



buddha talk

on

the

way

Home

... to true and lasting happiness

An overview of the Buddha's teachings

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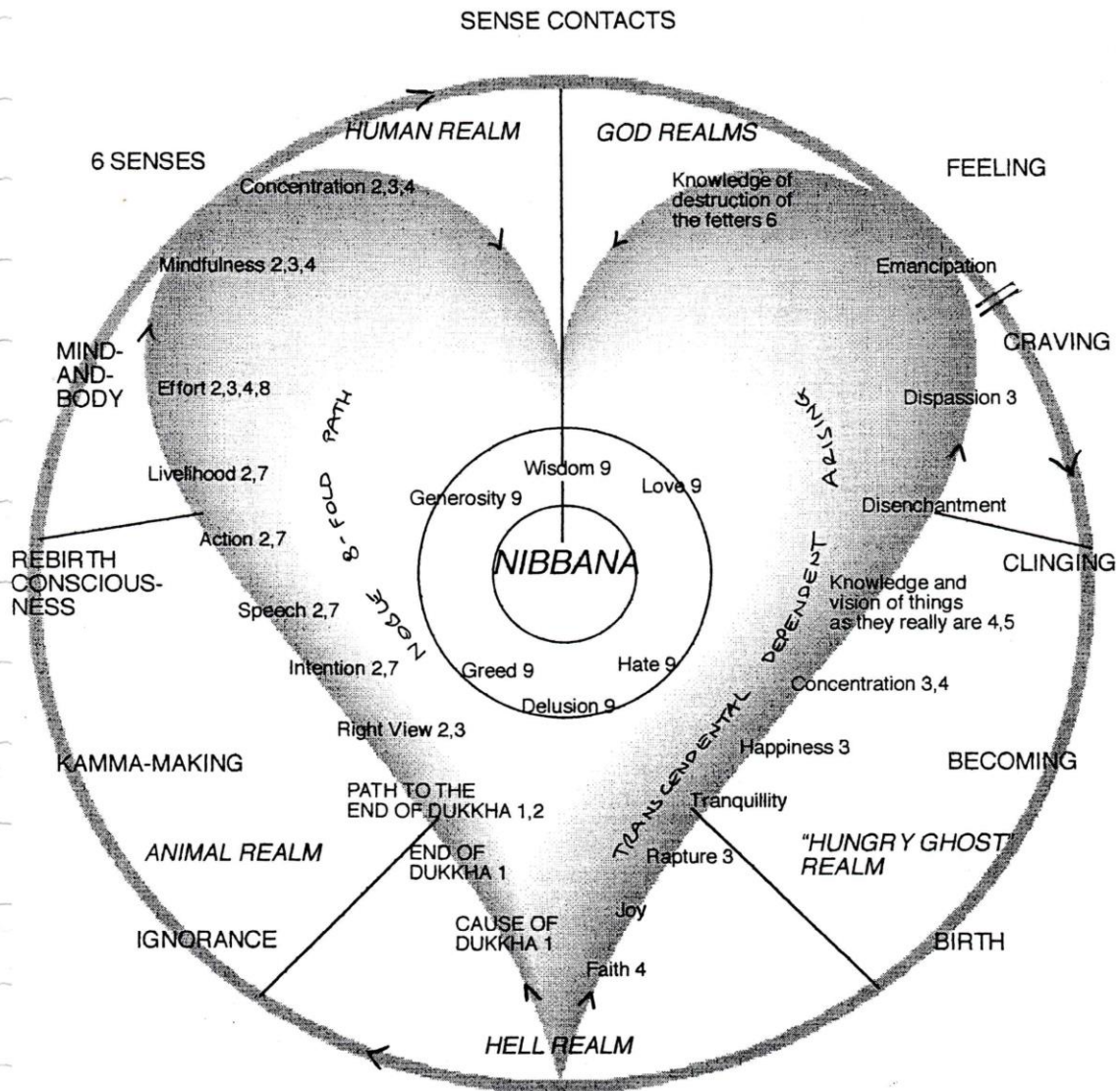
Many noble friends, who have generously provided ongoing love and support

My students, who ensure I continually learn

All of these people and many others have been my teachers.

To them all, heartfelt thanks.

THE BUDDHA-DHAMMA



WORLDLY DEPENDENT ARISING

- | | | | |
|---|--|---|---------------------------------------|
| 1 | 4 noble truths | 6 | All 37 factors of enlightenment shown |
| 2 | Noble 8-fold path | 7 | 4 supreme emotions are practised here |
| 3 | 7 factors of enlightenment | 8 | 4 supreme efforts are included here |
| 4 | 5 spiritual faculties / powers | 9 | The 6 roots |
| 5 | Re the 3 characteristics of the universe | | |

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FOREWORD

This handbook is based on a 6-day New Year's retreat given in 1995-96 at Wat Buddha Dhamma, a forest meditation and retreat centre in the Dharug National Park near Gosford, NSW.

It is intended as an introduction to the Buddha's teaching (the Dhamma) which is basically a set of practical techniques for reaching enlightenment - also known as self-realisation; freedom; true and lasting happiness; the understood experience of 'things as they really are'. Or, put the other way around, the techniques enable us to break out of or transcend the idea of self.

The handbook, written - as it was spoken - in an open and down-to-earth style, attempts to present clearly an overview of the Dhamma so as to put each technique in context. The importance of each of the three sections of the Noble 8-fold Path - the path of wholesome living (sila), the path of calm (samadhi) and the path of insight (panna) - is acknowledged and their mutual interdependence shown. The book has been set out so as to make the techniques as accessible as possible. In the first part of each section the relevant techniques are described and enough explanation is given to enable the reader to understand their importance and where they fit in the overall scheme. In the second part each technique is set out in summary so the reader may immediately begin to practise it.

The most immediately practise-able techniques, those comprising the path of wholesome living, are put first as they set the foundation for the path of calm, which in turn enables the practitioner to develop along the path of insight. Thus it is theoretically possible for serious practitioners to work systematically through the handbook and reach enlightenment.

May you reach enlightenment in this very life!

Melbourne, May 1996

FOREWORD TO THE SECOND & THIRD EDITIONS

In the second edition of the Handbook, minor changes have been made to the text; and 'summary boxes' have been added at relevant spots in the text to further clarify specific points of practice. In the third edition only minor alterations have been made.

Melbourne, August 1998, February 2007

INTRODUCTION

Well - here we are. At serene Wat Buddha Dhamma, in the middle of the beautiful Australian bush, on a summer evening, sitting down to start a retreat that will take us out of the present year and into the new one. That's our first example of impermanence - the years roll by!

An overview of the Dhamma?

Our topic is 'an overview of the Dhamma' - that is, of the Buddha's teachings. You may think this is an impossible task - to summarise the Buddha's teaching in 6 days. But he himself gave a much shorter summary than the one we'll be considering here. He said 'There is just one thing I teach: suffering, and its end to reach'. Or – how can we have true and lasting happiness? And that's the basis on which we'll be building.

Why have we all come here? To give some time to ourselves, to walk our inner journeys a bit more. Some of you, I believe, are new to the Dhamma - or relatively new. And some of us have been hearing and practising the Dhamma for several years now - some for many years. Some of us may be here because of a personal crisis in our lives. Often, that's what brings us to seek out the Buddha's wisdom in the first place. We must all like the idea of ending one year and starting another with the Dhamma. Maybe, that way, we can make some good new year's resolutions, and start out by practising them well!

But whatever else brings us here, we all share a wish to find out more about, and practise, the Buddha's teachings. I'll be aiming to put them into context, to give a broad view, and then to slot into that view the key practices, so we can look at where they fit and how they relate to each other. And importantly, in this retreat I'm aiming to provide a context in which we'll all be enabled to practise what I like to call these 'tools for happiness and freedom' the Buddha has given us.

In designing the course, I've tried to cater for beginners and for those who are experienced in meditation and the Dhamma; and also for Buddhists and non-Buddhists. In a sense, the course will be like a smorgasbord - there will be a variety of different learnings, practices and experiences available. Participants can select what they're ready for and grow from wherever they are in their inner journey.

In my experience, few teachers have been as helpful as the Buddha in providing a context and strategies for practice on the spiritual path. I spent many years looking closely at, and practising, Christianity, and for many years my inspiration came from some of the Vedic literature, and I have practised both exoteric and esoteric yoga. But when I heard Ayya Khema teaching the Dhamma, I was home! And ever since then, the clarity, completeness, logic, beauty, and integration of the Buddha's teaching has guided me truly towards the true happiness and freedom I've been yearning for.

The search for happiness

When the future Buddha left the palace of his father, seeking, he said his search was for that which would bring 'true and lasting happiness' to people. He found this happiness himself and spent the rest of his life - 45 years - teaching it.

The Buddha's path involves three very special elements which start us on the journey towards this happiness: love, joy and peace. Without love and joy we won't continue on any path towards our freedom. We'll practise whatever techniques we're using a whole lot better if (a) we love doing them and (b) we can see them bringing more love into our hearts and lives.

Joy leavens our practice and our whole daily life. The Buddha said joy was so important that we should not only be mindful of our own joy, but also practise enjoying others' joy with them, so we'd experience more of it!

Peace develops in our hearts as we practise our techniques more. As we meditate, practise mindfulness and the 4 supreme emotions and the 4 supreme efforts, contemplate, and develop our insight, there is a noticeable increase in the equanimity we bring to our daily lives, and therefore to our sense of peace.

Practice makes perfect!

Hopefully this course will bring all of us to deeper levels of these three states of being - love, joy and peace - within ourselves. The course is practice-based because that's how we develop them. The thing we most yearn for - that true and lasting happiness - can only be reached through our own experience. And all the experience we need can be gained by learning and honing skills. Just as we did as kids, when we learned to walk, ride a bike, play a musical instrument, or a game. The Buddha gives us the game-rules and instructions. If we follow them faithfully we'll reach our goal.

Outline of the Dhamma talks

The Dhamma talks deal firstly with the Buddha's early life and his search for true happiness; and an initial look at an overview of the Dhamma. Next we'll consider wholesome living, the basis for the overall path. Then the technique of mindfulness is discussed, and how we can use it. Following this comes the rest of the path of calm (energy and concentration); then the path of insight; then the worldly dependent arising, which describes our present situation and the transcendental dependent arising, which shows us the stages we go through as we progress towards true and lasting happiness. Finally we look at ways of transferring back home the experience gained at the retreat - how to establish the regular daily practice necessary for continued development along the inner path.

Each day the retreat starts with an early meditation so we can centre and focus ourselves. Then, after breakfast and developing generosity through selfless service, we spend the morning with a Dhamma talk and meditation practice. Afternoons will

be spent in sitting and walking meditation, with a choice of your own program; and individual interviews about your meditation progress. As practice develops through the course, you can include some contemplation and investigation in the afternoon practice. Each evening we'll do a group meditation, a contemplation together, and a guided lovingkindness meditation.

Noble silence

Noble silence is an extremely important aspect of the retreat. It's designed to support us in our practice. We're here to walk further on our own inner journey; noble silence helps us to stay focused and maintain the flow of practice. Doing this gives us the best possible chance of experiencing the calmness and happiness that comes from good practice. This is especially true in a retreat of this length. I urge you strongly not to break noble silence. Please remember that any time you initiate communication with someone else, you're disturbing not only your own focus, but - unmasked - theirs as well; and also that of all your fellow retreat participants who are close by. For the purposes of noble silence communication includes non-verbal - it can disturb focus just as much as talking. People often find it helpful to move around with the eyes looking down when they're with others, so as not to make eye contact. It's also better not to read widely - particularly non-Dhamma books; perhaps restricting yourselves to this handbook would be a good idea. Retreat time is precious. It's for our own practice - not for reading about someone else's. Obviously there are some circumstances when 'noble talking' applies. There will be time for asking questions after each Dhamma talk - but please keep them practice-based. If you are in real difficulty, please don't hesitate to approach me, and we'll talk straight away if possible, or make a time to talk. You will also have more than one opportunity to have an interview with me if you wish to. Talking is okay if really necessary during selfless service - if you don't know what to do, for instance - but please keep it as brief and as quiet as possible.

Growing towards an understanding of the Dhamma

Growth is really what this weekend is all about - growing towards our true potential as human beings, toward the joy of being who we really are, and getting a sense of the 'true and lasting happiness' this brings us. Finding out that it's not so very far away after all! And, most of all, finding out that we can start right now walking along the path towards our highest ideal; and, as we go, more and more true happiness creeps into our hearts, into our minds, and into our daily lives!

CHAPTER ONE

THE BUDDHA AND THE DHAMMA

THE BUDDHA AND HIS GOAL

When the young Prince Siddhattha left the palace of his childhood and early adulthood, his loving wife and newborn son, his goal was no less than to find out what would bring human beings true and lasting happiness.

The Buddha was born Prince Siddhattha Gotama, in 623 BC, on the present border of India and Nepal. Soon after his birth several highly-experienced astrologers were asked what the new prince's future life held in store. All but one said he would either be a great and wise ruler, following in his father's footsteps, or the next Buddha - Self-enlightened One. The last astrologer said the child would be the next Buddha. Knowing that if his son saw the suffering in the world he would probably want to be the next Buddha, and wishing him to follow in his footsteps, the king ensured he was brought up within the confines of palace life. The prince's early life was lived in luxurious surroundings, and he was kept blissfully unaware of the vicissitudes of life outside the palace walls. Later, he said about this life: 'I was delicate, excessively delicate...my turban, tunic, dress and cloak were all from Kasi (that is, the finest) ...night and day a white parasol was held over me so that I might not be touched by heat or cold, dust, leaves or dew...there were three palaces built for me (for the different seasons)...'

The '4 messengers'

But, in growing awareness, the young prince left the palace one day to see how life was lived outside its walls. He met, in turn, what he later called the '4 messengers': a senile old man; someone who was very sick; a corpse; and a renunciate, walking peacefully in contemplation. These 4 ultimately spurred him to renounce his worldly life and seek the cessation of suffering, or true and lasting happiness, and the truth of our life as human beings in this universe.

The Buddha later said '(I said to myself) Suppose that, being myself subject to birth, having understood the danger in what is subject to birth, I seek the unborn supreme security from bondage, Nibbana (Sanskrit Nirvana). Suppose that, being myself subject to ageing, sickness, death, sorrow, and defilement, having understood the danger in what is subject to ageing, sickness, death, sorrow, and defilement, I seek the unageing, unailing, deathless, sorrowless, and undefiled supreme security from bondage, Nibbana'. He left his home when he was 29 years old, changing his silk for the simple garment of an ascetic, and began a life of voluntary poverty. 'Later, while still young' he says '...though my mother and father wished otherwise and wept with tearful faces, I shaved off my hair and beard, put on the yellow robe, and went forth from the home life into homelessness.' (Ariyapariyesana Sutta - The Noble Search. Middle Length Discourse 26.13,14)

The Bodhisattva's early training

The young aspiring Buddha (Bodhisattva) sought training in meditation from two of the best-known teachers of the day, Alara Kalama and Uddaka Ramaputta (op cit 15, 16). Alara Kalama taught him the first 7 meditative absorptions (jhanas). Uddaka Ramaputta taught him the 8th meditative absorption, even more refined and concentrated. Both teachers found him such a good student that they invited him to lead, or share their leadership of, their respective communities. However, it occurred to the Bodhisattva that this meditation alone did not lead to detachment, 'cessation (of suffering), peace, direct knowledge, enlightenment, Nibbana' (op cit 15,16), so he did not accept their offers. But the practice of the meditative absorptions helped him to realise that the highest truth can be found inside oneself, and he decided to go and live in the forest, and find it for himself.

The 'Middle Way'

Because many of the holy men of his time were seeking the truth through asceticism, the Bodhisattva tried many forms of asceticism and self-mortification, including taking minimal food - until, he said later, he could touch his backbone from his stomach! He had practised austerities to 'the utmost' (Mahasaccaka Sutta - The Greater Discourse to Saccaka. Middle Length Discourse 36.28). But his body and mind were both weakened by this, it brought him no closer to his goal of finding Nibbana, true happiness for human beings, and he could see it was futile. So he decided to abandon both extremes, the indulgence of his early years and the asceticism of his life up to then as a renunciate, and try the Middle Way. He ate and looked after his body until he regained good health, and then continued his search, basing it on practising the meditative absorptions.

Resolution and enlightenment

When the Bodhisattva felt he was ready, he selected a suitable place to complete his inner search. He later said '...I arrived at Senanigama near Uruvela (in what today is Bodhi Gaya, in northern India). There I saw an agreeable piece of ground, a delightful grove with a clear-flowing river with pleasant, smooth banks and nearby a village for alms resort... And I sat down there thinking 'This will serve for the striving'. The fig tree under which he sat is now known as the 'bodhi' - enlightenment - tree. He made a resolution to sit and meditate there until he reached enlightenment, or 'until the flesh rotted from his bones'. Describing the time of his enlightenment, he later said:

'Tireless energy was aroused in me and unremitting mindfulness was established, my body was tranquil and untroubled, my mind concentrated and unified1 entered upon and abode in the first ...second third and fourth jhana(s).
'When my concentrated mind was thus purified, bright, unblemished, rid of imperfection, malleable, wieldy, steady and attained to imperturbability, I directed it to knowledge of the recollection of past lives this was the first true knowledge gained by me in the first watch of the night...

`I directed it to knowledge of the passing away and reappearance of beings and I understood how beings pass on according to their actions. This was the second true knowledge attained by me in the second watch of the night...

'I directed it to knowledge of the destruction of the taints. I directly knew it as it actually is 'This is suffering This is the origin of suffering';..... This is the cessation of suffering....This is the way leading to the cessation of suffering'

'When I knew and saw thus, my mind was liberated from the taint of sensual desire, from the taint of being, and from the taint of ignorance. When it was liberated there came the knowledge 'It is liberated.' I directly knew 'Birth is destroyed, the holy life has been lived, what had to be done has been done, there is no more coming to any state of being.' (Bhayabherava Sutta - Fear and Dread. Middle Length Discourse 4.22-31)

Prince Siddhattha Gotama had become the Buddha, fully liberated, the Self-enlightened One, through Realising, or understanding and experiencing for himself the wheel of birth and death and the 4 noble truths. He was 35 years old. Then he decided to teach what he had discovered 'out of compassion for beings'. And he did so, every day of his life, until his death 45 years later.

What is enlightenment?

In a nutshell: seeing things as they really are, which results in true and lasting happiness. The Pali word describing the enlightened state is Nibbana, literally 'non-burning'. The Buddha described the state of enlightenment in many ways including 'the sorrowless', 'security from bondage', 'the unborn supreme', 'the unageing', 'the unailing', 'the deathless', 'the undefiled'. Other ways of describing it include:

- cessation (of suffering), peace, direct knowledge
- seeing ourselves as we really are
- having a full understanding and experience of things as they really are
- a 'light going on in the mind' which illuminates the truth of ourselves and of the universe
- the result of following the Noble 8-fold Path
- the highest ideal for a human being
- true and lasting happiness.

CAUSE AND EFFECT

The Buddha taught that all phenomena in the universe are dependent on, caused by, conditioned by a pre-existing cause or phenomenon. All the phenomena of which we and our lives consist fall into one of 12 categories, or successive steps. These categories form a continuous cycle which the Buddha calls 'samsara', the 'round of birth and death' or the 'worldly dependent arising' (See Chapter 6). It remains unbroken until we seek and find liberation.

The 'transcendental dependent arising' is the path out of the cycle of birth and death whose steps we experience as we transcend this worldly existence. It is the second

half of the total cause and effect sequence, and begins at the point of suffering, or 'old age, sickness and death' in the Worldly Dependent Arising cycle. This fact of suffering is the first 'noble truth' we need to experience and realise, to begin our journey to freedom. However, as we have enough faith in the practices to study and practise them we move on to joy, and then rapture as our practice develops toward true and lasting happiness.

This total sequence of cause and effect, or arising and ceasing, 'comprises all of the human experience, and all its possibilities' (Bikkhu Bodhi - Transcendental Dependent Arising. Wheel Publication 277/278).

THE 4 NOBLE TRUTHS AND THE NOBLE 8-FOLD PATH

These four truths, realised by the Buddha during the night of his enlightenment, are the core of the Dhamma. The 4 noble truths and the noble 8-fold path describe how things really are in our universe, and what we need to do to reach enlightenment, the full understanding of how things are. The truths are:

1. The truth of 'dukkha', suffering or unsatisfactoriness: dukkha is 'birth, ageing, death, sorrow, lamentation, pain, sadness and distress; being attached to the unloved, being separated from the loved, not getting what one wants'
2. The origin of dukkha: 'the craving which gives rise to rebirth, bound up with pleasure and greed, finding fresh delight now here now there - i.e. sensual craving, craving for existence and craving for non-existence'
3. The end of dukkha: 'the complete fading away and extinction of this craving ...liberation from it, detachment from it: Nibbana'
4. The way of practice leading to the end of dukkha:
 - right view: '...the knowledge of dukkha, the cause of dukkha, the end of dukkha and the path to the end of dukkha'
 - right thought (intention): '...the thought of renunciation... non-ill-will... harmlessness'
 - right speech: 'refraining from lying ...slander ...harsh ...frivolous speech'
 - right action: 'refraining from taking life ...taking what is not given ...sexual misconduct' (basically, unfaithfulness)
 - right livelihood: keeping oneself by work based on the 5 precepts (the 4 noted under right speech and action above, plus refraining from intoxicants)
 - right effort: '...a practitioner rouses his will, makes an effort, stirs up energy, exerts his mind and strives
 - to prevent the arising of... unwholesome mental states
 - to overcome... unwholesome mental states that have arisen
 - to produce unarisen wholesome mental states
 - to maintain (and develop) wholesome mental states'
 - right mindfulness: contemplating the 4 foundations of mindfulness
 - right concentration: 'Here a practitioner, detached from sense desires, detached from unwholesome mental states, enters and remains in the first jhana (meditative absorption) ...second jhana...third jhana...fourth jhana' (Mahasatipatthana Sutta - The Greater Discourse on the Foundations of Mindfulness, Long Discourse 22)

THE 4 NOBLE TRUTHS

1. THE TRUTH OF UNSATISFACTORINESS (DUKKHA)
2. THE CAUSE OF UNSATISFACTORINESS – CLINGING
3. THE END OF UNSATISFACTORINESS – NIBBANA
4. THE PATH TO THE END OF UNSATISFACTORINESS – THE NOBLE 8-FOLD PATH

THE NOBLE 8-FOLD PATH - THE 3 PATHS OF PRACTICE

SILA

Path of wholesome living
- right speech
- right action
- right livelihood

Training the mind/
heart to be open

- 'Metta bhavana'
(lovingkindness meditation)
- 4 supreme emotions
- 4 supreme efforts
- 5 precepts
- Clear comprehension

Heart consciousness

Happy heart

SAMADHI

Path of calm
- right effort
- right mindfulness
- right concentration

AIMS
Training the mind
to be calm

PRACTICES
- 'Samatha bhavana'
(tranquillity meditation)
- Exerting effort
- Mindfulness

KEYS
One-pointed concentration

BENEFITS
Calm mind –
craving abandoned

PANNA

Path of insight
- right view
- right intention

Training the mind
to discern the 3
characteristics of the
Universe

- 'Vipassana bhavana'
(insight meditation)
- Contemplation
- Investigation

Discernment

Seeing things as they
really are – ignorance
abandoned

The '3 parts of the Dhamma'

These 8 parts of the path make up the 3 overall categories of the Dhamma:
- right view and right thought are the path of insight
- right speech, action and livelihood are the path of wholesome living
- right mindfulness, effort and concentration (i.e. meditation) are the path of calm.

We need to practise all three to reach the end of dukkha - not as succeeding steps, one after the other, but more like 8 lanes of cars on a highway, all proceeding at a similar pace – and all gradually increasing the amount of happiness we experience. It's worth emphasising here that those people who think that the Buddha's teaching is negative, because it's based on the fact of dukkha or unsatisfactoriness in all life, have only looked at half the story. He saw the truth of dukkha and its cause clearly, *in order to* see clearly the end of dukkha – true and lasting happiness - and the way to true and lasting happiness. There can be no true cure without a true diagnosis.

THE DHAMMA

A characteristic of the Dhamma that will become increasingly obvious to us as we progress through this retreat is that it's complete - the path given to us by the Buddha takes us all the way from where we are (wherever that is) to full enlightenment - if we want to go all the way.

If we don't, we'll find the Dhamma brings us results as we progress, which are very effective both in our spiritual practice and in our daily lives; and we can progress as far as we wish to. As we've seen, the Dhamma has 3 aspects - the path of wholesome living, the path of calm, and the path of insight. The daily practice path of wholesome living - thinking, speaking and acting so as to make our hearts, and the hearts of those we're with, truly happy - brings us instantaneous results, with life flowing more happily, smoothly and enjoyably. As we bring effort and perseverance to our practice of mindfulness and tranquillity meditation (the path of calm), the greater calmness in our mind flows into our day and affects everything we do, with each task seeming simpler, not so daunting. And as we see more of the way things really are (the path of insight), we have more equanimity, or evenness, in our minds and in our daily lives.

The Dhamma is also beautifully integrated, so that progress in one of these 3 aspects - wholesome living, calmness or insight - facilitates progress in the other two. Day to day wholesome living helps create happiness so we can settle for our daily meditation. Meditation calms the mind so we're able to see reality more clearly than we'd otherwise be able to. And, as we've seen, as we progressively develop more clarity of insight, this brings more evenness and deep peace to our daily lives.

Practising the Dhamma involves a balanced mix of heart and mind. We need to listen with heart and mind, practise with heart and mind; and the practice brings peace to heart and mind.

There are some other things about the Dhamma that make it a particularly helpful and attractive path:

- it fits in with other spiritual traditions, effectively 'filling in the gaps' and clarifying ambiguities in them so that practitioners' understanding and experience of them may be more rewarding

- the tranquillity meditation path set out so clearly by the Buddha is also to be found (in my experience, not so clearly and completely set out) in the writings of, for instance, Christian (e.g. St. Teresa d'Avila, Meister Eckhart) and Sufi (e.g. Irina Tweedie) mystics. It is the meditative path naturally followed by the human mind when it is given an opportunity to quieten down. But we need to know the progression of meditation steps, to know what is meditation and what is not, so we don't spend time (sometimes meditators spend many years) continuing down a path that doesn't take us very far

- the Theravadin tradition, in which my teacher Ayya Khema is ordained, is based directly on the Pali Canon, a collection of the Buddha's discourses, which were written down at the third great Council of Arahants (enlightened men and women) 250 years after the Buddha's death. The discourses had been given in repetitive and memorable form in the first place, memorised by Ananda, the Buddha's friend and attendant who had perfect recall, checked at the first great Council of Arahants, given out to the Arahants who passed them on to their students verbatim, and checked by the second and third Councils of Arahants. So we can be sure that the discourses as we read them are as close as is possible to the actual teachings given by the Buddha

- the Theravadin tradition is also simple. In her introduction to 'When the Iron Eagle Flies' Ayya Khema says 'Simplicity can ...be noticed in the teaching. There are few rituals, no initiations, no secrets. Often, one sutta contains all the elements needed for a complete spiritual path.'

- the Dhamma is pragmatic. It is about the Middle Path. It encourages us to follow a balanced path, not ascetic, not indulgent.

- although he knew much more than this, the Buddha focused on what was needed to guide people to enlightenment. For instance he advises us not to spend time developing the 'siddhis' or various psychic powers because they don't help us toward enlightenment.

THE IMPORTANCE OF PRACTICE

Progress in the Dhamma does not depend on faith in any power outside oneself. It is squarely based on the practitioner's own work at the practices. The Dalai Lama, in his foreword to Ayya Khema's book 'When the Iron Eagle Flies' says the Buddha 'counselled his listeners not simply to accept his words out of faith but to think about them and then, if they found them convincing and appropriate, to put the advice into practice'. Every step on the path is attainable with practice. The whole path to enlightenment can be followed by energetically developing skills.

The attitude with which one practises is, of course, a key to your success. A decision needs to be made to do one's best to follow the path. There are several foundations of successful practice, including non-judging of self and others, patience, an open, 'beginners' mind, trust in the practices, not trying over-hard, an acceptance of how

the practice is proceeding, a letting-go into the practice so there is room in the mind to see what will happen next, a curiosity about what is unfolding – and most importantly, a sense of adventure and fun. You're on the inner journey!

ATTITUDE AND COMMITMENT

THE ATTITUDINAL FOUNDATION OF PRACTICE

- 1 Non-judging
- 2 Patience
- 3 `Beginner's mind'
- 4 Trust
- 5 Non-striving
- 6 Acceptance
- 7 Letting go
- 8 Curiosity
- 9 Adventure and fun

COMMITMENT, SELF-DISCIPLINE AND INTENTIONALITY

Meditation won't work without

- 1 Commitment to working on yourself
- 2 Enough self-discipline to persevere in the practice
- 3 Regular practice

CHAPTER TWO

THE PATH OF WHOLESOME LIVING

I like to call the path of wholesome living 'the path of heart-happy living' because when we act, speak or think with wholesomeness our own heart is happy and we'll make the hearts of those around us happy too. We know when we act, speak or think wholesomely our heart feels open and clear; if we act, speak or think unwholesomely our heart will constrict and become heavy.

To live wholesomely we need only keep an eye on these three - thoughts, speech and action - because speech and action are the only ways we interact with our environment, and all speech and action is preceded by thoughts. The Dhamma is about thinking, speaking and acting with happiness – it's all about living with joy, and lightness and fun and freedom! The 4 supreme emotions are the basis for this.

THE 5 PRECEPTS

All spiritual paths have a set of basic 'guidelines for living'. In the Dhamma these are the 5 precepts. These form the basis for the path of wholesome living, and anyone who really wishes to take up the noble 8-fold path undertakes to follow them. They are expressed by the Buddha, who understood that these things don't happen overnight (!), as 'undertaking the training to refrain from...'. We undertake the training to refrain from:

- harming any living being. The positive side of this is that we actively seek to love all living beings
- taking what is not given. The positive side of this is being generous
- lying and harsh speech, 'idle chatter'; or being truthful, helpful in our speech, and aware of the value of what we're talking about
- sexual misconduct. Basically, this entails remaining faithful to our partner; and being helpful in all our relationships
- taking intoxicating drinks or drugs. This is in order to keep the mind as clear as possible, acknowledge it and look after it as our most precious tool.

THE 5 PRECEPTS

UNDERTAKING THE TRAINING TO REFRAIN FROM

- 1 Killing living beings
- 2 Taking what is not given
- 3 Sexual misconduct (being unfaithful to one's partner)
- 4 Lying and harsh speech
- 5 Intoxicants

IMPLICITLY UNDERTAKING THE TRAINING TO DEVELOP

- 1 Lovingkindness and compassion towards all living beings
- 2 Generosity in all its forms
- 3 Wholesome and helpful relationships with everyone we meet
- 4 Honest, helpful and thoughtful speech
- 5 Clarity of mind in every way possible

Three other important techniques to practice in our Path of Wholesome Living are the '4 supreme emotions', 'the 4 supreme efforts' and the '5 ways of combating unwholesome thoughts'.

THE 4 SUPREME EMOTIONS

The 4 supreme emotions are unconditional love, or lovingkindness; compassion; joy with others; and equanimity, or even-mindedness. They are of basic importance because they help us along the inner journey by opening our hearts. A joyful, open heart is probably the basic requisite for following the spiritual path. We need it to hear the Dhamma, to practise the Dhamma, to dissolve the feeling of separation between ourselves and others, to help us see ourselves as part of the whole.

The 4 supreme emotions provide a background for wholesome living, a secure inner base to return to in the midst of daily life. They facilitate our practice of the 4 supreme efforts, and our progress along the path of insight. It's easier to accept the reality of the three characteristics of the universe - impermanence, unsatisfactoriness and non-self - within the context of the 4 supreme emotions. Further, experiencing love, compassion and joy-with-others helps us to see the unity of all things which is a key to the insight path. It's even possible to reach enlightenment just by practising unconditional love, compassion, joy-with-others and equanimity.

4 SUPREME EMOTIONS

- 1 Loving-kindness
- 2 Compassion
- 3 Joy with others
- 4 Equanimity

These are the most important wholesome emotions. Arousing them as often as possible opens the heart centre, and helps to purify the mind.

Unconditional love

I call unconditional love 'the great solvent', because it dissolves all the barriers between our imagined individual self, and everything else. It joins us to all that is, makes us part of the whole. Being able to love others helps our meditation because it involves a similar letting-go or giving of oneself. Being aware of and living out of the heart connection frees up our whole life.

To have love in our lives we must give love. It's similar to the Buddha's description of anger - like picking up a hot coal to throw at someone; the one who's throwing gets burned first. The giver of love has the love in their heart first. And as Ayya so succinctly puts it, 'the one who's receiving it is getting an ego support, not love'.

Ayya continues 'We often confuse affection - our attachment to people - with love. Being attached to anything prevents us from enlarging and expanding. It makes it more difficult for us to make the heart connection, which is expansive, and cultivated for its own sake. If we are attached to someone, we want the person to be with us or we have a feeling of loss - or, we're afraid of a total loss of that person. This introduces fear, which is connected to hate. Also, we'd like to be loved back, in the same quantity/quality as we give - like bartering! Finally, it prevents us from seeing the purity of unconditional love, because we think affection is love.

'Unconditional love has nothing to do with the quality of another person - whether they're lovable. This is judging. Nor does it have anything to do with the presence of another person, whether we're being loved back, or with giving and taking.

'Everybody has this love quality - just as we all have the quality of hate. If we don't practise the love quality then we're always going to be going up and down. We must cultivate the love quality in our own heart. But we must work at it, instead of just thinking we do it. The practice starts here and now. Every time there's the slightest feeling of ill-will or rejection or dislike or resistance we can convert and substitute into a feeling of care and concern. It's not passion - it's a warm caring and concern which shows itself in speech and action. You don't have to say 'I love you'; people

can tell by what you say and how you act whether you're loving, indifferent or opposed. We may have to practise many times, but if we do, it works. It works for everyone. We just have to do it often enough, and with sincerity. Anybody who has tried to be loving for its own sake knows what it's like. It's peaceful, harmonious, satisfying, fulfilling. It brings contentment, and gives a basis of security, because if one practises again and again one knows one is not going to get angry about anything. The loving quality has been established to the point where it's no longer changeable. This confidence makes it possible to be without fear. It's an openness. The loving quality in the heart is the greatest protection there is - the loving response is always disarming.' (Ayya Khema - from a talk on lovingkindness).

I like to compare each of the supreme emotions with water. Love feels like the boundless ocean. It accepts everything that flows into it - the pure and the impure, the wholesome and the unwholesome and just keeps on going, washing up on all the shores in the world without discrimination.

LOVINGKINDNESS MEDITATION

1. Calm the mind by being aware of the breath for a few minutes
2. Allow / encourage a feeling of love to arise in the heart centre. Remember a time when you felt unconditional love strongly, or use visualisation to help you, if necessary
3. One after the other, flow this feeling of love to
 - yourself
 - your parents, whether they're still alive or not
 - your loved ones
 - your good friends
 - acquaintances you meet in your everyday life
 - someone you find it difficult to get along with
4. Anchor the feeling of lovingkindness in the heart centre, and gently close the heart centre over it.

Compassion

Compassion is important to our spiritual journey because it opens the heart, promotes fellow-feeling, joins us to others, and helps us see the unity of everything. Compassion is concern, heart, literally 'with-feeling'. The fellow-feeling involved in compassion is based on the fact that we, too, are caught up in the sufferings of life. But we mustn't 'fall into' the other's suffering. We need to remain mindful, so that even as we empathise with the suffering person we can be seeking a way to reduce their suffering.

The opposite of compassion is cruelty; and compassion should not be confused with pity, which can make us feel somehow above, or better than the other person.

Compassion is aroused in the heart by being mindful, by giving compassion to yourself, by practising on easy situations first. We can aim to arouse compassion for ourselves and all other living beings, whenever the need arises in daily life, and every time an unwholesome emotion arises.

Compassion feels like a broad, deep well, brimming over. There's plenty of water there, and it's ready for action!

Joy with others

Joy with others is important because joy is a vital part of the spiritual journey. It helps us transcend our usual way of looking at things. Joy is the subject of the 2nd jhana (meditative absorption), and one of the 7 factors of enlightenment. Joy with others increases joy in our own lives, by lifting and opening the heart and freeing the mind. It connects us with those we share joy with; we forget ourselves and can overcome negative emotions more easily. Joy with others is putting ourselves into a joyful person's place.

The opposite of joy is envy. We need to be careful we don't confuse it with hypocrisy, when we may pretend to be happy for someone.

We can arouse joy with others in our hearts by being mindful, by allowing ourselves to feel joy fully, by listening to the other person, hearing their joy, reflecting their facial expression, responding generously. We can practise in easy situations first. Remember, it's natural to human beings. It's a skill - when we practise it, it improves.

Joy feels like a bubbling mountain stream, leaping and laughing its way down over the stones to meet the river below.

Equanimity

Equanimity is a uniquely important ingredient on the path. It is the subject of the 4th meditative absorption, and one of the 7 factors of enlightenment. It's the queen of emotions, the basis of the Arahant's life, attitudes, and demeanour - 'What other response is appropriate - everything simply is!'

Equanimity is 'evenness of mind, equability, poise, composure, self-possession, calmness, serenity', an evenness of response. It yields security because it makes us independent of the happenings around us. Equanimity feels expansive, as if the mind is broadening out - like a broad, calm lake, mirroring its surroundings.

The opposite of equanimity is anxiety; and it's possible to confuse it with indifference. But while indifference leads to a feeling of unhappiness, equanimity leads to happiness.

We can arouse equanimity by being mindful and then allowing it to come into our minds, rather than, eg. irritation. Again, it's best to practise in easy situations first. And again, equanimity is a skill, which can be learned through practice.

DHAMMA EXERCISE- UNCONDITIONAL LOVE

HOW TO DO THE DHAMMA EXERCISE

- form into small groups, preferably with people you don't know. Select a group facilitator

- follow these instructions...

1. In the first 5 minutes each person writes down 3 things s/he can actually do to apply unconditional love, in a specific situation. They should be practical, achievable things. Use what you've just heard in the Dhamma talk to guide you
2. Share around the circle in your group any one of the 3. E.g. "I'm going to do X about Y because..."
It is important that all the members endorse people as they speak by thanking them. Then no-one feels they're speaking into a vacuum - it's a form of love. The group is not there to judge, criticise or make suggestions - just listen
3. The group facilitator writes down on a sheet of paper the 6 or so things, without putting people's names to them: E.g. "Will talk to neighbour pleasantly at the first opportunity" or: "Will create an opportunity to speak to neighbour pleasantly"
4. The contents of the sheets are shared with the whole group, and then all the sheets go on the wall over lunchtime, so we can learn from each others' experience.

THE 4 SUPREME EFFORTS

Once we're aware of what's happening in the mind, through mindfulness, and we're practising the 4 supreme emotions as much as we can, we can bring some of the Buddha's other techniques into play, in order to purify our minds further. Purification = making wholesome; and a wholesome mind is a happy mind; so purification is worthwhile. Two more extremely helpful purification techniques are the 4 supreme efforts, and the 5 ways of combatting unwholesome thoughts.

The 4 supreme efforts are

- 1 Not to allow an unwholesome thought to arise which has not yet arisen
- 2 Not to allow an unwholesome thought to continue which has already arisen
- 3 To make a wholesome thought arise which has not yet arisen
- 4 To make a wholesome thought continue which has already arisen

And as we've seen, the Buddha really emphasises the importance of this aspect of our spiritual walk, in the way he says `...a practitioner rouses his will, makes an effort, stirs up energy, exerts his mind and strives...' to prevent and overcome unwholesome thoughts or mind-states, and to produce and maintain wholesome thoughts or mind-states.' In fact, he says of the last effort `(The practitioner) rouses the will, makes an effort, stirs up energy, exerts his mind and strives to maintain wholesome mental states that have arisen, not to let them fade away, to bring them to greater growth, to the full perfection of development.' (Mahasatthipatthana Sutta, op cit. 21).

4 SUPREME EFFORTS

1. Not to allow an unwholesome thought to arise which has not yet arisen
2. Not to allow an unwholesome thought to continue which has already arisen
3. To make a wholesome thought arise which has not yet arisen
- 4 To make a wholesome thought continue which has already arisen

Making these efforts as often as possible is an important step into purification of the mind. The purer the mind, the easier it is to meditate and the more easily insight arises into the true nature of things.

THE 5 WAYS OF COMBATTING UNWHOLESOME THOUGHT

The 5 ways of combatting unwholesome thoughts (contained in the Vitakkasanthana Sutta - The Removal of Distracting Thoughts, Middle Length Discourse 20) are:

1. Substitution - the same thing we do with thoughts during meditation: label, let it go, go back to the meditation subject. The Buddha uses the simile of a carpenter fitting a wooden plug into a hole: when he finds it doesn't fit he extracts it, and simply substitutes one that fits better
2. Through recognition of danger - when we recognise that our unwholesome thoughts are dangerous in that they lead to suffering, we change them. The Buddha compares this to the shame young people who are fond of ornaments would feel if, instead of their usual finery, they had around their necks the carcasses of dead animals
3. Shifting the focus of our attention - not involving ourselves with our unwholesome thoughts, but keeping our attention on something productive. The Buddha compares this with seeing something we don't want to see: we either shut our eyes or look away
4. Stopping the cause of the thought - when an unwholesome thought has arisen, we can enquire 'What is the cause of this thought? What is the cause of its cause?' etc. The Buddha compares the process to someone walking fast and thinking 'Why am I walking fast? What if I walk slowly?..... What if I stand sit..... lie down?' In this way we may move in stages from unwholesome to neutral to wholesome thinking.
5. 'Constraining and crushing'- anything is better than unwholesome thoughts; here, we really deal with them conclusively. The Buddha compares this technique to a strong man seizing a weak man and constraining him, beating him down, crushing him. The Buddha even suggests we do this '...with teeth clenched and tongue pressed against the roof of the mouth'

THE 5 WAYS OF COMBATTING UNWHOLESOME THOUGHT

- | | |
|---|-------------------------------------|
| 1 | Substitution |
| 2 | Through recognition of danger |
| 3 | Shifting the focus of our attention |
| 4 | Stopping the cause of the thought ' |
| 5 | "Constraining and crushing" |

SUMMARY OF THE TECHNIQUES FOR WHOLESOME LIVING

The 5 precepts

- 1 Simply keep them, remaining aware always of the positive aspect of each, as well as what we're aiming to 'refrain from'*
- 2 Remember - 'recognition, no blame, change'!*

The 4 supreme emotions

- 1 Be aware of what emotions are arising in the mind 2 Aim to always have in the mind*
 - lovingkindness*
 - compassion*
 - joy with others, or*
 - equanimity*

The 4 supreme efforts

- 1 Be aware of what thoughts are arising in the mind*
- 2 Use one of the 4 efforts*
 - avoid*
 - overcome*
 - develop*
 - maintain*

The 5 ways of combatting unwholesome thought

- 1 Be aware of what thoughts are arising in the mind*
- 2 Use one of the 5 methods*
 - substitute*
 - realise the unwholesome results*
 - avoid or ignore*
 - analyse the cause*
 - suppress*

Lovingkindness meditation

- 1 Calm the mind by being aware of the breath for a few minutes*
- 2 Allow/ encourage a feeling of lovingkindness to arise in the heart centre. Remember a time when you felt unconditional love strongly, or use visualisation to help you, if necessary*
- 3 One after the other, flow this feeling of lovingkindness to*
 - yourself*
 - your parents, whether they're still alive or not*
 - your loved ones*
 - your good friends*
 - acquaintances you meet in your everyday life*
 - someone you find it difficult to get along with*
 - all living beings, far and wide, starting from where you are*
- 4 Anchor the feeling of lovingkindness in the heart centre*

Lovingkindness contemplation

Follow the guided contemplation I given in Chapter 9.

CHAPTER THREE

MINDFULNESS - HIGH ROAD TO HAPPINESS

At the beginning of the discourse on 'the 4 foundations (or subjects) of mindfulness' the Buddha says 'There is this one way to the purification of beings, for the overcoming of sorrow and distress, for the disappearance of pain and sadness, for the gaining of the right path, for attaining Nibbana (that is, true and lasting happiness): that is to say the 4 foundations of mindfulness.

'What are the 4?...A practitioner abides contemplating body ...feelings mind mind-objects, ardent, clearly aware and mindful, having put aside hankering and fretting for the world...' (Mahasatipatthana Sutta - The Greater Discourse on the Foundations of Mindfulness, Long Discourse 22).

Mindfulness can be described as -

- having our minds full of whatever we're doing, feeling, thinking, saying
- being in the moment, being here and now
- doing one thing at a time
- bringing the mind and body together in the moment; bringing the mind back
- knowing what we're thinking, saying, doing, as we think say or do it
- an objective introspection, with no judgemental overtones
- letting go of everything but what we are focusing on.

When we are mindful we are not leaning forward to get more of what's happening; we're not leaning backwards away from what's happening. We're just being, just being with whatever's happening. We do this instead of identifying with it. When we identify we get caught into a conditioned response. For example: I'm upset for a moment, I get caught by it, then 'I'm an upset person'. Or - I'm upset for a moment, I mindfully note or watch it, it's an upset moment and it passes like every other moment.

The 4 foundations of mindfulness

In the Greater Discourse on the Foundations of Mindfulness the Buddha details a series of specific contemplation exercises which, he says at the end of the Discourse, if we practise them for just 7 days, will lead to the purifying of ignorance from our minds and thus to our freedom, our true and lasting happiness - Nibbana. We may not feel we can do this for 7 days at this stage, but whatever mindfulness practice we do (a) brings us immediate calmness and (b) adds to our skill in mindfulness and brings us closer to being able to maintain mindfulness for a full 7 days.

It helps if we always remember that our practice is removing layers of conditioning and gradually revealing our true nature, which has never actually left us - i.e. we actually Know all this already!

I'll give a summary of the basic exercises, set out as instructions, to keep it as simple as possible. The idea is to do any one of the exercises as often as we remember. It doesn't really matter which exercise, as long as we're mindful. Probably the easiest ones to remember at first are the body ones, particularly the breathing, postures and clear awareness (the daily movements), so we can start with these. Then, as we get used to being mindful, we can start to pay attention to the other 3 foundations - our feelings, our moods and the specific mind-objects suggested by the Buddha.

THE MAIN OBJECTS OF MINDFULNESS		
1	Body	- breathing - posture - 4 elements
2	Feelings	- pleasant - unpleasant - neutral
3	Mind	- 6 roots
4	Mind objects	- 4 noble truths - 5 hindrances - 5 aggregates - 7 factors of enlightenment

The first foundation – body

The 1st foundation, the body, includes contemplating the breathing, the postures (walking, standing, sitting, lying down), our daily movements (including moving forward or back, bending and stretching, carrying things, falling asleep and waking up), the 31 parts of the body, the 4 elements (earth, air, fire, water), and the impermanence of the body.

- 1 Know 'I am breathing'; 'I am breathing a long breath'; 'I am breathing a short breath'; 'I am breathing in'; 'I am breathing out'
- 2 Know 'I am walking (standing, sitting, lying down)'
- 3 Be clearly aware of moving forwards or backwards; bending or stretching; wearing clothes; carrying things; eating, drinking, chewing, savouring; going to the toilet; falling asleep and waking up; speaking or staying silent
- 4 Review the 31 parts of the body (see Appendices)
- 5 Review the body in terms of the 4 elements (earth, water, fire, air)
- 6 Compare one's own body with a corpse in the 9 stages of decomposition (see Appendices).

The second foundation – feelings

The 2nd foundation, the feelings, includes pleasant and unpleasant physical and mental feelings. Feelings arise not only from touch contact - sensations - and thought contact - emotions - but also from the other senses.

- 1 Know 'I am feeling a pleasant (unpleasant) physical feeling'
- 2 Know 'I am feeling a pleasant (unpleasant) mental feeling'.

The third foundation - mind content

The 3rd foundation, the mind (moods) includes the 6 roots we all have in our minds (greed, hate, delusion, and their opposites, generosity, lovingkindness, and wisdom; or, more accurately, non-greed, non-hate and non-delusion)

Know when the mind:

- 1 is greedy or free from greed
- 2 has dislike in it or not
- 3 has ignorance in it or not
- 4 is dull or overactive
- 5 is developed by the meditative absorptions or not
- 6 has attained meditative absorption or not
- 7 is temporarily freed by insight or by absorption or not.

The fourth foundation - mind objects

The 4th foundation includes the 4 noble truths, 5 hindrances to meditation, 5 aggregates comprising a human being, and the 7 factors of enlightenment.

- 1 The 5 hindrances - know when the following are present or absent:
 - sense desire
 - ill-will
 - laziness and drowsiness
 - restlessness and worry
 - sceptical doubt
- 2 The 5 aggregates – think:
 - 'this is form'
 - 'this is feeling'
 - 'this is perception'
 - 'these are mental formations'
 - 'this is consciousness' (i.e. the whole mind process)
- 3 The 6 sense bases – know:
 - 'this is the eye seeing a sight'
 - 'this is the ear hearing a sound'
 - 'this is the nose smelling an odour'
 - 'this is the tongue tasting a taste'

- 'this is the body feeling something tangible'
- 'this is the mind experiencing a mind-object'

- 4 The 7 factors of enlightenment - know when these are present or absent:
- mindfulness
 - investigation into the 3 characteristics of the universe
 - energy
 - bliss
 - tranquillity
 - concentration
 - equanimity
- 5 The 4 noble truths - know it as it really is:
- suffering ('birth, ageing, death; sorrow, lamentation, pain, sadness, distress; being attached to the unloved, being separated from the loved, not getting what one wants')
 - the origin of suffering ('sense craving, craving for existence and for nonexistence')
 - the end of suffering ('complete fading away and extinction of the craving')
 - the way of practice leading to the end of suffering (the noble 8-fold path).

THE 7 FACTORS OF ENLIGHTENMENT

1. Mindfulness
2. Investigation of the 3 characteristics of the universe
3. Energy
4. Rapture (piti)
5. Tranquillity
6. Concentration
7. Equanimity

All the foundations

For maximum benefit from your mindfulness practice, follow the Buddha's instructions exactly. He suggests that after each mindfulness activity, we

1. Contemplate the activity
 - in your own body (mind)
 - in other bodies (minds)
 - in both alternately.

This will give us irreplaceable experience of non-self.

2. Contemplate
 - the factors causing them to arise
 - the factors causing them to cease
 - both.

This will give us direct experience of impermanence.

3. Simply be mindful
 - 'there is body'
 - 'there are feelings'
 - 'there are moods'
 - 'there are mind-objects'.

This can be experienced as a second 'stage' of mindfulness, after each exercise. It produces a noticeable feeling of detachment from ourselves and connection to the whole. This gives us an opportunity to experience what the Buddha describes as the result of practising any of these contemplation exercises: 'The practitioner remains independent, not clinging to anything in the world'. That's the basis for our freedom!

The immediate benefits of mindfulness

What we'll notice, both as we go through the retreat and afterwards in our daily lives - as long as we keep practising! - is some of the benefits of mindfulness. They are legion! They include:

- 'clean, clear thinking' at work; a clearer atmosphere at home
- clearer communication in all relationships
- a heightened awareness of all that's happening around us
- a heightened awareness of how we're using our time, so we can prioritise better
- instant clarity, peace, happiness, simply from concentrating on one thing at a time
- a feeling of security from having greater control over ourselves and our reactions.

Mindfulness acts like a brake on a car- we come to a dangerous corner, use the brakes, and have time to turn the wheel. We have more chance to be in charge. Mindfulness means we can look inside and see ourselves clearly; it means our emotions don't run away with us so often. We have more chance to practise the 4

supreme emotions and efforts. And, when we don't think, speak or act wholesomely we use Ayya Khema's very helpful formula -'recognition, no blame, change'.

The aim of mindfulness – insight

While mindfulness brings us an immediate increase in calmness, its aim - as with all the practices - is insight. That means that all of our mindfulness is directed ultimately at investigating, or allowing insight to arise about, the 3 characteristics of the universe: impermanence, unsatisfactoriness, and non-self. We do this by practising exactly as the Buddha directs in the Mahasatipatthana discourse.

CLEAR COMPREHENSION

In our daily life, mindfulness is complemented by clear comprehension. Mindfulness 'knows only' our thoughts, speech and actions. Clear comprehension understands them and is very useful for guiding them. It has 4 parts:

- 1 Is the purpose of our thought, speech or action useful, wholesome, loving?
- 2 Are the means we're deciding to employ skilful, thoughtful?
- 3 Are both purpose and means within the 5 precepts? Will they result in true happiness for us and those around us?
- 4 Having completed the thought, speech or action, we evaluate: has our wholesome, loving purpose been accomplished? If not, why not?

CLEAR COMPREHENSION

- 1 Is the purpose wholesome? Are the means skilful?
- 2 Are both within the 5 precepts?
- 3 Evaluate - was the purpose accomplished? If not, why not?
 - unwholesome purpose?
 - unskilful means?
- 4 Adjust and act again.

SUMMARY OF THE TECHNIQUES FOR MINDFULNESS AND CLEAR COMPREHENSION

Mindfulness

- 1 Be aware of the*
 - breathing*
 - posture*
 - movements etc.*

Review the parts of the body

Review the body in terms of 4 great elements

Compare one's body with the 9 stages of decomposition of the corpse

- 2 Be aware of the*
 - physical feelings*
 - mental feelings*

- 3 Be aware of the content of mind (moods)*

- 4 Be aware whether or not the following are active in the mind*
 - 5 hindrances*
 - 5 aggregates*
 - 6 sense bases*
 - 7 factors of enlightenment*
 - 4 noble truths*

Clear comprehension

- 1 Check*
 - purpose*
 - means*
 - whether both are within the 5 precepts*

- 2 Evaluate, adjust, act again.*

CHAPTER FOUR

THE PATH OF CALM: THE FIRST STEPS

TRANQUILLITY (OR CALM) MEDITATION

The way of calm, or tranquillity, meditation is a scientific way, with specific techniques which are observable, replicable, and can be described in detail, as with any science. They can be practised by anyone (with the possible exception of those who are clinically mentally ill). It is actually the science of the development of the mind. As we've seen, it's the natural way for the human mind to develop. Again and again at retreats, as I speak with people about their meditation practice, I hear them describing a time or times when they've experienced a specific part of the tranquillity meditation path. It's found in all the world's major religions; sometimes being apparently lost for a while, but then re-surfacing, as with the Christian mystics of the Middle Ages. St. John of the Cross, St. Teresa d'Avila and Meister Eckhart, for example, all followed this technique of tranquillity meditation. Different words are used to describe it, but the practices and experiences are the same. In the Sufi tradition, too - the 'mystical arm' of the Muslim religion - the same meditation process is practised. As we've seen, the Bodhisattva was taught the meditation techniques by his first two teachers, and used them in preparation for, and on, the night of his enlightenment, and also as he was dying. Many of his discourses give the instructions for the techniques.

Concentration

Concentration is the key to meditation. We concentrate on our meditation subject. That's what meditation is: a relaxed, clear awareness of our meditation subject, as unbroken as we can, with effort, make it. Note the two necessary aspects of both
(a) relaxing and letting go of everything except the meditation subject, and
(b) applying effort to keeping our awareness on the meditation subject.

'THE PULL OF THE THINKING MIND' DEMONSTRATION

- 1 Sit so your back is straight but not stiff
- 2 Close your eyes
- 3 Become aware of your breathing without trying to control it
- 4 Just let the breathing happen. Be aware of it, feeling how it feels, witnessing it as it flows in and out
- 5 Try being with your breath in this way for 2 minutes

Care of the mind - shelter, food, rest, exercise

Meditation is the only rest the mind ever gets. All day the mind is thinking, all night it's dreaming. We consist of mind and body. Most people look after the body - feeding, exercising and resting it carefully - but few people look after their minds. Some people are careful to feed their minds properly (not too much telly, some decent books, art and music) but the exercise most people give their minds is often of a very limited and repetitious kind -often at work, using a limited range of 'mind-muscles'. Few people rest their minds or know how to. And how often do people in this society even consider having a home for the mind?

For success in meditation we need to take account of all 4 factors. We feed the mind with Dhamma instead of indiscriminately. We prepare a home for the mind in the heart. We exercise the mind with the tools we're practising this weekend - which builds up our 'mind-muscles' just as we do our body muscles in the gym. And we point it in the right direction, using our new mind-power to good effect on the Path.

WHY MEDITATE?

THE BENEFITS OF MEDITATION INCLUDE

- more day-to-day serenity
- improved health of mind and body
- relief of stress, pain, grief
- better relationships
- growing insight and understanding of ourselves

EVEN IN AN UNCONCENTRATED MEDITATION SIT, WE

- get to know the mind
- practise substituting thoughts
- build some calmness
- support our mindfulness practice
- learn what doesn't help us to concentrate
- make good karma, by sitting with the intention to meditate

The goal of calm meditation – insight

Many people practise meditation because it brings calmness to their minds and to their lives. But this is not the highest goal of meditation. Like all other sense pleasures, the calm states arising from meditation are impermanent - and therefore meditation alone does not bring us that true and lasting happiness which is the goal of the Dhamma. The Buddha said he taught only unsatisfactoriness (or the lack of that true and lasting happiness) and how to end it. His aim was to teach people how to reach the state of complete happiness, beyond temporary worldly happiness. So he taught that bringing calmness to our minds is just one step on the path - albeit an absolutely necessary one. Making our minds calm is the means for allowing insight to arise. Gaining insight is the goal. When we have a true understanding and experience of the insight path, it brings us true and lasting happiness.

Meditation and reverie

It's important to emphasise that the rest given the mind by meditation comes from our concentration on one subject, the one-pointedness. This rests our minds from the cacophony of thoughts, ideas, feelings and images we usually have going on in them. Meditation is not about allowing the mind to sleep or fall into a reverie. Many people have the mistaken idea that if they have 'gone off somewhere - can't say where' during a meditation, and if after the meditation they are so relaxed they could - or do - go to sleep, this is a good meditation. Not so. This is a 'reverie', and, while it may be relaxing, it has nothing to do with meditation. Meditation is alert concentration. Good meditation = being mindfully aware of what's happening with the meditation subject. Sometimes we're so absorbed in what's happening that we don't notice the passage of time. That's great. And when a good meditation session is over (a) we feel energised - definitely not sleepy! and (b) we know exactly what's been going on.

Instructions for techniques leading to tranquillity meditation - sitting meditation

Posture

It's important that we start our meditation relaxed both in body and in mind. A good posture includes the following factors:

- whether you are in a chair or on a cushion, sit so that the back is straight and free; for that you need to tilt the pelvis slightly forward. You should be erect, but relaxed
- if you're in a chair, place the feet firmly on the floor, in a position that gives maximum stability
- allow the neck to sit straight and relaxed on top of the spine. The head may be quite straight or tilted forward a little
- rest the hands either on the thighs, or in the lap; usually writing hand on top feels 'right'. This can be a more helpful position if you feel sleepy during the meditation, because you can easily lift the hands up and away from your

body, and concentrate for a while - with a fair amount of mental and physical energy - on pressing them together and holding them there
- close the eyes lightly, or if it keeps you more alert, half-close them - as long as you can still concentrate on your meditation subject.

Meditation Subject

The most widely-used subject to concentrate on is the breath. The breath is used because:

- it's available to everyone
- it's an obvious link between our mind and our body
- it's always there
- we can start the meditation with a feeling of gratitude and love to it for keeping us alive, which is a helpful attitude for starting the meditation well.

You can concentrate on the breath at one of three places:

- at the nostrils, as it comes into the body and leaves the body; just noticing the feeling of the breath as it comes and goes
- as it goes past the back of the throat, as it comes and goes
- at the abdomen, as it rises and falls, concentrating on the movement of the abdomen, in and out.

The important thing is to find the spot that feels most natural for you, and stay concentrated on that spot.

Support methods

To help you concentrate on the breath, one of four support methods can be used:

- counting: count 1 on the in-breath, 1 on the out breath, 2 on the in-breath, 2 on the out-breath, up to 10, if the concentration lasts; then go back to 1 again. If the concentration is interrupted by thoughts, don't try to work out where you were up to - just go straight back to 1, as soon as you realise the concentration has been broken
- a word: choose a 2-syllable word, saying the first syllable to yourself (silently) on the in-breath, and the second syllable on the out breath; or two one-syllable words, for example, 'love' on the in-breath and 'peace' on the out-breath.
- visualising: for instance, as you breathe in, see a wave coming in, and as you breathe out see it receding
- if you feel you need more detail to keep you concentrated, you could follow each breath down into the lungs and out again, concentrating on the beginning, middle and end of each breath.

NOTE: These 4 support methods are just to help you stay concentrated on the breath. If you can stay concentrated without using a support, don't use them.

Labelling

We all have thoughts coming and going through the mind. 'Labelling' them helps let them go:

- as you become aware of each thought, give it a label - past, future, worry, planning, hoping, or just 'nonsense' (that's a good one, particularly when we're trying to meditate!)
- don't dwell on the thought or the label; simply note it and go back to the breath
- do this each time you notice thoughts arising. The moment you label the thought you are stepping back to look at it, instead of becoming involved with it, and getting distracted
- it doesn't matter how many thoughts you're having - give each one a label, and return to the breath.

Sleepiness

If you feel sleepy, you can do several things:

- open your eyes wide and look at the light for a while
- give yourself a pep-talk and make a new decision to go back to the breath and stay focused on it
- lift your joined hands up and away from the body and press them together firmly, and keep them there until your alertness returns
- move a little - wriggle your fingers and toes, to get the circulation going
- or, if you're absolutely desperate, if nothing else works and you're going to fall properly asleep and snore, get up very quietly and do some walking meditation - somewhere it won't disturb other people.

Discomfort

If you feel discomfort from the sitting position:

- the first time you notice it, label it 'unpleasant feeling' and go back to the breath
- if it returns, try and do that again; and a third time
- if it is so persistent that you can't possibly concentrate on the meditation subject, don't move automatically. Move - slowly and mindfully, being aware of each part of the movement, so that you don't disturb your neighbour's or your own meditation.

To start

The Buddha said that for meditation one should be 'comfortable in mind and body'. Start each meditation by carefully getting into the best position for you then relax the body, from the top of the head to the toes, giving particular attention to the neck, dropping the shoulders, letting go of the tension down the spine. Then give love to yourself, for deciding to meditate, then give love to the breath, which keeps you alive. Now, put your attention on the breath, using whichever spot and support

method you have chosen, and stay with that meditation subject and support method for the whole of the meditation time.

Instructions for techniques leading to tranquillity meditation - walking meditation

Some people find it easier to become calm in walking meditation than in sitting meditation. In walking meditation we still have a single meditation subject, but it is not the breath. Instead of the breath we use the movement of the feet. The key is to concentrate as completely as possible on the movement of the feet, so that all other thought drops away. If your concentration is broken, stand still until you get it back again, then resume.

Walking meditation can be done in various ways:

- the '3-point walk' is when you concentrate on lifting the foot, moving it forward, and placing it on the ground again. Don't lift the second foot until the first is placed; you'll probably have to shorten your usual stride. Loosely clasp the hands, either behind the back, or in front. Tilt the head forward a little so you're looking at the ground about 3 - 4 feet in front. The eyes are open. Before you start, stand until you're balanced and ready
- the '6-point walk' is similar to the 3-point, but you're watching slightly finer movements: lifting the heel, lifting the toe, lifting the foot into the air, moving the foot forward, placing the heel and placing the toe
- select which of the 3-point and 6-point suits you best
- some people maintain simply a slow, deliberate but ordinary walk, but the 3-point or 6-point walk are best. For beginners the 3-point. Even if you're going to do the 6-point, it's helpful to start with the 3-point
- it's important to select a 15 - 20-pace path for yourself, a stretch of flat ground, so you can walk up and down it, rather than just walking around. Having a path increases your mindfulness, your intent, your concentration on the task at hand. When you turn around, do it carefully, slowly, maintaining the 3- or 6-point lifting and placing of the feet
- if thoughts interrupt the meditation you can either label, and go straight back to the concentration on the movement of the feet; or if the thoughts persist, stop walking, label and deal with them, then make a fresh start
- it's possible to slip into a really relaxing rhythm in walking meditation, if the concentration is good.

Access concentration

These two techniques in the first stages of the path of calm, then, begin with being aware of our meditation subject - the breath or the movement of the feet - using labelling and one of the support methods if applicable. Both these techniques can

bring us to a stage called 'access concentration'. Access concentration is when our mindfulness of the breath is such that:

- thoughts are not interrupting our concentration (though they may be in the background, passing through the mind like clouds across the sky)
- the breath has become fine. Because the mind and the body are closely related, when we calm our minds by concentrating on the meditation subject, and the 'thought-waves' in the mind diminish, the breath slows and calms and diminishes in strength too
- we can maintain this state for 5 minutes at least.

Stepping through the inner door - the beginning of tranquillity meditation

So, having made an effort with our minds, using either sitting or walking meditation, we have concentrated on the breath until the mind is quiet and the breath is fine. We then stay with the fine breath, keeping our concentration on it. By now the support method we have been using is no longer necessary. We simply allow the breath to come and go. While we're allowing, something else may happen: one or more of several pleasant physical sensations may arise in our body and become insistent that we take notice of it, instead of the breath. These pleasant physical sensations are there all the time; we just don't notice them while our mind is occupied with the daily merry-go-round. It takes a while to slow down the merry-go-round; longer for some people than others. The time-span may vary from a day to some years, but it helps greatly if you know what to look for. This step from concentration on the (fine) breath to concentration on the pleasant physical sensations is actually our step through our inner doorway - into what St. Teresa calls 'the interior castle'. It's a special step in the meditation process. We can't consciously make it happen - we can only set up the preconditions, in the same way as we can prepare a pot with potting mix, we can make sure there is sufficient sunshine, air, water - but we can't force the plant to grow. We simply keep on providing the best possible conditions for it. And one day, because it's in its nature, it will grow.

The 1st meditative absorption

The sensations are of several kinds: tingling; warmth; a lifting sensation; a feeling of bodily lightness; and a softening of bodily outlines are the most common ones. They may occur in sitting or walking meditation - but from here on, it's easier to continue the tranquillity meditation process while sitting, rather than walking.

Different people experience different sensations. We may feel more than one; but the strongest one should be selected. Having gently moved our attention to whichever pleasant sensation is the strongest, we concentrate on that with our full attention until we can maintain concentration on it for 10 - 15 minutes. Being absorbed like this in one of these pleasant sensations is called piti - bliss; or rapture: and it is the 1st jhana, or meditative absorption.

As we've seen, learning to become concentrated, or absorbed in this way, takes different people different lengths of time. Some people may take longer because they're not following the instructions properly. or their experience of life means they

have to practise concentrating, strengthen their mind muscles, before the mind is strong enough to maintain concentration long enough for the breath to become fine. People who work in occupations needing intense concentration like artists, musicians or software creators, who've learned to combine letting go with intense concentration can often reach 1st jhana more quickly. Probably some people can learn the jhanas quickly because they've done them before, in earlier lives.

THE JHANAS AND MEDITATIVE FACTORS				
MEDITATIVE FACTORS	1 st	JHANAS 2 nd	3 rd	4 th
Initial application	X			
Sustained application	X			
Bliss	X	X		
Joy, happiness	X	X	X	
Tranquillity, one-pointedness	X	X	X	X
Calm, equanimity				X

The 5 hindrances to meditation

The reasons we find it difficult to find or to maintain the clear awareness for the length of time necessary to reach access concentration, or to develop our meditation practice further, are the 5 hindrances. The Buddha said there are 5 mental states, 5 hindrances, which cause unhappiness in our lives; and which prevent us from gaining full concentration in our meditation. They are sensual desire; aversion; hate or ill-will; laziness and drowsiness - or 'sloth and torpor'; restlessness and worry; and sceptical doubt. We all have them, in fact we take them for granted. We assume they're normal.

We accept the greed of the world; that people are always wanting to get something else, or to get rid of things they don't like - objects, people, jobs, feelings... The everyday world is almost synonymous with sense desire or greed. The level of ill-will in the world is very obvious - since 1945 there have been 120 wars, and only 20 minutes of global peace! Laziness. procrastination, 'I'll just go and have a rest before I tackle that task I don't really want to do' - this is familiar to all of us. So is being restless or anxious about what we have to do in the future, and worrying about what we've done in the past. Sceptical doubt is the one that prevents us from following through on something we've set ourselves to do: we doubt our skills, or the possibility of achieving the task, or that the task is worthwhile. All of these hindrances, as well as holding us back in daily life, can also upset our meditation.

THE 5 HINDRANCES

- 1 Sense desire
- 2 Aversion
- 3 Laziness, drowsiness
- 4 Restlessness, worry
- 5 Sceptical doubt

The 5 meditative factors

There are 5 meditative factors we can use to counteract these 5 hindrances:

- the initial application to the meditation subject - the moment when we turn our mind to our subject - counteracts sloth and torpor, or laziness and drowsiness. Any time we lose concentration, we simply turn our mind back to the meditation subject. We may label the distracting thought, but we don't waste time and energy working out exactly what it was or where it came from. We just get back to the breath

- when we are able to sustain our application to the meditation subject for some time we begin to see the effect of the meditation. Our mind is calmer, with fewer thoughts passing through it, and after sufficient concentration, we may catch a glimpse of the first meditative absorption. As we get some results from our meditation, our sceptical doubt lessens

- once we're able to access 1st jhana, the bliss or rapture that comes counteracts ill-will in the mind - it's impossible to continue feeling ill-will when we experience this mind-state. Until that time, practising the 4 supreme emotions - especially lovingkindness and compassion - will both counteract ill-will and facilitate entry into 1st jhana

- restlessness about the future and worry about the past are wiped out by the happiness that underlies the bliss of 1st jhana. Until we access this happiness, the 4 supreme emotions are helpful; in this case, particularly joy with others and equanimity. All these supreme emotions can be cultivated day by day

- sense desire is counteracted by one-pointed concentration on the meditation subject. Our minds can't do two things at once: if we are concentrated on the meditation subject, we're not looking for sense pleasures. Once we become concentrated enough to enter 1st jhana regularly, we find that far greater pleasure results from the meditation practice than anything we can experience from outer sense gratification.

All these 5 meditative factors, then, arise as part of our concentration practice towards 1st jhana, and as part of 1st jhana itself. Between them they counteract all 5 hindrances to concentration.

THE 5 MEDITATIVE FACTORS & WHAT THEY COUNTER			
1	Initial application	counters	laziness and drowsiness
2	Sustained application		sceptical doubt
3	Bliss (unconditional love, compassion)		aversion
4	Happiness (joy-with-others, equanimity)		restlessness and worry
5	One-pointed concentration		sense desire

Conclusion

These are the first steps in the process of tranquillity meditation. If we do follow the instructions, we will, sooner or later, come to access concentration and the first meditative absorption - because, as I've said, it's the natural line for the mind to develop along. Meditating at retreats is very helpful for this, because the concentration builds and gets stronger each day.

If we decide that what we want from meditation is simply to bring more calmness to our lives, we've achieved enough at this point. But if we wish to travel further along the path to freedom, we must look into how to proceed further along in tranquillity meditation (Chapter 7), and how to gradually gain more insight (Chapter 5).

SUMMARY OF THE TECHNIQUES FOR INTRODUCING THE PATH OF CALM

Tranquillity meditation

- 1 Adopt the correct posture*
- 2 Bring the awareness to the meditation subject - the breath*
- 3 Maintain concentration, with assistance from a support method if necessary*
- 4 Label thoughts as necessary*
- 5 If sleepy*
 - open the eyes wide*
 - give yourself a pep-talk*
 - press the joined hands strongly together*
 - move the hands and feet*
 - do walking meditation*
- 6 If in discomfort*
 - note it and go back to the meditation subject; and a second time*
 - if necessary, move gently*
- 7 At the end*
 - note the states of mind in meditation are impermanent*
 - note the preconditions to the meditation session, helpful or not*
 - allow insight to arise or review what insight has arisen*

Walking meditation

- 1 Select a walking path*
- 2 Stand at one end of the path and steady yourself*
- 3 Bring the awareness to the meditation subject - the movement of the feet*
- 4 Maintain concentration as you begin the 3- or 6-point walk*
- 5 Label thoughts as necessary*
- 6 At the end*
 - note the states of mind in meditation are impermanent*
 - note the preconditions to the meditation session, helpful or not*
 - turn the mind to allowing insight to arise or review what insight has arisen*

The 1st meditative absorption

- 1 Be aware of the state of access concentration*
- 2 Maintain and deepen concentration*
- 3 When a pleasant physical sensation naturally arises, gently switch the attention to it, taking it as the next meditation subject. If more than one sensation arises select the strongest one*
- 4 Maintain and deepen concentration on the sensation until it 'suffuses the whole body'*
- 5 Practise until you can maintain concentration on the sensation for about 10 minutes, and can enter the absorption and leave it at will*
- 6 At the end*
 - note the states of mind in meditation are impermanent*
 - note the preconditions to the meditation session, helpful or not*
 - allow insight to arise or review what insight has arisen.*

CHAPTER FIVE

THE PATH OF INSIGHT

The path of insight is the third of the 3 aspects of the noble 8-fold Path: wholesome living, calm and insight. Yesterday we looked at the first part of the path of calm. Now let's look at the path of insight.

The importance of the path of insight

As we've seen, gaining insight is the goal of all our practice. The Buddha called insight 'knowledge and vision of things as they really are'. This is where our true happiness comes from: seeing things as they really are - including ourselves. Insight is an inner seeing, an inner Knowing. It is a transcendent Knowing, different from our day-to-day operating which is according to how we've been conditioned. Insight is the 'understood experience': it arises from hearing the Dhamma, and understanding what it means, then applying the techniques of practice to ourselves and our surroundings, until we experience it for ourselves.

The 3 characteristics of the universe

Insight is always about the one or more of the 3 characteristics of the universe: the impermanence of all phenomena; the unsatisfactoriness of all life; and the self-lessness, or core-lessness of all phenomena. Impermanence, unsatisfactoriness, non-self - in Pali *anicca, dukkha, anatta*. These 3 characteristics are true of all phenomena in our universe, both inside us and outside us. We gradually come to see this: as we look into them, we find out that we are impermanent, that life as we live it now is ultimately unsatisfactory, and that we aren't a separate self. When we have fully understood and experienced these facts, in ourselves and in everything around us, we'll understand how things really are: everything is constantly-moving energy; the things we don't like are obviously unsatisfactory and the things we do like change and are therefore unsatisfactory; and there is only one whole with no separate parts. When we have experienced this for ourselves enough we'll be enlightened, and truly happy.

THE 3 CHARACTERISTICS OF THE UNIVERSE

- 1 Impermanence (*anicca*)
- 2 Unsatisfactoriness (*dukkha*)
- 3 Non-self, corelessness (*anatta*)

Illusion

To see things this way is hard for us, because our ego, the self-image that we've carefully built up over all these years, feels threatened by impermanence, unsatisfactoriness and non-self. The world as it really is, is not the way we've been taught to look at it. It's not as we've been conditioned to believe it is. We've been taught that we're a solid entity, that marriage is forever, that we might even have an immortal, never-ending, permanent soul. We are all under the illusion that our selves, our houses and jobs and relationships are at least semi-permanent (and if they end that's really bad). We've been taught to see the 'downs' of life as aberrations, departures from the illusory main game which is that life is, 90% or more, satisfactory and satisfying. We cultivate this illusion; we work very hard to cover up the fact that life is actually unsatisfactory, by constantly chasing sense-pleasures to 'prove' to ourselves that it's entirely satisfactory, and thus cover up its lacks. And we convince ourselves that our egos are separate identities, at least for this life (and if possible, for ever) because we're so used to the illusion of self that we just can't bear the thought of things being otherwise.

The 'masks' over the 3 characteristics

Our illusion is compounded by three factors which mask the way things really are. Impermanence is masked by continuity. For instance, because the breath continues to arise, we forget that each breath is new, the old one discarded and useless - impermanent.

Unsatisfactoriness is masked by change, by movement. We might move away from an unsatisfactory situation - job, partner, position while we're sitting – and distract ourselves with something else, so we don't really take notice of the unsatisfactoriness. In meditation we often move before really being aware of the unsatisfactoriness and its significance.

Corelessness is masked by compactness, solidity. We don't usually think of the fact that a tree trunk is not in fact solid, but continuously moving, and interacting with its environment. So are we.

In order to see things as they really are, we must remove the conditioning of our minds that tells us that continuity equals permanence, movement equals satisfactoriness, and solidity equals self, or identity.

THE 3 MASKS

1	Continuity	masks	impermanence
2	Change	masks	unsatisfactoriness
3	Compactness	masks	non-self

CONTINUITY is not the same as PERMANENCE

CHANGE is not the same as SATISFACTORINESS

COMPACTNESS is not the same as SELF

TECHNIQUES FOR DEVELOPING INSIGHT

To see this Knowing, to allow the insight to arise, the mind needs calmness. We need to step aside from the ordinary operation of our mind, the minute-to-minute push-and-pull and allow, as it were, the waves or ripples on the surface of the mind to subside, so we can see clearly into its true depths, where insight already lies. This is the true purpose of tranquillity meditation, as we've seen: to prepare the mind by calming it, in the same way as the Bodhisattva did before his enlightenment, so we can then allow the truth of the universe to arise.

Having prepared the mind by calming it, we can utilise several techniques to help us develop insight. Some of them are described here.

Contemplation

Contemplation is something we've all done from time to time. In it we take a universal truth and see how it applies to us. Am I impermanent? Is my house impermanent? Is my current mind-state impermanent? Can I find anything around me that is unsatisfactory? Not the way I want it to be? Which is 'me' – the child in the photo, at 5 years old, or the executive or mother of today? In doing this, our former perceptions of ourselves and our relationship to the world around us may shift. Contemplation always involves one of the 3 characteristics of the universe: impermanence, unsatisfactoriness or non-self.

Insight meditation

1. The body as meditation subject

We can watch the body in meditation and see for ourselves the 3 characteristics operating:

- instead of just reacting straight away when we feel an unpleasant feeling during meditation, we can notice the unsatisfactoriness of feeling, and use it as another way to gain insight.

- without blaming anybody or any situation for making each feeling arise, we just notice the feelings arising and ceasing, and see their impermanence. They're just feelings.

Again, we notice they're just arising and ceasing by themselves. There's no 'me' in charge of them - we don't really own them.

2. The mind as meditation subject

We can also use meditation for insight by watching the thoughts:

- we can see that thoughts are completely impermanent, if we just sit and watch the mind for a while. The thoughts just constantly arise and cease

- we can learn from watching the thoughts in meditation that thinking is unsatisfactory and unsatisfying. Firstly, many of the thoughts are nonsense. Secondly, we're trying to meditate but the thoughts don't let us get on with it

- another unsatisfactory thing we'll notice is that the mind tends to go to sleep if it has no entertainment. It always needs to be entertained. We can watch this in daily life, too - we've always got to be doing something, or we aren't satisfied

- the thoughts teach us about non-self, when we see how unruly the mind is - we don't want any thoughts at all, we want the mind to be quiet, but these thoughts just keep on popping up. So we can see that the mind is not so much 'me' after all - we can't even get it to do what we want!

- also, we can learn that we don't have to believe our mind. These thoughts have come without our invitation, and they'll go away again by themselves. They have little purpose - especially during meditation. Some of them are 20 years old! Some might be dream-like, pure fantasy. So - why believe all the stuff the mind usually thinks?

These are all ways we can gain insight into impermanence, unsatisfactoriness and non-self through actually experiencing them in ourselves, during meditation.

Investigation

In investigation we become our own researchers, finding out for ourselves about the 3 characteristics of the universe. Just hearing about them doesn't change the way we see things, and is no spiritual path. The only use of the Buddha's teaching is to guide us, to show us the way. We have to follow the way ourselves - each of us, individually and independently. Investigating for ourselves is a task the Buddha urged again and again. We can do it both in meditation and in our daily lives.

INSIGHT MEDITATION

1 Using the feelings in the body as the meditation subject.

Concentrate on the arising and ceasing of the feelings throughout the body. At the end of the meditation time ask yourself

- is the body permanent or impermanent?
- is the body satisfactory or unsatisfactory?
- is the body self or not self?

2 Using the feelings in the mind as the meditation subject.

Concentrate on the arising and ceasing of thoughts and feelings in the mind. At the end of the meditation time ask yourself

- are the thoughts permanent or impermanent?
- are the thoughts satisfactory or unsatisfactory?
- are the thoughts self or not self?

Do this both

- internally (investigating ourselves)
- externally (extrapolating to others)

Investigating non-self via the 4 supreme emotions and the 4 supreme efforts

After we've practised the noble 8-fold path for a while, the illusion of self gradually weakens, and we begin to get inklings of things as they really are. At first we catch glimpses of possibilities. In our lovingkindness practice we become aware of the reality of oneness with everything - and we find that 'others' don't seem so far away. We practise oneness with every living being through compassion and through joy with them, by putting ourselves in their shoes and knowing what they're feeling - and we find that we feel the same as they do, they're not so different after all.

We try out substituting a thought that makes our heart-centre happy for one that has made it sad - and we find that happy thoughts expand the heart into something more inclusive; bigger than it was before; different from the sadness, which contracted it into something smaller, more separate, something that needed guarding. When we feel down, we try putting our focus on someone else (another

part of the whole) instead of on our illusory self; or we focus completely on a task - and the relief is immediate.

Gradually, as we check, as we investigate for ourselves the truth of what the Buddha said, we begin to realise that all of our unhappiness is due to our clinging to this illusion of self. All our frustration, hurt, envy, physical pain, all our anger, all our fear, all our greed for giving the senses what they want - all the stress we put ourselves under is due to holding onto this mistaken sense of ego, of separateness, of 'self'.

Investigating non-self via the 5 aggregates

The Buddha teaches that we actually consist of two main processes which make up the 5 aggregates: the bodily process, or material form; and the process followed by the mind, consisting of consciousness, feeling, perception, and mental formations. This is all we are - as we investigate our bodily and thinking processes we gradually realise this, and that our current self-image is indeed based on illusion. Then we can let go of this illusion - at whatever pace we choose to. Each time we let go of a little more it brings us a little more relief, happiness, freedom.

Material form includes the body with its sense faculties, and all external material objects. The bodily process basically consists of 4 elements: earth, with its characteristic of solidity; air, with its characteristic of movement; fire, with its characteristic of temperature (heat or coolness); and water, with its characteristic of binding (imagine a bowl of flour before and after water is added, or dust becoming mud when it rains). These elements are constantly coming together in a myriad of differing amounts and configurations, remaining in them for differing lengths of time, and then falling apart, each particle or element to be re-used in a different form. We eat a banana. Firstly we pick it up - movement (air); we bite into it - transferring solidity (earth) into our mouths; we can feel if it's a different temperature from the temperature in our mouth (fire); saliva mixes with it to turn it more liquid (changing the form it's bound into - water); the oesophagus squeezes it (movement - air) down into our stomach; it's broken down (heat and movement - fire and air) into different sugars, vitamins and minerals which are taken into the bloodstream (movement - air) for use in the body .. etc etc.

We can see, then, that the body is actually constantly changing - the constantly-moving atoms; the constant interchange of oxygen and carbon dioxide; the constant changes happening as a result of our eating and drinking - food and fluids going in one end, whatever's needed to run the body and provide energy extracted from it, the waste excreted from the other end - all going on constantly; the constant circulation of blood; the constant movement along the nervous system of the millions of messages needed to live our daily lives..... The whole body is actually in constant flux.

While the bodily process consists of solidity, movement, temperature and binding, the mind process consists of consciousness, feeling, perception and mental formations.

Consciousness is our basic awareness of an object, through one of the 6 senses (seeing, hearing, tasting, smelling, touching and thinking). It is also called 'sense contact' or 'sense consciousness' and is the mind's initial apprehending of the next thing it focuses on. For instance the ear, the sound and the ear consciousness come together, and the result is hearing.

Feeling refers to both physical conditions and mental states. It is either pleasant, unpleasant, or neutral. In the process that makes up the mind, feeling automatically follows sense consciousness.

It's worth noting here that this particular point in the mind process is a key to all our practice. It's at this point that we can escape from clinging, by accepting whatever feeling is there, and just noting whether it's pleasant, unpleasant or neutral. By doing this we distance ourselves a little, and we may be able to prevent the mind process from continuing on through perception and mental formations, on its way to its usual discursive thinking. This is a key in two ways: first, for new practitioners, it's at this point that we can take charge and change the direction of our thinking, and thereby, gradually, our whole lives. We do this by preventing unwholesome reactions (ones that make our hearts feel restricted and heavier) from occurring, and by substituting wholesome thoughts (ones that make our heart feel lighter and expansive). For more experienced practitioners, this point is where we can simply note the pleasant or unpleasant feeling and drop it. We won't want to do this all the time in our daily life; but if we can practise doing it until we are able to do it even in difficult situations, it will help immensely, both in terms of our wholesome living, and also in terms of insight into the mind as process, and therefore into non-self.

Perception notes the qualities of things, and includes recognition and memory. It perceives what the feeling is, gives it a label and then almost invites all the related perceptions to join in the mind process. Someone who is unaware of the mind process, or who is as yet not practised, will automatically allow the mind to go straight on to this part of the mind process from the feeling stage.

Once this happens, mental formations invariably follow, and we're caught once again in the mind's cycle.

Mental formations refers to all our thoughts and thought processes. They automatically follow perceptions and, with the other steps, can make great chains of discursive thinking - of which we may not be aware until maybe 10 minutes later! This is the way most people allow their minds to run.

These are all ways we can gain insight into impermanence, unsatisfactoriness and non-self, through actually experiencing them in ourselves. We can start by investigating one of them - impermanence is a good one to start with, because it's more easily seen than the other two. Our self-image, or ego, accepts it more easily because it's less threatening to it. But people who have a lot of faith often choose to investigate dukkha; and those who are analytically-minded often like to investigate non-self, either by analysis - analysing what things consist of, to see if a self can be

found, or by synthesis - becoming aware of the overall wholeness amongst all phenomena.

THE 5 AGGREGATES

1	Body	- earth - water - fire - air
2	Sense contacts	- seeing - hearing - tasting - touching - smelling - thinking
3	Feelings	- pleasant - unpleasant - neutral
4	Perception, including	- memory - recognition
5	Mental formations	- all discursive thought

Independence and effort

To follow the path to wisdom we must swim upstream, against the currents of the views commonly accepted in the world. This is not easy. It takes great courage and great determination and lots of effort - Ayya Khema calls it 'unremitting effort'. The upside of this is that we know we're on the track of the truth - because we're seeing it deep inside, really Knowing it, and we're actually experiencing how it really works. And at last we've found something that is answering our questions. The exciting part

is that as we progress, we experience for ourselves more and more of how the Buddha said it would be; so we trust the way ahead - and the way ahead leads, according to the Buddha, 'home' - to the place we've always, deep inside, known was there, but didn't know how to reach. As we progress we become more and more certain that the Buddha's roadmap will in fact lead us there, because it's worked so far.

So, to follow this Path, just like the Buddha did, we have to look the facts, the 3 characteristics of the universe, squarely 'in the face'. That is, if we want to move on beyond our present state of ignorance or delusion, to Nibbana, the state of non-burning, complete freedom, true happiness, the highest ideal ...and that means, meditate, contemplate, investigate, to see if what the Buddha said is true. Is everything impermanent? Is life ultimately unsatisfactory? Is there really a 'me', or not? Does anything have a separate identity? This is the path of insight.

It's easy to see why we need the path of calm, to prepare our minds to accept this unfamiliar truth about our world: the way things really are! As well as preparing the mind, the path of calm, as we progress through it, enables insight to arise spontaneously, and greatly smoothes the insight path.

The teaching of the Buddha goes against the current of our own conditioning. The mind that can grasp it is a mind that has been trained. It may be very hard to accept that we've lived a life of delusion until now; but we can offset that by being grateful - immensely grateful - that we're hearing the Dhamma now; and by really determining to use the Buddha's techniques, by living our lives with mindfulness, in the moment, concentrating on the here and now - and experiencing the joy and freedom that comes to us. It's immediate. We just need to do it more and more, again and again. We just need to practise!

SUMMARY OF TECHNIQUES FOR THE PATH OF INSIGHT

Contemplation

- 1 Calm the mind with meditation*
- 2 Select one of the 3 characteristics of the universe as your contemplation subject*
- 3 Satisfy yourself as to its truth in general in your environment*
- 4 Contemplate it in relation to yourself*
 - in the mind*
 - in the body*
- 5 Follow through the line of contemplation, allowing the mind to dwell on various aspects of the characteristic as it relates to your view of yourself. Be courageous; follow reality.*

Meditation for insight - taking the body as the meditation subject:

- 1 Begin the session with tranquillity meditation, to calm the mind*
- 2 Develop 'momentary concentration': concentrate momentarily on each of the constantly changing succession of different physical feelings in the body Concentrate on whichever feeling is strongest Don't try to control the feelings; simply be fully aware of them*
- 3 Be aware of impermanence, unsatisfactoriness or non-self (corelessness) in the feelings*
- 4 Allow the understood experience of one of these 3 characteristics to form in the mind until you Know 'Aha! This aspect of the body is impermanent or unsatisfactory or not self!'*

Meditation for insight – taking the mind as the meditation subject:

- 1 Begin the session with tranquillity meditation, to calm the mind*
- 2 Be fully aware of the constantly- changing succession of different thoughts in the mind. Concentrate on whichever thought is strongest. Don't try to control the thoughts; simply be fully aware of them*
- 3 Be aware of impermanence, unsatisfactoriness or non-self (corelessness) in the thoughts*
- 4 Allow the understood experience of one of these 3 characteristics to form in the mind until you Know 'Aha! This aspect of the mind is impermanent / unsatisfactory / not self!'*

Lovingkindness meditation for insight

- 1 Practise lovingkindness meditation*
- 2 Allow the feeling of lovingkindness to develop into one of sharing, togetherness, lack of separation*

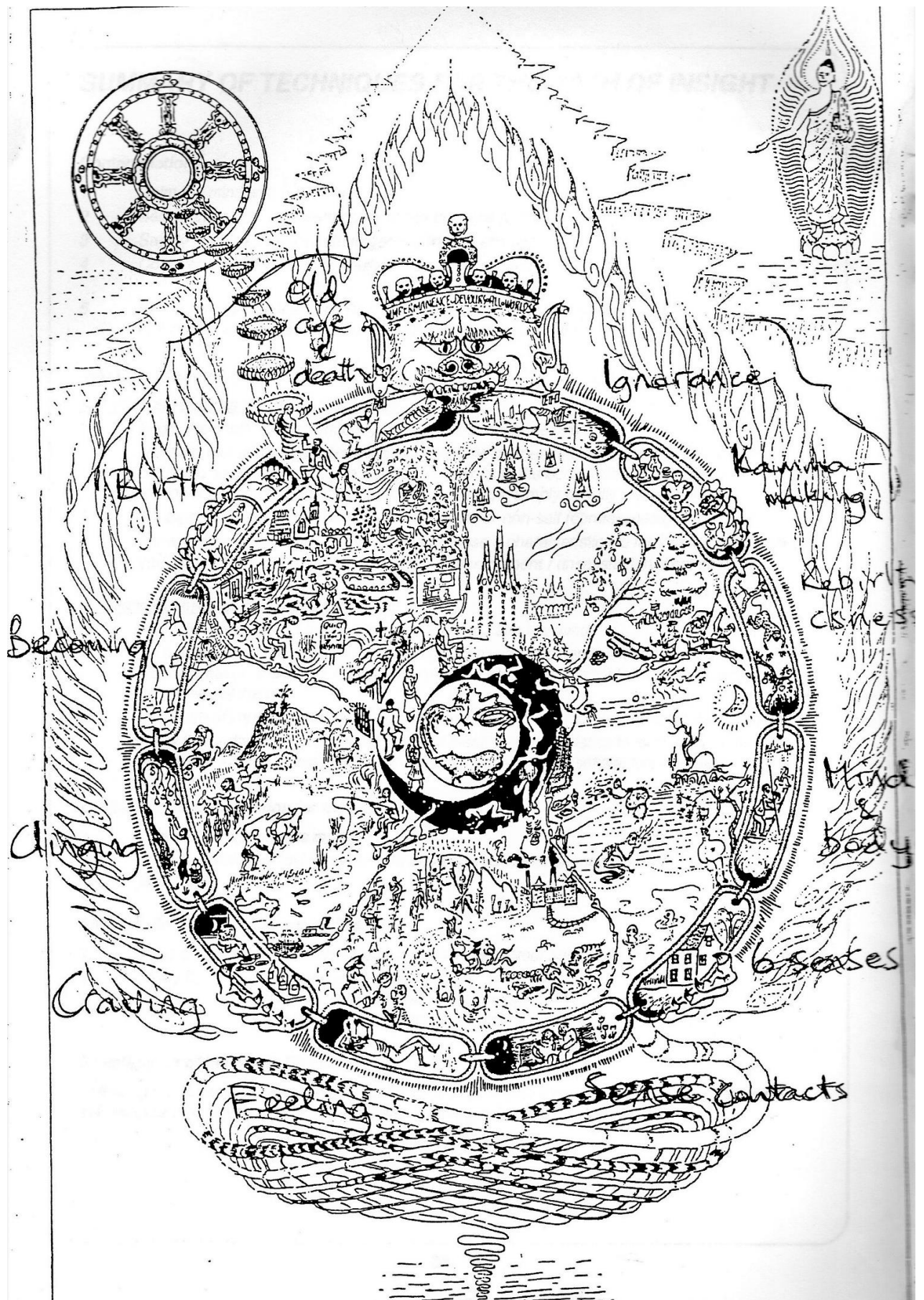
Investigation of the 3 characteristics

- 1 *Take one of the 3 characteristics of the universe as your subject for investigation or research*
- 2 *Study it*
 - *in your environment*
 - *in your own body and mind processes*
 - *in the body and mind processes of others*

Investigation of the whole Dhamma

Following the Buddha's urging never to just accept anything he says, but to investigate it for yourselves, carefully investigate the content of the following sections of this handbook

- *the wheel of birth and death*
- *the transcending of the wheel*
- *the Dhamma in daily life*



THE WHEEL OF BIRTH AND DEATH

CHAPTER SIX

THE WHEEL OF BIRTH AND DEATH

An understanding of the 'wheel of birth and death', or the 'worldly dependent arising' is indispensable to understanding the Dhamma as a whole. It forms the basis for seeing things as they really are: an incredibly, beautifully complex process of conditioned phenomena that constantly arise and cease. This process can be seen to operate both from day to day, and from life to life.

The Buddha teaches that all phenomena in the universe are dependent on, caused by, conditioned by a pre-existing cause or phenomenon. All the phenomena of which we and our lives consist fall into one of 12 categories, or successive steps. These categories form a continuous cycle, which the Buddha calls the 'wheel (or round) of birth and death'.

In the introduction to his explanation of how all physical and mind phenomena are conditioned, or dependent, the Buddha says 'This dependent origination is profound and appears profound. It is through not understanding, not penetrating this (aspect of the Dhamma) that this generation has become unable to pass beyond this round of birth and death.' (The Great Discourse on Origination. Long Discourse 15). What the Buddha is saying here is that, because of our ignorance about who we really are, we're unable to free ourselves from being re-born again and again.

He is actually referring to being re-born in different lives; but the concept is also enlightening if we apply it within one life. Let's look at the worldly dependent arising, or the round of birth and death, in more detail, to get an understanding of this.

The worldly dependent arising is often depicted as a wheel, with the steps of causation depicted in symbols around it. This is because the Buddha himself drew it like this as he was first explaining it. He said that this aspect of the Dhamma was so important that a picture, based on his own, should be put in every monastery, and one of the monks or nuns should be detailed to explain it to anyone who asked.

The 3 unwholesome roots

Inside the wheel, as a centrepiece, is a small circle comprising a cock (standing for greed), a snake (for hate), and a pig (for delusion). They whirl around together, each holding the tail of the next in its mouth. These are the 3 unwholesome roots, the cause for our continued existence in the round of birth and death. When they are present in our hearts, we experience the suffering of this transitory world of birth and death; when they have been completely destroyed, by generosity, lovingkindness and particularly by insight, we are calm, and in the perfect peace of Nibbana.

The cock represents every type of greed, from feelings that it's absolutely necessary to own something, or from violent passion, to a meditator's subtle wish for the enjoyment of spiritual pleasures. In the Tibetan renditions of the dependent arising

the cock is often coloured red, to symbolise the burning fire of desire, which is always hot and restless, like flames - unlike the coolness and peace we feel when we're not attached.

In the cock's beak is the tail of the snake of hate. The snake symbolises our annoyance when things don't go the way we want, or desire, them to - when we either don't get what we want, or we get what we don't want. Hate can be anything from a passion that may lead to killing, to a mild irritation at a sound, for instance. The snake is usually green, for the coldness of hatred; and the animal itself, whose venomous bite kills, symbolises what happens in our hearts when hate or dislike is present.

The snake has the tail of a black pig in its mouth. This pig symbolises delusion and its darkness. In enjoying its mud-bath, the pig may fling mud in its own eyes, symbolising our not being able to see the unhelpful effects of unwholesome behaviour, and the helpful effects of wholesome behaviour; not seeing, or doubting, the benefits of lovingkindness, compassion and joy with others, for instance. Also, the pig tends towards laziness, symbolising the lack of effort we may bring to our practice. To complete the cycle, the pig holds in its mouth the tail-feathers of the cock of greed. These three are joined to symbolise firstly, that we all have all of them in our hearts (they are only lost at enlightenment); and secondly, that they tend to feed each other - when one is present it makes it easier for another to arise.

The effects of our karma

Around the animals is a ring divided into two - a light half and a dark half. In the light half are four figures following the path of the Dhamma, that is, resisting the 3 unwholesome roots, and developing the 3 wholesome roots in their lives. They are a monk, a nun, a lay man and a lay woman - the community of Dhamma practitioners. The path of light leads them to rebirth in the heavenly realms or in the human realm.

In the dark half are those deluded people who have allowed the 3 unwholesome roots to dominate in their lives; their path leads to the realms of the hungry ghosts, animals, or to the hell-realms. They are depicted as naked, and falling, out of control. Their nakedness shows their lack of shame about the unwholesome ways they have thought, spoken and acted during this life; their being out of control reflects the power of unwholesome action to create confusion in the heart.

The 31 realms

Around the two paths is a bigger circle divided into 5 parts, depicting the 5 realms of existence: fire (for hell), ghosts with small mouths and big bellies (continual, unsatisfied greed), animals, humans and the heavenly realms or paradise. Usually, the Tibetan renditions include an extra realm, of the titans (continual, unsatisfied aggression). The Buddha teaches there are 31 realms altogether; 26 of them are 'unseen' heavenly realms, and the human realm is fifth from the bottom.

All these realms are our possibilities for rebirth. Where we are reborn depends on our karma - the total effect of the wholesomeness or unwholesomeness of our thoughts, speech and actions throughout our life. This may be expressed as which of the 6 roots - greed, hate, delusion, generosity, lovingkindness and wisdom - we have strengthened during our life; or to which of those 6 our mind most easily or habitually turns.

As we've seen, the Buddha gives us the basic guidelines for living a wholesome life in the 5 precepts.

The dependent arising

The outer rim of the wheel is divided into 12 parts, depicting the 12 links of dependent arising. This is the description of causation in our lives. Bhikkhu Khantipalo says 'In the 12 links around this wheel are set out the whole pattern of life and in it all questions relating to existence are answered.' (The Wheel of Birth and Death, Wheel Publication 147-149). At this point, it's worth remembering again that it's only when we investigate for ourselves that anything becomes really meaningful, or will come to us as insight. Ayya Khema often uses the example of 'biting into the mango': someone may describe a mango to us in great detail - but we won't really know what a mango is until we taste it ourselves.

The successive steps in the round of birth and death are (1) ignorance, traditionally depicted as an old, blind woman, (2) karma-making - a potter making pots, (3) rebirth consciousness - a monkey hopping from tree to tree, (4) mind-and-body - a boat with a boatman and a prone passenger, (5) the 6 senses - a house with 5 windows and a door, (6) sense contact - a couple embracing, (7) feeling - someone having arrows shot into his eyes, (8) craving - a person sitting at a laden banquetting table shovelling food into his mouth, (9) clinging - a person picking fruit and throwing it into baskets which are already overflowing, (10) becoming - a pregnant woman, (11) birth - a baby, and (12) old age and death, grief, lamentation, pain and despair - an old man with a sack of bones on his back.

These are traditionally explained in terms of three lifetimes: ignorance and karma-making take place in a previous life; from rebirth consciousness to the process of becoming take place in the present life; and rebirth, old age and death take place in the next life. However, as I've mentioned, it is also very useful to see them operating from day to day. And in fact, when our mindfulness is really developed, we can see them operating from moment to moment.

The 12 steps in the worldly dependent arising, then, are:

1 Ignorance (of the laws of nature, or how things really are). This is the 'beginningless beginning'. In past lives, 'we' haven't found out how things really are, having been ignorant enough of the 4 noble truths to want - or have - to come back to another rebirth. Due to this ignorance, we've set in motion the 'wheel' of birth and death by making karma, some of the 'fruits' of which we are now experiencing.

Or, alternatively, in past days, or moments, we've made karma because of our ignorance of how things work, or because our practice isn't yet to the stage where we have enough insight not to make karma. Ignorance, then, has led to.....

2 Karma-making. Every action, until we're enlightened - that is, until we realise who we really are - makes karma, or bears fruit, either later in the same life or in a future life. As with a potter, who creates successful and unsuccessful pots, our actions are either skilful or unskilful, and therefore make either wholesome or unwholesome karma. Over our whole life, this decides our next rebirth. Or alternatively, earlier today - or just in the last moment - we've acted, or spoken, or thought skilfully or unskilfully. Now we're experiencing a form of 're-linking' consciousness based on this. This consciousness becomes the basis for what happens around us in the present day, or moment - or life.

3 Rebirth consciousness. We bring to each birth, or day, or moment a consciousness caused by whatever karma we've made in the previous birth, or day, or moment. The karma we all made in our previous lives had the effect of our being born as human beings this life. In this life, in order to be born again as a human being - or in the god realms - we need, right now, to be making good karma. (That is, if we want to stay in the round of birth and death - if we've had enough of the round. we need to practise the Dhamma to the point where we realise the way we really are: non-self, which, of course, entails making no further karma and not coming back to rebirth). This re-linking consciousness is, with sperm and ovum, a necessary ingredient for conception, and thus it leads to the arising again of body and mind. It's depicted by a monkey jumping from tree to tree, with the fruit on the tree it's jumping towards symbolising the karmic resultants to be experienced in the coming life - or day.

In terms of day to day, or moment to moment, we can see the continuity of consciousness acting anew on the mind and body, so that they continue functioning according to that consciousness.

From here until the 11th step, rebirth, the steps are within this one life.

4 The arising of mind and body. Obviously this is the result of conception (which occurs when rebirth consciousness, sperm and ovum come together). Mind and body consist of the 5 aggregates, as we've seen, and are a process. But we haven't yet noted that mind is in charge. If we think about it, everything we do depends on a thought: we wouldn't be here at this retreat unless we'd thought of coming, or decided to come. This is why mind is shown as the boatman, and body is the passive passenger, lying down and being rowed along.

5 The six senses. These are seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting, touching, and the Buddha adds thinking, which, like the others, brings impressions or information into our consciousness. Each sense is capable of cognising a particular aspect of our environment - sights, sounds, smells, tastes, tangibles, and thoughts. In fact, they bring us all the information we're conscious of - we have no other way of cognising; all our experience is limited by the senses and their objects. While the 5 outer

senses gather information only in the present, and only from our human realm, the mind provides us with thoughts about past and future - memories, worries, hopes, fears - and is also capable of bringing in information about the other four realms.

Because the 6 senses exist, sense-contacts exist.

6 Sense contacts. If the right conditions exist, the senses will make contact with their sense objects. For instance, if our eyes are open, and there is enough light, and our head is turned in the right direction, we'll make contact with a particular sense object. The traditional image is a couple embracing. Sense contacts are immediately followed by feeling; because the sense contacts exist, feeling exists.

7 Feeling. Feelings are always either pleasant, unpleasant or neutral, the latter mostly going completely unnoticed unless we are specifically looking for them. As we've already discussed, we're always trying to ensure we have as many pleasant feelings as possible, and shying away from the unpleasant ones, so that we experience more happiness than unhappiness, or dissatisfaction. But even if a sense contact brings us happiness, it never lasts, and so is always ultimately unsatisfactory. This is symbolised by the picture showing the arrows being shot into both the eyes: a distinctly unsatisfactory situation!

Feeling, in those who are not Dhamma practitioners, always leads to craving, and thus to another round on the wheel. But for those who are aware, this particular spot in the process is the possible way out, ultimately to freedom. This is the spot at which, if we practise, we can take charge, and change the sequence of the events that follow. Up to this spot, previous karma has conditioned everything: all the steps from ignorance to here follow each other automatically. But this is the key to taking charge and seeing things as they really are.

Here, by practising mindfulness, we can

- get to know our pleasant and unpleasant feelings and what causes them
- use one of the 5 ways of combatting unwholesome thoughts, change our thinking and thereby our speech and our actions
- instead of wanting more pleasant feelings, or wanting fewer unpleasant feelings, we can simply note the pleasant or unpleasant feeling, and allow its usual results or effects to drop without attaching to them and being caught up once again in craving. Thus we are free in that moment.

So, feeling does not inevitably lead on to craving. This is the only link which is not purely causal. But if we are not in charge at this particular point, feeling develops into...

8 Craving. This is the wanting to have the pleasant, or wanting to get rid of the unpleasant, which is the way we usually operate. In Pali the word for craving is the word for 'thirst', implying thirst for experience. The picture depicts someone already drunk, still drinking more.

Craving inevitably leads to clinging.

9 Clinging. We don't even notice when we've had enough. Clinging is the more intense and diverse - almost more 'greedy' - result of craving. It's a more frantic search for happiness, for the 'right' house or possessions or job or friends or clothes...the list goes on and on. The picture shows a man reaching out to pick more fruit although his basket is already full - he 'doesn't know when to stop'.

Clinging inevitably causes becoming.

10 Becoming. This involves the idea of having or being something more than we have or are at the present. The non-Dhamma practitioner constantly 'stokes the fire of becoming' by wanting and not wanting all the time. The Dhamma practitioner, armed with mindfulness, stops the process of becoming by preventing the craving, as we've seen: instead of constantly wanting things to be different, we watch how things are. Doing this, we can 'become' in a wholesome direction, thus increasing our happiness, our good karma in the next life - or the next day or moment. Becoming is illustrated by a pregnant woman.

Becoming causes or conditions birth.

11 Birth. This is actually shown in the picture, which is of a woman giving birth. We may be tempted to put off our Dhamma practice in the knowledge that we'll definitely be reborn - but we don't know where! So the best thing to do is make wholesome karma in this moment, which will lead not only to a more advantageous rebirth in the next life, but to more happiness in the next days, or even moments. Obviously, birth leads to old age and death.

12 Old age and death. In future one is assured, given enough ignorance and craving, of lives without end, but also of deaths without end. The Dhamma path transcends both and leads directly to the deathless, the end of suffering, the going beyond life and death, Nibbana.

The picture is of an old man gazing at a corpse in a coffin.

The Buddha ends his description of the round of birth and death by saying 'And this is how this whole mass of suffering (dukkha) arises'.

We are the makers of this wheel for ourselves, and we are its turners; but we can also be the ones who stop the wheel. Because, as each step is dependent on the one before, if we remove the first step - ignorance - the others will no longer follow. Ignorance ceasing, karma-making does not arise; karma-making ceasing, rebirth consciousness does not arise; rebirth consciousness not occurring, mind-and-body does not arise; mind-and-body not occurring, the 6 senses do not arise; the 6 senses not occurring, sense contacts do not happen; without sense contacts feeling doesn't occur; without feeling there is no craving; without craving, no clinging; without clinging, no becoming; without becoming, no birth, old age, death, suffering or unsatisfactoriness. And so this whole mass of suffering ceases.

A tiger's head is drawn at the top of the wheel, and its claws grasp the whole wheel. This reminds us of the impermanence of all phenomena in our universe. The tiger wears a crown which shows he is king over all the realms. On the crown are 5 skulls, representing the impermanence of the 5 aggregates comprising the person. Below the wheel is the tiger's tail, without beginning, symbolising the countless lives we've already lived in the wheel of birth and death.

CHAPTER SEVEN

THE TRANSCENDENTAL DEPENDENT ARISING

The transcendental dependent arising is the path we follow out of the cycle of birth and death. It details the steps we take as we transcend this worldly existence. It is the second half of the total dependent arising sequence - so-called, as we have seen, because each step is caused, or conditioned, by the step before and causes, or conditions, the subsequent step.

This total sequence of 'dependent arising', cause and effect, or arising and ceasing, comprises all of the human experience, and all its possibilities.

The second, transcendental part of the dependent arising begins at what might be called the 'end point' of the cycle of birth and death - dukkha, the ultimate unsatisfactoriness of our lives and of all phenomena in our universe. The first noble truth - there is suffering - refers to this same point. It is a crucial point for any spiritual understanding or practice path. With no understanding of the unsatisfactoriness of life, we have no wish, or opportunity, to transcend it. This is why so often we're brought to the beginning of our spiritual journey - or to its resumption - by a great sadness or crisis in our lives. Until that time we've been able to distract ourselves from the truth of suffering by moving on to something else. But a crisis doesn't allow us to look away - we can't get away from it; that's its nature. It may be the loss of a partner, or of a job one really enjoyed and identified with; the death of a child; or a 'seven-year' 'where's my life supposed to go now? Everything's become meaningless!'

Let's be clear, however, that, while dukkha is inherent in all our experience, it is not our total experience. There are many beautiful and happy things in human life. Nor does an understanding of dukkha mean that our whole lives become morbid! On the contrary: having understood suffering and therefore been impelled to practise a spiritual path, we find the practice increases our day-to-day joy and happiness, both in quantity and, undeniably, in quality. For instance, when we're mindful, we're more aware of what we're doing, so we either (a) enjoy it more, or (b) change to something more wholesome so our hearts are happier.

The Buddha said that he taught only suffering and its end. This was what his whole original search was about: he saw the unhappiness of human life, the suffering inherent in it, left his home specifically to seek an end to it, and when he had discovered the end of suffering and the way to end it, taught this to whoever was ready to hear the teaching.

To cure something we must first be able to diagnose it, describe it accurately; then we can find its cause; and the cure may then become self-evident - as in the 4 noble truths. The Buddha has been described as 'the great physician'. We've seen his description of suffering and its cause - craving - in the worldly dependent arising; and we've seen the cure we need to aim towards if we wish to bring an end to our

suffering - we need to aim towards ending our ignorance. Because if we end our ignorance, this will mean that no karma arises, and therefore no rebirth consciousness arises, and therefore no mind and body arises, and so on until..... no suffering arises.

Now we come to the transcendental dependent arising part of the sequence, which is the path we follow as we progress towards ending our ignorance. The 'extinction of delusion' was one of many ways the Buddha described Nibbana. The sequence of the Transcendental Dependent Arising is: '....suffering is the supporting condition for faith, faith is the supporting condition for joy, joy is the supporting condition for rapture, rapture is the supporting condition for tranquillity, tranquillity is the supporting condition for happiness, happiness is the supporting condition for concentration, concentration is the supporting condition for knowledge and vision of things as they really are, knowledge and vision of things as they really are is the supporting condition for disenchantment, disenchantment is the supporting condition for dispassion, dispassion is the supporting condition for emancipation, and emancipation is the supporting condition for the knowledge of the destruction (of the cankers, or fetters).' (Upanisa Sutta, the Discourse on Supporting Conditions. Samyutta Nikaya).

The sequence, then, is: suffering, faith, joy, rapture, tranquillity, happiness, concentration, knowledge and vision of things as they really are, disenchantment, dispassion, emancipation, and the knowledge of the destruction (of the fetters). Let's look at each in turn.

Step 1 - Unsatisfactoriness (dukkha)

At a recent course on Palliative Care I attended we studied the topic of grief and loss. The facilitator made the point that grief and loss permeate our whole life. She asked the group what we thought of, when we thought about grief and loss. Naturally, everyone said 'death'. So she wrote that up on the whiteboard. Then she asked us 'What else do you think of?' And pretty soon the whole board was full of a wide variety of situations and events that trigger grief - a telling demonstration of the way grief permeates our lives. And 'grief' is just one of the factors used by the Buddha to define dukkha, or suffering, or unsatisfactoriness. Others are..... sorrow, lamentation, pain and..... distress'. As we've seen, he also calls the cycle of birth and death '...this whole mass of suffering'.

He defines 3 kinds of dukkha: 'occasional' - old age, sickness, death; 'frequent' - not getting what we like and getting what we don't like; and 'continuous' - the unsatisfactoriness that is due to the impermanence of even the pleasant things in life: everything arises and ceases.

If we are at the beginning of the transcendental dependent arising, we've seen something of the pervasiveness of dukkha. We've realised that, the way we are living it, life can never be fully satisfying; can never bring us true happiness, lasting happiness; that it will never truly fulfil us. We know we still feel somehow incomplete; this may be expressed as the thought 'there must be something more to

life than this - I must be here for more than this'. So, we begin to search. That's what has brought us all here, to this retreat. We've faced the fact that life is not satisfying; and when we really do that, it's the beginning of the spiritual path - and the beginning of swimming upstream, against the current of the conditioning of society that everything's okay as it is.

In fact, as well as playing the key role in starting us on the spiritual path, unsatisfactoriness plays a very positive role throughout our life. For instance, it's only when we recognise that something in our life is unsatisfactory that we think about changing to something else - a new job, for instance, when we realise our present one isn't using our skills to the full; or a new car, when the current one is breaking down so much that it's dangerous. So it's actually a key - without unsatisfactoriness we'd never change! We'd just remain in the illusion that keeps us going around and around on the wheel of birth and death.

The realisation of life's unsatisfactoriness, then, impels us to search for something more. This is why it's called the 'supporting condition' for faith and confidence.

Step 2 - Faith and confidence (saddha)

This is not the sort of faith that we in the West are used to hearing about in the context of religion: a faith in something we can't see or hear or prove. This has nothing to do with 'blind faith'. Here, 'faith' refers to simply having enough faith in the Dhamma to try it out - more like the idea of 'giving the Dhamma a chance'. It's almost like accepting a hypothesis in a scientific experiment. It is simply a confidence, a belief that it's worth searching for something more, and that it's worth following that search by listening to and trying out the practices suggested by the Buddha. Remember, the Buddha, in the well-known Kalama sutta, urges us not to just accept what he says, but to test it for ourselves. (Kalama Sutta, The Buddha's Charter of Free Enquiry. Anguttara Nikaya).

This faith is a necessary precursor to, or condition for, the next step of the transcendental dependent arising - our joyful inner journey.

Step 3 - Joy (pamojja)

It's not really difficult to see and then experience that the next four steps of the transcendental dependent arising are already there, in us, waiting to emerge. Joy arises when, on hearing the Dhamma, something inside us tells us 'This is it! This is what I've been searching for! Here are some answers to the questions I've had for so long! or at least it sounds promising it could be the next step....' It's tinged with relief; there may even be a feeling of 'coming home'. There's a feeling of gratitude, and celebration. For me, this feeling of joy arose first as I listened to aspects of the Christian teachings - it's not confined only to the Dhamma; it's a necessary step on all spiritual paths. There's a powerful expression of it in Aretha Franklin's song 'Joy is coming in the morning'. But when I first heard the Dhamma - taught by Ayya Khema - it came as a really powerful feeling of coming home. I almost felt as though what I was hearing was quite familiar to me. I experienced the

same thing at the first retreat I attended; and quite often since then, when a new insight arises, or when an old one appears with a new power. Even when we're just walking along, perhaps through the bush, and something reminds us of part of the teaching, the feeling of joy can arise. Or quite spontaneously, when we've just done one of the practices well. It can arise, too, as we anticipate the next step on the path, the next part of the Dhamma that may appear suddenly clear to us. The feeling is an outflowing from the heart - and it can result in lots of hugs with others who've discovered the same thing!

Experiencing this initial joy is the supporting condition for the arising of rapture.

Steps 4-6 - Rapture (piti), happiness (sukha), and contentment or tranquillity (passaddhi)

These steps support and condition each other. They are the same states as the subjects of the first three meditative absorptions.

We can see illustrated here the importance of the jhanas to the path of freedom: they are concentrated, tranquil states of mind that allow insight about the 3 characteristics of the universe to [arise. Here in](#) the Upanisa Sutta, the Buddha shows quite clearly that they are supporting or conditioning factors for the arising of insight, or the knowledge and vision of things as they really are, which is the step directly after them; and which is, as we have seen, the real goal of meditation.

Rapture has a physical quality about it - it's connected with physical sensations, pleasant ones. Almost, in the beginning, a feeling comfortable in our bodies, feeling relaxed, at home, light in our bodies - a feeling of physical well-being.

As we've seen, provided we keep our attention on the breath, one of the pleasant, physical sensations in the body - feelings of warmth, tingling, the hair standing up, a rising either within the body, or as if the whole body were really light - becomes so evident that it almost pushes aside the attention on the original meditation subject. It may announce its presence with a feeling like excitement. At the point where the pleasant sensation diverts the attention from the breath, the attention can be deliberately switched to the sensation and it can replace the breath as the subject of meditation.

The strongest one of these pleasant physical sensations can be consciously selected and used as the next meditation subject. Concentration on it needs to be sustained until the sensation completely suffuses the body. At this point, thoughts are still present, and the mind is still moving around to some extent - but for the most part the mind is absorbed in the experience. An accompanying emotional feeling, of happiness, may be noticed. This whole experience is known as 'bliss' or 'rapture', and may be sustained for long periods of time. However, sustaining this state of mind or consciousness for about 10 minutes is considered a sufficient basis for continuing to the next step. As with the subsequent steps, when one can access, maintain and leave this state whenever one wants to, it is considered mastered.

When one has been absorbed in bliss or rapture for an extended period of time, it may begin to be experienced as 'gross', and the mind may feel drawn toward experiencing a 'finer' sensation or feeling. If it is allowed, the feeling of happiness, which has been in the background, naturally develops and 'takes over' from the physical sensation, in the same way as the physical sensation 'took over' from the breath. At this point one can allow the pleasant physical sensation to drop away, and consciously switch the concentration, in the same way as before, to the pleasant emotional feeling, taking it as the meditation subject. This is moving through the second 'inner doorway'.

In this step, no attention is being given to other thoughts. The mind is totally absorbed in the happiness, or joy which now fills it completely and, in a similar way to the first absorbed state, also suffuses the body completely. Sometimes there is a feeling of a 'fountain' of joy rising up and spreading throughout the body. It can bring an involuntary smile, perhaps quite broad. A certain excitement can still be felt. The element of one-pointedness is still present, of course, and the feeling of happiness is accompanied by a kind of self-confidence. This is known as the absorbed state of happiness or joy. In the same way as before, one can remain in this state for a long time; but 10 minutes or so, fully absorbed, is considered sufficient before moving on to the next step. Actually, because of the total absorption, one tends not to notice the passage of time, so an estimate is sufficient. The point is to move on because one wants to, rather than because one can no longer sustain the absorption.

In the same way as before, the mind, after being absorbed for a time in happiness or joy, feels this is gross, and inclines towards something finer. Perhaps it could be said that the seed of the tranquillity which is the mind's next natural resting-place, is in the self-confidence which is part of the second absorbed state. At this stage one can let go of the joy or happiness, to discover that 'beneath' it lies a pleasant feeling of tranquillity or equanimity. Again, if allowed, this feeling strengthens and spreads through the whole mind and body, until one is completely 'steeped' in tranquillity. There is a feeling of relaxing the mind, of broadening out, of 'smooth-ness', 'unruffled-ness'; and an accompanying steady mindfulness - a steady being in the here and now, totally absorbed in tranquillity. Here, we've moved through the third 'inner door'.

These three states of mind then are the supporting conditions for the next step on the transcendental dependent arising: calm, or mature concentration.

Step 7 - Calm (samadhi)

The final step, or doorway, in the first series of meditative absorptions, or jhanas, leads into a deep calmness. There is no longer a need for the feeling of pleasure; the mind is content to move gently down into a finer feeling, or state, of deep peacefulness. The only things happening are the continued one-pointedness, this time on the calmness, and the calmness itself. Here the mind is still, pure, clear and 'bright', and the state is developed until this pure bright mind pervades completely the whole being.

Each of these four meditative absorptions results in a sense of huge relief. The mind has been given some respite from its usual crazy merry-go-round - and we've been fully conscious, all the way through, of the pleasure brought by each of the first three states, each in its own way; and of the immense calm of the fourth one. It's much better than a holiday!

This purity of mind, then, is the supporting condition for the arising of insight - the knowledge and vision of things as they really are.

Step 8 - Knowledge and vision of things as they really are

As we've already seen, this is the 'understood experience', involving both hearing the truth about impermanence, unsatisfactoriness and corelessness or non-self, and experiencing it for ourselves. In my experience it is more helpful to hear about these three characteristics of the universe first - then we know what to look for, and can recognise it when it arises. The disadvantage of this way around, though, is the mind's initial resistance. However, if we have a deep experience of one of these characteristics before hearing about it, it may (a) make no sense at all, and therefore be wasted, or (b) frighten us, so we don't want to pursue meditation.

Again, we see the sequence in the transcendental dependent arising of the jhana steps before the insight steps.

Knowledge and vision of things as they really are is the supporting condition for disenchantment.

Step 9 - Disenchantment (nibbida)

After we've investigated the 3 characteristics and have some knowledge and vision of things as they really are, we begin to feel a disenchantment with the things of this world and the way we've previously approached them. We're no longer 'enchanted' - or 'en-chained' - by the illusion, particularly the illusion of self as a separate entity. With the enchantment broken, we are free to see even more clearly things as they really are: how things really work in the universe; the answers to life questions we've been unable to answer before: how best to act for wholesomeness and purity. We no longer have so much 'dust in our eyes'.

Having been able to see - to understand and actually experience - things as they really are, and that everything, including the 'me', is impermanent, is simply a continuously arising and ceasing process, we may experience fear: our previous experience has not prepared us for this insight. But our journey along the path of calm meditation has.... this is why the calm of meditation is so necessary to continuing along the transcendental way to freedom. A happy, peaceful, flexible and expandable mind will not balk at seeing a different kind of reality.

The way to deal with the fear is to investigate further - who is fearful? At such times it can be helpful to have a teacher, to help with the process. We'll realise that the fear arises from not being able to find this 'me'; all we can find is this process of

phenomena arising and then dissolving. As well, we see that all the things we're attached to are dissolving and disappearing: we're subject to a continuous process of loss and grief.

Further, we realise that these things also impede us - the house needs constant looking after; both the body and the mind need constant attention; relationships, jobs all these things need looking after, and yet, now we see, they are all impermanent. They all change and disappear whatever we do. And also, there is so much that we constantly react to - our mental formations, other peoples' mental formations ...all these, while we attach significance to them, bring us pressure. And so we begin to see the danger inherent in all that exists: firstly, its potential to bring us grief; secondly the fact that it impedes us and thirdly, that it forces us, by its apparent significance, into constantly judging and responding.

We're able, then, to see the fear as a necessary step on the way, an indication that we have indeed seen and experienced a different reality from the one we've grown so used to; and that we have, at last, apprehended things as they really are.

Now, 'having seen the dangers inherent in all formations, we realise there is nothing to be gained by our being here.' (Ayya Khema, *When the Iron Eagle Flies*). And the desire for deliverance arises. This is a really significant point on the insight path - we feel existence has nothing to offer, and we begin to disengage from our previous way of living in the world. 'Living in the world but not of it' - that is, not according to its conditioning - is a phrase that now becomes helpful in guiding our attitudes to everyday life. It holds the sense of disengagement as a result of profound insight into the way things really are, rather than as a result of everything disgusting us - we are not averse to things; we are just seeing them as they really are.

A sense of urgency now enters our practice; and practice now centres around a continuing investigation of the 3 characteristics. When we have done this enough, we'll realise they're ultimately true: everything *is* ultimately impermanent; everything *is* ultimately unsatisfactory; and *nothing* has a separate core. Where before, everything was seen and evaluated in terms of 'I, me and mine', now everything begins to be seen as 'not I, not me, and not mine'. Through sustained and penetrating investigation a de-identification with the 5 aggregates, and an end to their enchanting spell, comes about.

Disenchantment is the supporting condition for dispassion.

Step 10 - Dispassion (Viraga)

With the arising of true disenchantment with the conditioned world, desire for the conditioned fades, and detachment and equanimity increase. Everything simply is at it is. It's not that nothing matters; it's not indifference. But nothing is special. Grasping is abandoned; new involvements are not taken up. Letting go becomes important - things don't have their former, illusory, significance. Insight gradually deepens and becomes clearer and more powerful. All things, all conditioned phenomena, are seen to be impermanent, unsatisfactory, and core-less.

Now the mind turns towards the unconditioned, seeking a state where nothing arises and nothing ceases - a 'still point' Ayya Khema calls it, where there is complete and utter peace and freedom.

Let's remind ourselves again here that this state of dispassion has been reached not by turning away from the conditioned world of samsara, not by escapism, but by energetically engaging the reality of the cycle of conditioned phenomena - through a process of rigorous and disciplined investigation. This investigation has led to a full understanding, a real comprehension of the nature of things, and a subsequent transcendence of conditioned phenomena.

Depending on which characteristic of the universe we have investigated - impermanence, unsatisfactoriness or non-self - the process leads to one of 3 'gates' to the unconditioned: respectively the 'signless', the 'wishless', and emptiness, or the 'gateless gate'. The 3 investigations are as follows:

- understanding the lack of significance of all formations leads to realising Nibbana as the imperishable
- understanding the unsatisfactoriness of all formations leads to realising Nibbana as freedom from desire
- understanding the corelessness of all formations leads to realising the unviability of a notion of self in relation to the unconditioned.

In each case, by penetrating the conditioned to its deepest and most universal features, the practitioner realises the supreme security and freedom of the unconditioned.

Step 11 – Emancipation

The actual moment of stepping through one of the 'gates' is called the 'path moment'. It is just one mind moment; and in it there is no observer. It is a single moment of meditative absorption when there is nothing occurring; nothing arising, and so nothing ceasing. But after the path moment there are two mind-moments, called 'fruit-moments', when the 'fruit' of the path moment - the complete freedom - is experienced. Non-occurrence is experiencing the unconditioned, which is synonymous with there being no separation. Ayya Khema says 'it is a return to the ground of being, to the matrix of existence which is the unconditioned primordial source The experience is a moment in which the 'self' notion is obliterated; an enormous sense of relief is felt, as if a great burden had been laid down. That relief is combined with understanding of what has occurred; namely that (for one mind-moment) consciousness abandoned all that we know, whether beautiful, wholesome, acceptable, or their opposites, and all sense of personal existence was lost.' (When the Iron Eagle Flies).

THE TRANSCENDENTAL DEPENDENT ARISING

(Each step is the supporting condition for the next)

- 1 Unsatisfactoriness
- 2 Faith and confidence
- 3 Joy
- 4 Rapture
- 5 Tranquillity
- 6 Happiness
- 7 Concentration
- 8 Knowledge and vision of things as they really are
- 9 Disenchantment
- 10 Dispassion
- 11 Emancipation
- 12 Knowledge of destruction of the fetters

There are 3 more path and fruit moments: culminating in the moment of final liberation; at which point we are at last free of the 10 fetters binding us to the conditioned state. The 10 are personality belief (wrong view of self), sceptical doubt, belief in rites and rituals, sense desire, ill-will, craving for finematerial existence, craving for non-material existence, conceit (conceiving of self), restlessness, and ignorance. Of these, the first three are broken at the first path moment - 'stream-entry'; the next two are diminished for the 'once-returner' at the second path moment, and broken for the 'non-returner' at the third path moment; and the remaining five are broken only at full enlightenment.

It is only with the attainment of the state of dispassion that the mind passes completely beyond the mundane or conditioned level and for those single mind-moments realises freedom. Afterwards, though, the mind is able to live in the world much more easily. Many of the difficulties encountered while we divided the spiritual life from non-spiritual activities are lessened; as a result of the experience of the unconditioned - or, rather its fruit-moments. This is because, while the practitioner who has experienced one or more of the path and fruit moments looks and seems

on the outside just the same as before, on the inside there has been a vast change; and s/he approaches everything from a completely different viewpoint.

The fully-enlightened one, the arahant, is completely non-self and therefore completely free, no longer affected by the world, with a mind unshaken by any of its phenomena.

THE 10 FETTERS

LOST AT STREAM ENTRY

- 1 Personality belief
- 2 Sceptical doubt
- 3 Belief in rites and rituals

LOST AT ONCE-RETURNER (50%) AND AT NON- RETURNER (100%)

- 4 Sense desire
- 5 III-will

LOST AT FULL ENLIGHTENMENT

- 6 Craving for fine-material existence
- 7 Craving for non-material existence
- 8 Conceit (conceiving of selfhood)
- 9 Restlessness
- 10 Ignorance

After one of these experiences of the unconditioned, the practitioner reviews the present situation to see which fetters are left. Unless s/he knows 'Destroyed is birth, the holy life has been lived, what had to be done has been done; there is nothing more to come' - then practice towards the final path moment continues!

As the Buddha said 'There is the deed but no doer
There is suffering but no sufferer
There is the path but no-one to walk on it
There is Nibbana, but no-one to enter'.

CHAPTER EIGHT

THE DHAMMA IN DAILY LIFE

When we get home, the atmosphere will be different from the one we've built up together here at the retreat. Here are some pointers for carrying the practice we've done at this retreat into our daily lives.

Continuing the practice

The first thing to be said is that we have each experienced something, here at this retreat, of the highest ideal a human being can aspire to. It's not necessary to make our way towards the pinnacle of the mountain by following the Buddha's teaching. There are many paths, all leading to the same goal - enlightenment (although, of course, other disciplines call it by other names). But, in my experience - and in the experience of the many thousands of others who are following the Dhamma, all around the world - the Buddha's teaching works. This is mainly because it is clear and complete.

The Dhamma is a totally integrated, balanced whole, so that when we are practising one aspect we are also building up our understanding of, and possibility for experiencing, all the other aspects. The Dhamma makes it clear that the responsibility is ours - we must do the work ourselves. But, if we do practise the techniques the Buddha has so clearly set out for us we can be sure of results. I can say this from my own experience; and no doubt you have each experienced it during the retreat. As we continue the practice, both in our daily lives, and in meditation and contemplation, we'll all see more and more results - both in our meditation and in our daily lives.

Discipline

The second thing to be said about when we get home is, if we are serious about continuing to follow the Dhamma- this jewel of a way to live - and about maintaining the levels of calm and insight we've reached here, we have to discipline ourselves into some habits straight away. Mind you, the discipline becomes easier and easier as we see more and more benefits from the practice. Most of us here know already the tremendous benefit that daily meditation brings to our lives...

Daily meditation

And that's the first thing we need to do: meditate daily, preferably an hour in the morning and an hour at night. We need to make it an unquestioned part of our routine, a basic habit - if we expect to gain from it. Concentration is a wonderful achievement, but it's fragile - we need to nurture it well. So, make a place where you're going to sit each day, and leave your cushion there. Every time you see it, it will remind you - just in case you might have forgotten! If you like, you can put some flowers there; or a picture that will remind you of some of the teaching.

If you want to have a shrine, the things we usually have are: a Buddha statue, some flowers, a candle and some incense. Each acts as a reminder of a particular aspect of the Dhamma. The Buddha statue stands for the enlightenment principle - the fact that enlightenment is the pinnacle of the natural development of a human being. That's why we feel incomplete; it's what we're searching for. Because it's our natural way forward, it's attainable by every human being. Often, the Buddha has a sweet smile on his face - that reminds us of the joy of the path. The flowers remind us that everything is impermanent, because they wilt. The candle stands for the light of enlightenment that 'switches on' in our consciousness: a little with each understood experience, each insight we have, and then quite noticeably as we proceed along the path. The incense smoke reminds us of non-self, as it dissolves into the air.

So, go to your meditation place each day at the same times - and have a clock there, with an alarm (a soft one!), or a timer to make sure you sit the full time. Otherwise your mind will be taken up with wondering when the time is up. Make it for yourself the same as we've been doing here; we meditate until the bell - or alarm - goes. If you are a beginner, start with 2 sessions each day of 30 minutes each, and build up 5 minutes each week until you're doing an hour each time. Two hours daily will maintain you at your present level of calmness.

And remember, for the last 5 minutes or so of each meditation, we should all check the 3 things: remember 'This, too, is impermanent'; recapitulate the pathway we have taken, including things like whether we ate or not beforehand, the warmth of the room, the position we sat in, the sequence used at the beginning of the meditation, etc. - both whether it's been a good meditation or not - we can learn something from every meditation; and the third thing is 'What have I learned from this meditation?' - in terms of how to meditate, and what insight has arisen.

Supports - books, tapes/CDs, noble friends

There are several supports we can use to help us continue the practice in the way we'd like to do now. We can read books and listen to tapes. But the most important support, according to the Buddha, is having noble friends - people with whom we practise meditation (once a week is good), and with whom we can talk about the Dhamma, and discuss ways of living it in our lives.

When we're not with noble friends, though, we need to be aware that every now and again we'll need to give ourselves a good pep-talk: 'I know this is the best thing for me to do - now! - so I'm just going to forget everything else and do it.' This covers everything from sitting to meditate, to leaving the room when we're about to blow up with anger so we can give ourselves some time to cool down and have more hope of speaking and acting wholesomely.

Mindfulness, the 4 supreme emotions, the 4 supreme efforts

Meditation, and noble friends to support you in it, is the first must. After that, mindfulness, throughout the day, and in meditation, and the 4 supreme emotions and efforts are a great help.

Remember, the Buddha said if we're truly mindful for just 7 days, we'll become enlightened - that's how important it is. Being in the moment; being right here, right now; being whatever we're doing; experiencing it, not thinking about it. Meditation and mindfulness are interdependent - each facilitates the other. At home, we don't have the same amount of time as we've had here, for meditation. But we can be mindful all the time - as long as we keep up the minimum daily meditation. Both are necessary if we want to maintain the gains we've made in this retreat. Once we're aware of what's happening in the mind, through mindfulness, we can bring some of the Buddha's other techniques into play, in order to purify our minds further. Purification = making wholesome; and a wholesome mind is a happy mind; so purification is worthwhile.

Regarding the 4 supreme emotions - lovingkindness or unconditional love, compassion, joy with others and equanimity: if we can keep one of these in our minds all the time, we'll certainly be living a wholesome life! Two important techniques to help us do this, as we've seen, are the 4 supreme efforts and the 5 ways of combatting unwholesome thoughts.

Regular retreats

Meditation, mindfulness and being with noble friends are all to be found at retreats, like this one. When we go home, we'll all find that the levels of calm, insight and 'Dhamma-energy' drop gradually, over a few days. What we have in our minds is mainly influenced by the previous 24 hours, so the effect of the retreat will gradually diminish. So, what you need to do is go to regular 'refreshers'. I agree with Ayya that digging 100 feet in one well will yield better results than digging 10 feet in 10 different places. Staying with the same style of teaching, at least at the beginning of practice, pays off.

Investigation into the 3 characteristics

The second last thing to practise is investigating the 3 characteristics of the universe. It can be done constantly, whatever we're doing.

The 5 precepts

The three parts of the Dhamma, as we've seen, are wholesome living, the path of calm, and the path of insight. I've talked about the way of calm, and the way of insight, and I've touched on wholesome living, in talking about the 4 supreme emotions, the 5 ways of dealing with unwholesome thoughts and the 4 supreme efforts. But the real basis for our practice of wholesome living, are the 5 precepts. Again, they are

- 1 To refrain from killing living beings - yes, including mosquitoes and flies! Basically, because our lives involve some unavoidable killing of living beings, including insects on the wind screens of our cars and bacteria when we've

had enough of the flu, we need to make up our own minds where to draw the line. We'll know in our hearts what we want to do, and what we're ready to do

- 2 To refrain from taking what is not given - is fairly clear
- 3 To refrain from sexual misconduct - basically involves being faithful to your partner
- 4 To refrain from lying and harsh words, slander and 'idle chatter'- the latter is probably the most difficult of the precepts to keep!
- 5 To refrain from alcohol and drugs - because they interfere with clarity of mind.

SUMMARY OF TECHNIQUES FOR DHAMMA PRACTICE IN DAILY LIFE

Your practice when you get home after this retreat can be helpfully supported by

- discipline*
- daily meditation*
- books, tapes, CDs*
- noble friends*
- mindfulness*
- practise of the 4 supreme emotions*
- effort, energy*
- practise of the 4 supreme efforts*
- regular retreats*
- investigation into the 3 characteristics of the universe*
- living according to the 5 precepts*

CHAPTER NINE

GUIDED MEDITATION AND CONTEMPLATION

Lovingkindness meditation

Lovingkindness meditation is a guided meditation technique based on suggestions by the Buddha for increasing the unconditional love in our hearts. The more love we have, the easier it is to live our daily lives, to meditate - and to practise the other Dhamma techniques, too. This type of guided meditation can also be used to develop compassion, joy with others and equanimity. This particular meditation is based on one of those given by Ayya Khema at retreats.

Contemplation

Contemplation is a particular form of thinking, an active investigation of a subject. It is done with the sole aim of gaining insight. In contemplation we take a subject which is a universal fact, not an individual problem, and see how it applies to us. We try to see how we react to that universality. Only our own reaction gives the fact importance for us.

Contemplation means that we follow through with one subject, and although the subject may be very familiar to us, because of our sustained following-through on it, we may realise new insights about it - we may see the same thing in a different light. The way the insight arises is as an inner knowing, an inner certainty, which has been given the opportunity to arise from within us by the concentration on the one contemplation subject instead of our usual discursive thinking.

This is one technique for encouraging insight to arise: not just thinking about a subject, but following through a specific line of contemplation in order to discover a universal truth about it, and realising its application to our own life. We look at all its facets, and connections to our reality, and gain a completely new viewpoint.

A lovingkindness meditation - entering the heart

Look into your heart and see if there are any negative emotions there - dislike, anger, upset, worry or fear, craving, desire, restlessness-anything at all that creates unhappiness, a darkness. Let it all float away, like black clouds in the sky

Look again into your heart and see the great spacious purity of it, filled with love and compassion, with warmth and caring. Fill yourself with that and surround yourself, so that nothing untoward can touch you

Open the doors of your heart as wide as possible and let all the people who are here enter your heart, experiencing all the warmth and the caring; love and compassion, enjoying a home in your heart

Now let your parents enter your heart. Make them a comfortable home in the warmth and caring of your heart those who are near and dear, those you may be living with all your friends. You may have to open the doors to your heart wider and enlarge the space where they can find love and compassion. Make them all at home Now invite into your heart your acquaintances, your colleagues at work, your neighbours, relations. Make them all comfortable, let them enjoy..... Now invite a person in, whom you find difficult. Let him or her also enter and be soothed and embraced by the love and compassion that person can find in your heart

Now let the creatures of the bush, that you may have seen, or you can imagine, all enter into your heart, the small ones, as small as an ant, medium-sized ones, big ones, snakes and spiders, let them all enter your heart.....

And now open your heart more and more. Make it bigger and bigger, and let people from everywhere - wherever you can think of them - enter your heart, finding a home of love and compassion, enjoying your gifts. Make the heart bigger and bigger, until it's big enough to let all of humanity enter

And now make it so big that it can accommodate the sky, the stars, the moon, all entering your heart, experiencing your love, your compassion

Put your attention on yourself, and notice how much your love and compassion have grown by giving them away. The more you give away, the more there is. Enjoy your heart full of love and compassion, the warmth of love, the caring of compassion. Enjoy, be one with it. Find your home there. Make it the mind's resting-place

May beings everywhere have love for each other.

A guided contemplation – lovingkindness

May I be free from enmity

Investigate

- what is enmity? (resistance, rejection, dislike, unfriendly feelings towards any living being)
- have we had, or do we now have, any enmity?
- how can we change this into loving-kindness?

May I be free from hurtfulness

Investigate

- what is hurtfulness?
- have we hurt any living being in the past?
- have we had any intention of doing so?
- if so, how can we change that so it won't occur again?

May I be free from troubles of mind and body

Investigate

- what troubles / problems could we have?
- are there any of these troubling us now? In our minds? in our bodies?
- what are their underlying causes? Follow the causes back
- practise letting-go of the disturbance through non-clinging

May I be able to protect my own happiness

Investigate

- what is our own 'happiness'?
- how could we protect it from being disturbed or shattered?

Whatever beings there are, may they be free from enmity

We wish for all other beings the good things we wish for ourselves

Having found out how to be free from enmity for ourselves we now have some ideas about how we could enable the same for others, perhaps by encouraging them to act so as to substitute loving-kindness for enmity in their own minds

Whatever beings there are, may they be free from hurtfulness

Again, if we are harmless, we may be able to generate that feeling in others. Contemplate how to diminish hurtfulness in thoughts, speech and actions and promote harmlessness

Whatever beings there are, may they be free from troubles of mind and body

What troubles of mind and body do others have?

Can we arouse compassion for them? How strongly? Do we really feel with them? How may we increase that compassion?

Whatever beings there are, may they be able to protect their own happiness

- what is 'their own happiness' for other living beings?
- for people who are close to us?
- for people we don't know at all, but have heard about?

- for other living beings who share this planet Earth with us?
- if we have true love and compassion for others, we'll never disturb their happiness. Does this mean never disagreeing with anyone?
- how can we help others to protect their own true happiness?
- how much fellow-feeling of this sort do we really feel?
- how may we increase it?

A guided contemplation - the 4 elements

Let's begin by putting the attention on the breath for a few moments

Feel the element of earth - solidity - in your body. Where the hands rest on the legs; where the legs rest on the floor or the mat; feel the eyelids touching each other; the lips touching; where the buttocks press on the pillow

Now feel the earth element in the cushion itself, pressing against the buttocks. Solidity in the cushion. Follow that feeling of solidity through into the mat, or the floor beneath the cushion. Notice the solidity of the floor - earth element. And now follow that solidity into the walls of this building, and out into the earth itself - earth element in the floor, the walls, and outside

Follow the earth element into a tree outside. Notice its feeling of solidity. Touch it with your hand, and focus on that earth element in the trunk. Follow it through into the branches, and into the leaves. Earth element

Now, flow that earth element back from the leaves of the tree into its branches, down the trunk into the roots, back into the earth - earth element; all the way; focus on the flow of earth element into the walls of the building, into the floor, the mat, the cushion, the legs, buttocks, whole body. Sit, flowing the earth element in and out of the body, noticing the solidity. noticing the continuity

Now, focus on the element of water - the binding element - in your body. In the bloodstream, the saliva, the urine, in the eyes and the mouth. Without the water element, the body would fall apart, disintegrate - as it does after death. Feel the water element throughout the body

Now feel the water element in the cushion itself. It too would fall apart without the element of binding. Each fibre of the cushion, held together by the water element. Follow that feeling of the binding element through into the mat, or the floor beneath the cushion. Focus on the water element in the floor. Again, without water element it would dry out and rot away. And now follow that water element into the walls of this building, and out into the earth itself - water element in the floor, the walls, and outside

Follow the water element into a tree outside. Focus on that water element in the trunk - feel the sap moving. Follow it through into the branches; and into the leaves. Water element. Now follow that water element out into the air, as the leaves breathe, or transpire in to atmosphere. Feel the water element in the atmosphere, as it gathers and flows upwards, forming into clouds; and then; after a time, falling again to the earth, to be soaked up, into the earth, into the roots of the various plants. Water element, binding all things together

Now, flow that water element back from the leaves of the tree into its branches, down the trunk into the roots, back into the earth - water element, all the way; focus on the flow of water element into the walls of the building, into the floor, the

mat, the cushion, the legs, buttocks, whole body. Sit, flowing the water element in and out of the body, noticing the binding nature, noticing the continuity

Now, focus on the element of air - movement - in the body. The movement of the bloodstream, the tingling in the fingertips, the flutter of the eyelids. Feel the digestive process if you can. Its movement goes on all the time - even when we're asleep. Feel the air element - movement - throughout the body

Now feel the air element in the cushion itself. The gross movement as we shift on the cushion; the finer movement of its continual breaking down into smaller and smaller particles. Follow that feeling of the air element through into the mat, or the floor beneath the cushion. Focus on the air element, the constant movement, in the floor. Everything in the universe moves; constantly - a constant dance of atoms - wavicles, of energy. And now follow that air element into the walls of this building, and out into the earth itself - the movement in the floor, the walls; and outside Follow the air element into a tree outside. Focus on that air element in the trunk - the movement of the sap. Follow it through into the branches, and into the leaves. Air element, changing as the leaves move in the breeze - or just because of the warmth of the sun. Now follow that air element out into the air itself. Feel the constant movement of the atmosphere, as it swirls, gathers and flows. Air element, the element of movement

Now, flow air element back from the atmosphere into the leaves of the tree, into its branches, down the trunk into the roots, back into the earth - air element, all the way; focus on the flow of air element into the walls of the building, into the floor, the mat, the cushion, the legs, buttocks, whole body. Sit, flowing the air element in and out of the body, noticing the movement, noticing the continuity.

A guided contemplation - the 5 daily recollections

The Buddha recommended that we recall these 5 facts of our existence every day. They are all well known to us, but we don't like to look them in the face - we pretend that they don't exist; we ignore them. When sickness or death occur, we look on them as a sad thing instead of a fact of life. They are actually just laws of nature.

I am of the nature to decay, I have not got beyond decay

- is this true? If so; have we paid attention to it in our lives?
- is there any kind of resistance to it in our minds?
- would we rather not have it happen? If so, why don't we like this law of nature?

I am of the nature to be diseased. I have not got beyond disease

- is this a true fact?
- have we had sicknesses? might this body have them again?
- what does this tell us about this body, which we are used to calling 'me'?
- does our body really obey our wishes?
- or does it have its own nature and become sick whether we want it to or not?

I am of the nature to die. I have not got beyond death

- this is obviously true. But do we remember that it may happen at any time?
- are we ready for death?
- if not, what's holding us back?
- what are we doing about getting ready so it's not a threat?

All that is mine, dear and delightful, will change and vanish

- look at the past. Has this happened in the past?
- is it happening right now?
- will it happen in the future?

I am the owner of my karma

- do we accept this fact-that we are responsible for all of our thoughts, speech and actions? Not somebody else, human or otherwise?

I am heir to my karma

- each thought, word and action manufactures what will happen in our lives in the future. Recollecting this makes us careful to do only wholesome and useful things

I am born of my karma

- it was our own wish to be alive and to be alive here and now that brought us to the circumstances of this birth. What can we learn from this?

I am related to my karma

- this is actually the closest relationship we'll ever have
- it's as if we're creating ourselves, moment by moment. Do we accept this?

Whatever karma I shall do, wholesome or unwholesome, I shall inherit

- this brings our present actions, thoughts, speech into the limelight. We are making karma almost constantly, and what we 'inherit' is often immediate.

APPENDICES

SOME 'KEYS TO THE DHAMMA'

The Buddha always taught orally, and used numbers so that his listeners could remember more easily. All of the categories listed below are for the practitioner's investigation: the sequence for making best use of the Dhamma is listen, remember, investigate, practise, evaluate.

3 Characteristics of the Universe

- 1 Impermanence (Anicca)
- 2 Unsatisfactoriness (Dukkha)
- 3 Corelessness, Substancelessness, Non-self, Impersonality (Anatta)

These are the 3 characteristics which the student of the Dhamma investigates. A full understanding of them, plus actually experiencing them in various ways and situations, leads ultimately to Nibbana.

3-fold Craving

- 1 For sense pleasures (kama-tanha)
- 2 For becoming (bhava-tanha)
- 3 For non-existence (vibhava-tanha)

All craving falls into these 3 categories.

3 Parts of the Noble Eightfold Path

- 1 Wholesome living (Sila)
- 2 The Path of Calm (Samadhi)
- 3 The Path of Insight (Panna)

Each step of the Noble Eightfold Path falls into one of these 3 categories. All 3 parts are followed concurrently for maximum benefit from the practice.

3 Types of Suffering

- 1 Ordinary suffering (dukkha-dukkhata)
- 2 Unsatisfactoriness of conditioned states (samkhara-dukkhata)
- 3 Suffering caused by change (viparinama-dukkhata)

These 3 are investigated in order to reach a greater understanding of dukkha in one's daily life. There are 3 kinds: 'occasional' - old age, sickness, death; 'frequent' - not getting what we like and getting what we don't like; and 'continuous' - the unsatisfactoriness that is due to the impermanence of even the pleasant things in life: everything arises and ceases.

3 Unwholesome Roots

- 1 Greed
- 2 Hate
- 3 Delusion

We are all born with the 3 wholesome and 3 unwholesome roots. The former can counteract the latter, with use of the 4 supreme efforts.

3 Wholesome Roots

- 1 Generosity
- 2 Lovingkindness
- 3 Wisdom

See above.

4 Elements of all Materiality

- 1 Earth - solidity
- 2 Air - movement
- 3 Fire - temperature
- 4 Water - binding

All material things, including our bodies, consist solely of these 4 elements.

4 Foundations of Mindfulness

- 1 Body
- 2 Feelings
- 3 Mind (mood)
- 4 Mind-objects

These are the objects of mindfulness, which is practised as much as possible in daily life.

4 Roads to Success

- 1 Concentration of intention
- 2 Concentration of energy
- 3 Concentration of consciousness (concentration itself)
- 4 Concentration of investigation

Also known as the '4 pathways to power'. This alternative name indicates that the Buddha considers that success comes from power over oneself, through the practice; not from power over others.

4 Rupa-jhanas (material absorptions)

- 1 Blissful sensations (piti)
- 2 Joy
- 3 Tranquillity (contentment)
- 4 Calm

This sequence, which is the natural path of the meditating mind, and is to be found described by practitioners of all religions, is what the Buddha means by 'concentration', the 6th factor of enlightenment.

4 Supreme Efforts

- 1 Not to allow an unwholesome thought to arise which has not yet arisen
- 2 Not to allow an unwholesome thought to continue which has already arisen
- 3 To make a wholesome thought arise which has not yet arisen
- 4 To make a wholesome thought continue which has already arisen

Making these efforts as often as possible is the first step into purification of the mind. The purer the mind, the easier it is to meditate and the more easily insight arises into the true nature of things.

4 Supreme Emotions (Brahmaviharas)

- 1 Loving-kindness (metta)
- 2 Compassion (karuna)
- 3 Joy with others (mudita)
- 4 Equanimity (uppekha)

Arousing these 4 emotions as often as possible opens the heart centre, and is the second step into purification of the mind. They are the main wholesome emotions.

5 Aggregates (Khandas)

- 1 Body (rupa)
- 2 Consciousness (vinnana)
- 3 Feeling (vedana)
- 4 Perception (sanna)
- 5 Mental formations (sankhara)

All physical and mental phenomena of existence fall into these 5 groups of 'isness'. Materiality or body consists of the 4 elements (see above).

5 Daily Recollections

- 1 I am of the nature to decay. I have not got beyond decay
- 2 I am of the nature to be diseased. I have not got beyond disease
- 3 I am of the nature to die. I have not got beyond death
- 4 All that is mine, dear and delightful, will change and vanish
- 5 I am the owner of my kamma. I am related to my kamma.
I am heir to my kamma. I am born of my kamma. Whatever kamma I shall do, whether wholesome or unwholesome, that I shall inherit.

5 Hindrances

- 1 Sensual desire
- 2 Ill-Will
- 3 Sloth and torpor
- 4 Restlessness and worry
- 5 Sceptical doubt

These are the hindrances inherent in all human beings. They hinder meditation, or concentration. They are counteracted by the 5 meditative factors (see below).

5 Meditative Factors

- 1 Initial application (vitakka - counteracts sloth and torpor)
- 2 Sustained application (vicara - counteracts sceptical doubt)
- 3 Bliss, rapture (piti - counteracts ill-will)
- 4 Happiness (sukkhā - counteracts restlessness and worry)
- 5 One-pointedness (magatta - counteracts desire for sensual gratification)

These 5 arise as part of the first jhana (meditative absorption), and between them counteract all hindrances during concentration. Until the practitioner has mastered first jhana, the 4 supreme emotions may be substituted.

5 Precepts

- 1 To undertake the training to refrain from killing living beings
- 2 To undertake the training to refrain from taking what is not given
- 3 To undertake the training to refrain from sexual misconduct
- 4 To undertake the training to refrain from lying and harsh words
- 5 To undertake the training to refrain from alcohol and drugs

Serious Dhamma practitioners take the 5 precepts. They are the basis for practising wholesome living.

5 Spiritual Faculties

- 1 Faith
- 2 Energy
- 3 Mindfulness
- 4 Concentration
- 5 Wisdom

These are central to the path. When perfected they become the '5 spiritual powers'.

7 Factors of Enlightenment

- 1 Mindfulness
- 2 Investigation into the 3 characteristics
- 3 Energy
- 4 Piti
- 5 Tranquillity
- 6 Concentration
- 7 Equanimity

All these are to be cultivated by s/he who seeks enlightenment-i.e. seeing things as they really are.

Noble 8-fold path

- 1 Right view
- 2 Right thought (intention)
- 3 Right speech
- 4 Right action
- 5 Right livelihood
- 6 Right effort
- 7 Right mindfulness
- 8 Right concentration.

9 stages of decomposition of the body

- 1 A corpse one, two or three days dead, bloated, discoloured, festering
- 2 A corpse eaten by crows, hawks or various other creatures
- 3 A skeleton with flesh and blood, connected by sinews
- 4 A fleshless skeleton smeared with blood, connected by sinews
- 5 A skeleton detached from the flesh and blood, connected by sinews
- 6 Randomly connected bones, scattered in all directions
- 7 The bones whitened, looking like shells
- 8 The bones piled up, a year old
- 9 The bones rotted away to a powder

Contemplating these gives us perspective on our daily troubles and helps us detach from the body.

10 Virtues

- 1 Generosity
- 2 Moral conduct, wholesome living
- 3 Renunciation
- 4 Wisdom
- 5 Energy
- 6 Patience
- 7 Truth
- 8 Determination
- 9 Loving-kindness
- 10 Equanimity

Cultivating these 10 will lead to greater purification of the mind.

10 Fetters

- 1 Personality belief
- 2 Sceptical doubt
- 3 Belief in rites and rituals
- 4 Sense desire
- 5 Ill-will
- 6 Craving for fine-material existence
- 7 Craving for non-material existence
- 8 Conceit [conceiving of self]
- 9 Restlessness
- 10 Ignorance

31 Realms of Existence

- 1 Hell
- 2 Hungry ghost
- 3 Animal
- 4 Titans
- 5 Human
- 6-31 Deva realms (totalling 26 different realms)

All beings exist in one of these realms. The human realm gives the easiest access to enlightenment because of the balance of dukkha, which spurs us on, and sukkha (happiness), which encourages us.

31 parts of the body

- 1-5 Head-hairs, body-hairs, nails, teeth, skin,
- 6-9 Flesh, sinews, bones, bone-marrow,
- 10-14 Kidneys, heart, liver, pleura, spleen,
- 15-18 Lungs, mesentery, bowels, stomach,
- 19-24 Excrement, bile, phlegm, pus, blood, sweat,
- 25-31 Fat, tears, tallow, saliva, snot, synovic fluid, urine.

37 factors of enlightenment

- 1-4 The 4 foundations of mindfulness
- 5-8 The 4 supreme efforts
- 9-12 The 4 roads to success
- 13-22 The 5 spiritual faculties and the 5 spiritual powers
- 23-29 The 7 factors of enlightenment
- 30-37 The noble eightfold path.

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