makes it worth practising mindfulness of breathing.

[42:25] When our presence of mind becomes more complete, we learn, we understand, we realise the Buddha's teaching, without anyone having to explain it. One knows it by oneself: paccattaṃ, each for himself. We all talk about it, paccattaṃ, paccattaṃ, and then go and ask the teachers about the Dhamma. And among the teachers nobody knows who is more foolish and who is wiser, these days. So: the teachers we honour as they deserve. But the one we should follow is the Master (the Buddha). For he certainly does not lead us astray. The Buddha is the guiding mark.

[43:15] Try it, this life. Stake the whole life. Put this life on the line, the life and spirit you have left. Trust the Buddha without doubt, and act on it without hesitation. We have trusted so many others, and we have trusted ourselves a lot. Shall we put ourselves to the test once, for one lifetime? (Isan dialect) If you dare. If you don't dare, you shake your head (and leave it). Afraid of dying? We die here anyway. Practice takes the courage to stake something. If we have such firm confidence (saddhā), energy (viriya) follows by itself. Confidence, energy, presence of mind, concentration, wisdom: the faculties (indriya) ripen bit by bit.

[44:16] We say "confidence", and today nobody knows what they have confidence in. The mouth says "Buddhaṃ saraṇaṃ gacchāmi" (to the Buddha I go for refuge). Something white (a robe, an image) comes along and they bow to it. Something green comes along and they bow to that too, who knows to what. Do you see? And yet they say: to the Buddha I go for refuge. Whoever reaches true confidence, the faculty of confidence, Māra (temptation) cannot pull him off the path any more. Even if he had to die, he would not change his mind, not change his confidence. That is true confidence. When confidence is firm, one strives eagerly in the practice, one does not lose heart at the hardship. Energy, effort arises. Presence of mind, recollection, becomes more complete.

[45:10] Concentration becomes firmer. Wisdom becomes sharper. When wisdom has arisen and sharpened, it in turn nourishes confidence, for this confidence is confidence born of wisdom, confidence joined with wisdom. The more clearly one knows, the firmer the confidence. So it goes round in a circle and lets the faculties ripen, the powers (bala). All the things that belong to awakening (bodhipakkhiya-dhamma) are one single thing. They cannot be separated. They converge in one place.

[46:02] So the teaching the Buddha set up is a guideline, a principle for practice, so that one does not go astray. "All things should not be held on to" (a word of the Buddha). So there is nothing one may hold on to. Not the right, not the wrong, not the good, not the bad, not evil and merit. For all of it is only temporary. What exists is impermanent; what is permanent does not exist. So we should not hold on to anything. Just know things, like suffering: it arises from causes and conditions. It arises for us to know it, not for us to become its owners. That is all.

[46:59] But because we grab it and say it is ours, we suffer. Suffering exists because of holding on. Holding on exists because of wanting. Wanting exists because of being lost (not knowing). Ignorance, craving, clinging. Ignorance, craving, clinging. This is where you start, at the cause. And the being lost sits in this heart. So: come back here, and you cure the being lost. Being lost and knowing lie close together. They are two sides. Knowing and being lost are like the palm and the back of the hand: you cannot separate them, but you can choose the side.

[47:55] They lie very close together. That is why training presence of mind until knowing arises is the only way out of suffering. When presence of mind catches it in time, knowing and giving warning, that is true knowledge (vijjā). Then the mind just knows. It does not judge, it attaches no importance to what is known. In other words: merely knowing, merely seeing, merely hearing, merely. It gives the thing no value, no meaning, no verdict. Or yet another way: it has no view about what it knows. Then you are free of the harm of views.

[48:43] Without a view there is no thought. Thought is what the mind creates. "With the fading and ceasing of ignorance, what the mind creates ceases, and with it consciousness, mind and body, the six sense bridges, contact, feeling, craving, clinging, becoming" (the chain of dependent arising, paṭiccasamuppāda). If ignorance ceases, nothing arises from the start. Like light that shines and drives out darkness. So: the cultivation of presence of mind, the only way. Presence of mind is the true friend. No need to want to know. Today people suffer because they want to know the Dhamma, yet do not know themselves.

[49:26] Turn back and know, and you can accept. If you accept, it is over. People suffer because they do not accept, do not accept what is. It is like this, and they want it otherwise. It is like this, and they do not want it like this. Do you see? Craving for becoming, craving for non-becoming (bhava-taṇhā, vibhava-taṇhā). I have gone in many directions now; you are getting sleepy. (Isan dialect) Those down there (in the hall) say: let him talk about what he wants. Only, what one likes or does not like: if he talks about what you like, you listen gladly; if he talks about what you don't like, it burns in the ears. Pay attention: the way out of suffering is to create no more causes of suffering.

[50:37] What has been created has arisen; it will decline and cease by itself. What matters is: do not create new causes of suffering. What is the cause of suffering? In the verse the Buddha spoke at his awakening it says: "House-builder, I have seen you. You shall not build me a house again." The house-builder is craving, which builds becoming (bhava, becoming someone). Every birth is suffering, again and again. If we catch craving in time, we do not become its slaves. If we catch in time what the mind creates, we do not become its slaves. Just catch it in time, nothing else. There is nothing to do.

[51:33] Do you see? There is no intention to let go or lay down at all. There is no I that lets go or lays down. There is no I that practises. As long as there is still an I that does, it is not yet the real practice. This I that still does is what is called clinging to rules and rituals (sīlabbata-parāmāsa): practising by the form, by rules and observances (sīla-vata). Most practitioners do not get across here. That is why their doubts about the Buddha's teaching never end. Have I crossed or not? That is doubt (vicikicchā). Do you see?

[52:13] So: practise, stay in the present, look at yourself, train slowly. As far as we can look, that is how far we are. Do not copy the others. Important: today people do duckling practice; they force each other into it. When I say this, I step on the teachers' toes. But ducklings is what they are. Why? Because they cannot yet enter primary school, they must first go to kindergarten. Those who walk (in walking meditation) one behind the other in a line are all kindergarten children, not yet in primary school. When I talk like this, someone gets annoyed again.

[52:53] So: wake up, grow up, manage it. You must be able to rely on yourselves. The teachers are not your refuge for ever. Waiting for the teacher to do it with you does not work. We have to do it ourselves. We have to rely on ourselves. Why wait for someone else to lead us, and not do it ourselves? That is it: we do not develop ourselves. If we do not progress, we stay just as far, however many years and lives pass, on the same level. Duckling practice. (Isan dialect) Go on walking in your line; walking is good too. So back to the way the Buddha taught. Are you awake again?

[53:41] Practise knowing the breath. Follow it in slowly, and know. In, know; out, know. Do not take it too seriously, do not make a matter of life and death of it, but do not take it lightly either. Not tense, not slack. Let it be a natural practice, force nothing. Just know it, let the body breathe by itself. We do not have to breathe for it. Just know, know slowly, go along with the in-breath and the out-breath. When presence of mind becomes more complete, the intention to direct the knowing fades by itself. Because mindfulness of breathing is complete, the four foundations of presence of mind arise.

[54:35] So from the body you come to the heart. At contact you see the rippling, and so you begin to study feeling, the feeling of the body. In studying feeling: where does feeling arise? How does it arise? What is it that is there, that sees, that knows? Bit by bit you study inward. What is known and what knows are not the same. The mind is not the object (ārammaṇa), the object is not the mind. They separate. In practice you see this bit by bit.

[55:26] Whoever gets this far, there is no need to talk with him. Then there really is nothing more to say. He does it by himself. He listens, yes, but he does not believe blindly. Those who have got this far do not believe anyone easily. But they do not reject anyone either. They do not judge. They test. Do you see? He does not believe prematurely that only this is true and everything else is not. Whatever anyone says, he does not contradict, but he does not agree either. He leaves it in the middle. For he believes the truth.

[56:12] So the practice goes forward step by step, firmly. He understands the world better. He understands convention (sammuti) better. He suffers less, but he can still live with convention. He does not set himself against the world. He does not boast of standing above others. The more he knows, the humbler he becomes, the more he can yield. Whoever cannot yield to others is the loser. Whoever is bent on defeating others has lost from the start: he has lost to his own heart. Whoever can yield has conquered his heart. So the one who yields is the winner. All of us want to be the winner, and all lose from the start: "I have to beat you", nothing else.

[57:10] So in practice we have to understand everything we learn from the books and the teachers correctly, and then practise it straight. Only then do you see the fruit. For instance with giving: if we give in order to give out, we see how our heart grows lighter. The stinginess in our heart lessens, and at the same time loving-kindness (mettā) and goodwill surface in our heart. Why? Because selfishness is being washed out. Loving-kindness, goodwill, regard for the good of others can arise.

[57:51] And when loving-kindness and goodwill towards each other are there, there is no more harming. It grows less by itself. People harm each other out of selfishness. Without selfishness one does not harm. Virtue (sīla) is simply the normal state of not harming: one has let go of the intention to harm. Not: one has the intention to let go of harming; but: the intention itself is gone. The language may turn it this way and that, but think it over carefully. It simply means: one does not think of harming. In our everyday language.

[58:38] If you do not think of harming, you do not come into conflict with anyone. Do you see? No need to sit there every evening reciting "pāṇātipātā veramaṇī" (I undertake to abstain from killing). Big words in the mouth: "sabbe sattā" (may all beings be happy), oh! And when it comes to it, who comes first, oneself or the others? One says one thing and is another. So: turn back and look into your heart. Look carefully. Carry and hold it. Be careful. This I leave with you: you have to manage it. Otherwise no one can help you. If you carelessly let your heart grow murky, a bad destination (duggati) is to be expected.

[59:28] The Ajahn said it a moment ago: whether we go to heaven or to hell depends on ourselves. After death there is no deva (devatā, a heavenly being) to carry us to heaven and no warden of hell to drag us down. There is none. What no one says, I will say: whoever thinks evil in this moment is in the lower realms at once. Whoever thinks good in this moment is in a good destination at once. By the power of kamma (of cause and effect). Do you see? So can we guarantee ourselves that we will not carelessly let our mind slip into the unwholesome? If we mean it, if we want to get out of the lower realms, we have to guard it right here.

[60:12] If we do not practise from now on, our chance grows smaller with every second that passes. The more time passes, the smaller it gets. If you wish yourself well, then guard your own heart. Whoever can guard his own heart can guard the whole world. It depends on our heart. This I leave with you. "Manopubbaṅgamā dhammā, manoseṭṭhā manomayā" (all things have mind as their forerunner, mind is their chief, they are made of mind). I rejoice in your determination (anumodanā, rejoicing in the good others do). And I stress as always: everything I have said is said for you to hear, not for you to believe.

[61:11] (Isan dialect) It is as if I sit here talking: like a jujube tree (bak than: a thorny tree with small tart fruit). Look closely, compare well. The jujubes fall down: ripe ones, unripe ones, worm-eaten ones. Whoever picks them up chooses. This one is not yet ripe, so it is tart. The ones you can eat, you eat slowly. Before you eat, before you put it in your mouth, you check whether there is a worm in it. Whoever grabs in haste and reaches in with his hand, the jujube's thorns scratch his hand. That is how it is: listening to the Dhamma is like picking up jujubes. If someone wants a lot at once and throws a stick up, careful, it falls on his head. It is the same with the teachers' words: where a word lands too hard, that is the stick on the head (you wanted too much at once).

[62:06] So: choose what suits your temperament. Take that with you and reflect on it; then it brings benefit. Finally I rejoice with you (anumodanā) and wish you all blessings with all my heart. Because we have all done good, may this be the power that brings us nearer to path and fruit (the stages of liberation), to nibbāna, in time to come. To each of you, to all. So be it.