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Forest Refuge Talks

Introduction

You have to come back to your practice, and then understand it very well, and then observe it very well and then from there, by knowing where you are, by knowing exactly what you are doing, from there you can proceed further. So we don't tell you you have to do this, you have to do that, you have to find by yourself. By taking refuge in the Dhamma, by taking refuge in this general teaching that the Buddha has presented, because we're all different. It is up to you to find out. What is my practice, where am I in my practice, so there is no pressure. You don't need to accomplish anything, you don't need to go anywhere, everything is here. You are here, and then you just come back to yourself.

Because actually the eightfold noble path, described as the Buddha's teaching, what is that? It's life, it is just life. And what is that in relation to us? It is just ourselves. Our self in action. The eightfold noble path is ourselves in action. We speak, we do physical actions, we do a livelihood, we use our mind, we are mindful, we have to make some effort to have all these activities going on, whatever they are, and then we need to also understand to some extent what we are doing. So, this is just the noble eightfold path, that's all, there is nothing of theory that is outside yourself. Yourself, and the relation that you have with the world.

So now, our practice will be just to come back to ourselves and to see where we are. And the first challenge that we will have is to bring some kind of balance. Because we are so active that we get too agitated. Or we are so inactive that we get drowsy and then we fall asleep. So, with these types of extremes that we are having, we cannot see very clearly. So the first thing we have to come to is balance. That means we have to get our internal balance. We have to make our mind very clear. Because the more we are balanced, the more the mind is balanced, the clearer the mind is going to become. And then when the mind is very clear, then also the understanding is very clear. If the mind is not clear, we cannot see very far, we cannot see very deep. So all the time we have to see, when we practice, how am I? Is my mind balanced? How is my practice? Do I put too much effort? Do I put not enough effort? Am I tired? If I am tired, I can sleep, there is no problem. If you are hungry, there is no problem, you need to eat.

So that balance of energy you have to see for yourself. Now it is one month and also there is more independence. We are very lucky we have some monastics with us, so the advantage of a monastic life, now you are all like monastics. So the advantage of that is that there is more space into your life, a little bit less responsibility. It's not that monastics don't have responsibility, but their commitment is a little bit outside of the heavy duty that you find normally in the world. So now we have that possibility and we have to see it as a good opportunity.

About our practice, how do we relate to the world, what is our place, and what is everything? How it is related. The principle of causality will be the main theme of our practice. And also, the procedure is going to be gradual, so we have two things. Causality and then a gradual training.

So since there is a gradual training, then there is a causal understanding. So we will start very easily, and I ask you just to try to see what effect the fact of taking refuge on the Buddha, Dhamma and the Sangha and observing the precepts, what effect these things have on your mind, these things have on your body. To what extent this new commitment that you are making for the retreat just now, how is it affecting my mind? How is it affecting my body? So just observe that and see that there is a change. Last week I was talking with a yogi and she was telling me that when she had any difficulty in her practice or in her life, what she was doing she was remembering the qualities of the Buddha and the Dhamma and the Sangha and then she was taking refuge. And then by taking the refuge, which is something inside of ourselves, there is a change. We kind of switch to another dimension, we start to see things a little bit more clearly, we kind of have a trust,

a commitment, a kind of letting go that gives us the confidence that puts us out of the cloudy waters. Everything calms down, everything comes to be clarified. So just see the difference, and see also how it is in your practice. Because otherwise it's kind of meaningless. Like we repeat these things, but if you don't see to what extent it is effecting your practice, then you may miss something. So, at least a little bit, try to see that.

So now as you see we are getting to the practice very gradually, so you don't need to worry, you need to have confidence and then also you need to be very patient with yourself and just try to be happy with the new conditions you are in. It will take a few days for those who have just arrived, it may take a few days just to adapt and to make yourself comfortable and just to see. And then start with the practice that you have already been doing, and then by understanding more and by discussing also you can see how you can improve. How by understanding what you are doing you can find ways to go over the wall.

But first, like with this image of the bow and the arrow, first we need to hit the wall before we can go over the other wall. If we think oh, no, we are told that actually there are 6 or 7 walls and I can go very far. And if you think you can shoot your arrow and reach the other end just in one shot, you may not succeed. So, just be patient.. You may have just a small bow, but that's enough and it will take you somewhere, and from there you go again a little bit further, and then from there, again a little bit further.

So we talk about the gradual training of the 8 fold noble path, but it can be seen as linear, but also they cannot be separated, so when you are practicing Sila, you have to include your mind which type of intention, what is the quality of your mind when you are doing things with these precepts, when you are doing things with your actions, in your life. what is the quality of your mind. Also how do you see the world? How do you see or understand these things? So these things, that means your actions, verbal, physical, mental, they are related to the mind as well and also they are related to your understanding. So all of that is the 8-fold noble path. It goes on a linear way, that means the more you practice, the deeper you go, the more quality you give to the aspect of Sila in your life, then the deeper your Samadhi will become, and also the deeper your wisdom also is going to improve, and then the deeper your wisdom, the deeper your understanding and the deeper and the more quality you will be able to give to your sila. So, linear development but also it all goes together. So Sila is influencing Panna and Panna is influencing Sila, but Sila is also propulsing yourself towards deeper deeper aspects of understanding and being with your practice.

When we talk about the sign, the nimitta, it can have various meanings in the practice of Samadhi. So the sign itself can be the image, like when you practice some kasina's or the breath, so you have an image and that image is actually a representation of your meditation, that means you are able to get a kind of visual, conceptual image of your meditation theme, and your perception will be able to grasp that sign. So this is a kind of external sign. But another type of sign is the sign of Samma Samadhi. So this sign, the second nimitta represents the quality of your mind. So when the mind is getting more and more concentrated with a good quality of meditation, then you see, you see that the jhana factors, the factors of absorption becomes more intense, so that also means that the quality of your mind becomes much more harmonious. There's a kind of harmony, a kind of togetherness that will bring a much higher quality to the mind, so these jhana factors when they are intensified and also brought to a great deal of quality, then we can say that this is the sign of samadhi. So you will recognise them when you practice, not only you may have lights, or you may have a visual image coming very clearly, but you also see that now I start to have a lot of happiness and now the mind is not distracted, the mind is not interested to sense pleasures, and I'm not angry. So these are signs of Samadhi. So your mind is getting more and more qualitatively closer to samadhi.

First you have to build the momentum, that means you have to build the quality of the mind that is developing the meditation. So when we talk about the metta, then the feelings of metta has to go to beings in particular, but to which extent you need to have the face or the picture very clearly is not so important. But it will come and you will see. The more you see that the quality of metta gets

intensified, then the more you go into it, then also you will notice that the beings become much more clear, because the mind is very clear, so this is the effect you see. So when the object starts to be clear, whatever the meditation object or subject, starts to be more clear in the mind, why is that? It's not the object, it's the subject, it means your mind is getting more clear, less hinderances, that means the mind is not distracted and it's very clear. So when the mind is very clear whatever it wants to perceive comes to be perceived with much more precision. So, the object itself that you are using for your meditation can be a sign to evaluate the quality of your mind. So that means if your object, let's call that a nimitta of example - the meaning is very wide no, but nevertheless let's call that a nimitta, so the more your nimitta was to become clear, that means the clearer the mind is. So if you were to look at the mind you would see my mind is much more clear. And the same thing if you see that the mind is more clear, then you see the quality of your object of your meditation is also very clear. So whatever meditation you are doing this is the principle of relationship with the mind's object and the quality of the mind.

Yes, because when someone is developing samatha then the object of samatha somehow has to be developed, we are training ourself to direct the mind to a specific objects to strengthen the mind, so that is the main orientation. But from time to time we are also looking at the mind. So when we are looking at the mind, that means the mind itself is taking the mind itself as the object. So it's like a training.

So now I am training to take care of these flowers, no, so if I'm able to give a great quality to that and I get so interested in what I am doing, then the quality of my mind also will be very sharp. Then just a few minutes later if I look at something else, the momentum or the intensity will be the same. If I do that and then I look at my mind then I will see OK the mind is very clear, so it's like this. So the more clear the object. So this is what we need to understand so the purpose of Samatha is the training, so now we are training towards trying to hit an object, trying to hit a target. But it's just artificial. So the purpose of that is to understand the mind itself, that's the deal. It's not the fact of being able to absorb yourself for hours and hours is kind of pointless if you don't give that quality, if you don't give that training to understand the process itself.

That's why, to finish the question, we come back to causality. So you are training yourself to get strong, so when you are strong you understand the whole procedure You understand how is my mind. How is my mind related to the object and then also you understand more about the dynamic of the mind itself, how is the mind working when this is happening. So that is the purpose of samadhi, we are artificially practicing in some ways, but that artificial training is in order to strengthen the mind in order to understand the process of the meditation. Not only the meditation but in every aspect of our life, because we understand more and more the mind, how the mind is related to the body and how our mind and body is related to the world, how the world is affecting us, how we are affecting the world. So it's all a question of relationship, a question of dynamic and a question of causality and a question of conditioning. So all is related. So that's why the understanding of relationship in Buddhism is almost endless how you can see relationship and causality. But we can just start little by little.

Ok, where I am now, and what is the reason? But you don't need to ask yourself all the time, OK why? why? why? And otherwise you don't go anywhere. Just see the fact. And also an important aspect of understanding causality is you need to understand the what. Not only the why. Not only the why and the how, but also the what. What are we talking about. So if we are just speculating and theorising, it's useless. So we have to understand now what am I experiencing, what is my mind and then what is the what. So the definition of our experience. If not theoretically, at least experimentally it has to be there. So once we are very much settled in the experience then we can go a little bit further and see the principles of causality in its dynamic.

First our duty is to find balance. If our mind is not clear, if our mind is unbalanced then we cannot see we can not see reality clearly. If we are always investigating what is giving us trouble or what is the deep problem without having that aspect of balanced quality to the mind then the analysis or the understanding is not going to be very deep because we are falling again in the mud. So when

we are in the mud it's difficult to get clean. So first our duty is to say OK, now, we just have enough understanding to bring the mind to a very stable quality of balance, so for that purpose when we are practicing samatha for example, we don't investigate so much. We don't investigate too much, because again, too much analysis is the opposite of samatha. So the purpose of Samatha is to bring a good quality to the mind, and then once that quality is established then we go and do more analysis.

Of course, to come to a balanced state of mind, in order to practice samatha properly we need to understand causality, we need to understand what we are doing, and what we are doing wrong and what we are doing too much or not enough, this is important, but important just enough to give us the motivation and the correct understanding to proceed properly, where we are going, how do we proceed, what is the goal of my meditation, how should I adjust my practice to that goal, am I too much or not enough, and then where.

This we have to see from time to time. But if we are walking somewhere, if we are going somewhere, then all the time you ask where I am, and then you look at your compass and you get your cell phone and you get the map of this and the map of that, then you just don't end up looking where you are and trying to understand something but you don't go anywhere. So, walk and then understand where you are going and how you are doing it and then you do understanding of what is happening and how it is happening and why it will come also.

To see what is the effect of observing the morality, observing the precepts and taking the refuge. So did you notice a difference? Did you feel good about that? Did you have kind of a satisfaction or a kind of happiness a kind of peace that is coming out of that? So today also I spoke with someone and she was telling me that before coming here she was doing a lot of good things and she was helping to provide funds for the nuns and she was very happy just doing that. So why is these things happening? Also someone told me that he is helping the orphans and he is doing good works in the society, and that person is very happy, very stable and very strong. So, is it possible that what we are doing are affecting our mind a lot? Of course! It is. So here we have the effect of morality, the effect of good sila, what it has on our mind. The effect of doing good works, what does it bring to our mind?

So, in the gradual training, this type of happiness is just called the happiness of blamelessness. We don't regret anything, we don't have any remorse, we are just happy. Just because we don't do anything blameworthy, we are not harming anybody so its a kind of happiness that is worth considering. And we are also talking about morality or virtue or things like that. Since we are talking about virtue, you may know that one of the texts in the middle length sayings, the Buddha says we have two types of bodily conducts, two types of verbal conducts, two types of mental conducts and two types of inclination of mind, two types of perception. It goes like this, but the point is it is dividing these two types of conducts into what should be cultivated and what should not be cultivated.

Sometimes, also when we come back, like when we have a busy life you see, like in your daily life and then you come back from work or you come back from having done a lot of things, when you settle into your practice then this is also what you can do, so you can just relax, you can just relax and then if the mind is thinking, the mind is just thinking, and if you are there, you can also just be there. It's a way to calm down and to be back to your home. And the mind is our home.

So how does the Buddha evaluate and judge that classification, how should we ourselves evaluate these types of conducts. So again we see the principle of causality very well, it's obvious there, and the point is that they say in the text that such bodily conduct causes unwholesome states to increase and wholesome states to diminish should not be cultivated. And then the opposite also is true, that such bodily conduct that cause wholesome states to increase and unwholesome states to diminish then they should be cultivated So the same thing with our verbal actions and then also our mental actions and also our perceptions and then inclination of mind etc. etc. So we have to make a distinction and also we have to observe in a way that will bring that type of understanding

of causes and effect. We see from the experience, it is from the experience that we see that these type of actions are bringing good results and these types of other actions don't bring good results.

So, I will give another quote that is the usual description of the senses, this is from the gradual training. So, "he guards the doors of his sense faculties. On seeing a form with the eye do not grasp at its sign and features, since if you were to leave the eye faculty unguarded evil, unwholesome states of consciousness and grief might invade you. Practice the way of its restraint, guard the eye faculty, undertake the restraint of the eye faculty. On hearing a sound with the ear, do not grasp at its signs and features, since if you were to leave the ear faculty unguarded, evil, unwholesome states of covetousness and grief might invade you. Practice the way of its restraint, guard the ear faculty. Undertake the restraint of the ear faculty.

So it goes on like this with the smell and the odor with the nose, then on tasting the flavor with the tongue, on touching a tangible with the body, on cognising a mind object with the mind, so we should not grasp at its signs and features, since if we were to leave the mind faculty unguarded, evil, unwholesome states of covetousness and grief might invade us and we should practice the way of its restraint and guard the mind faculty.

So, is it something very difficult to do? And also to what does it refer? It refers actually to a very general practice. To a very general practice of mindfulness. And this indriya samvara is the guarding of the sense faculty guarded with mindfulness. So what is guarding the doors? Mindfulness itself is guarding the door. But the mindfulness is a very general type of mindfulness. And if we can say, also, it is when we just relax and then we are just here with the sound and then with the nose and we are just here with the sense objects in general, we don't choose and then we give an equal importance to all the senses that are coming into touch with us and we don't interfere. The only thing and the main thing that we should be aware of is that the mind does not get too much influenced with unwholesome tendencies and unwholesome reactions and the mind also should not let these tendencies to proliferate in ourselves. So when we are very attentive, we are very aware in the present moment, what actually is happening? We feel everything, but actually in general just to be aware of the mind itself is a way to protect it.

Actually, if we look at the principle of guarding the sense faculties, we can also see some varieties among the text. And another type of description of the sense faculty is that they compare that with the six animals. So for example, they say that if a person is tied with 6 animals, like lets say the person is tied with a monkey and then with a squirrel and then he's tied with a lizard and then with a deer and then with a dog and then with a monkey, then all of these animals are pulling him in different directions, so he has to follow the monkey or he has to follow the dog and then the squirrel wants to go in the branches in the trees and then the dog wants to go to the rubbish and so he doesn't know how to do. And so the same thing with our mind. We are just pulled with external objects and then we don't know to which sense we should follow.

So the advice here is that in order to be in control of our mind and not to be pulled away in all the directions the mindfulness on the body is what is advised. So, it is just like if you put a post in the ground and then you tie all these animals although they want to go in different directions they will always stay in the same place with the post, they will not be able to go away from the post, so it is the same thing with mindfulness of the body then all of these animals are not going to have control over the mind because you are firmly established in mindfulness of the body. So guarding the sense faculties based on the mindfulness of the body is a good way, it's also a possibility to guard your senses.

It is very interesting to see the different approaches and also the different descriptions that the Buddha is giving in the text. So, just something similar but quit different is told in the story of a monk in the time of the Buddha, the monk was a very very clever monk, very intelligent, and also he was a teacher of many people, but he was not a meditator, he had never meditated, and the Buddha told him that he should try to meditate and he should try to find a meditation teacher. So that monk went to a forest monastery and then he was looking for a teacher so he asked the senior monks if they would be willing to teach him. And then the didn't want to teach him so they referred

to a younger monk. They would say, no no we don't want to teach you, you go to that other monk. And he would go to the other monk and they would send him to another monk. And then like this it would go on. And then, actually no one wanted to teach him, and he did end up with the youngest monk of the monastery, and that monk was a just a novice of seven years old.

So, what the novice told him, he wanted to make sure the monk was sincere enough, he was just wanting to be sure that the monk was willing to follow his instructions, he just told him to jump into the pond, all dressed up, so the monk obeyed, and he just went into the pond with his robes, so when he came back the novice was satisfied, and he thought, well this person is sincere enough, dedicated enough to follow the teaching. So, the teaching that he gave him, and the name of the monk that we are talking about is Potila,

so the teaching that he was given is that again with the animals. And they say that if you want to catch a Lizard, then you follow the Lizard when it goes into the ant hill. And then in the ant-hill you have many doors. So, what you have to do, is you have to close the five doors and keep one door open, and then you are sure to catch the lizard when it will go out. But the point here is that the door is not the body, the door is the mind, so that means you block all the five senses - you don't block, but you don't observe them and then you just keep the door of the mind open. That means you just watch the mind. So that monk was so intelligent that just by watching his mind he ended up attaining arahantship.

So we see that there are many possibilities but in the end we have to see and to understand by observation the dynamic of our own mind. So there are many ways. Another alternative also that we could identify with governing the senses. You may have heard the story of Bahiya, and then the Buddha told him, he just wanted a simple teaching and so the Buddha told him briefly, in the seen just the seen. So when you look at something, you just look. In the heard, just the heard, so when you listen to something you just have the sound, and in the smell, just the smell and in the taste only the taste, and in the touching only the touch. So just be aware actually of the sense impression, all of them, together with the mind, and then with the mind, when there is thinking there is just thinking. So this is also another way of controlling or restraining the sense faculties.

So, by this, we see that controlling the sense faculties, guarding the sense door is an easy way to be with ourself and its also a way to improve our understanding and to develop our mind. And then we can always come back to senses. We can always come back to our senses when we are too much working with samatha or when we are doing a lot of vipassana, sometimes we get tired and we want to do something else, so by just coming to the sense and not doing anything, but by being very aware is a way to have, it's a kind of break, but it's very important to have that type of understanding. So we can call that also general mindfulness practice.

So we can see that indriya samvara as a practice, it has a causal importance, because we see how all the things are affecting our mind, and we see that in the gradual training it is also an aspect of it. So after the practice of morality, after the practice of the precepts, of observing the rules and everything, then we have to guard the sense doors, and then after that we can go in for the development. So the sense door here is mainly in regard to restraint. So we are just aware of the mind in the way that it does not overflow, in the way that it does not get unbalanced. And this also is just the beginning. But if it is done appropriately then also it can go very deep with our practice. So from there there are many other possibilities that we can use for our meditation. . . .

The last thing is that if we have a good understanding of how the things are affecting our mind, and also if we have a good way of understanding and observing the quality of our mind then we can use that as a base, and then that base which brings us a quality of attention, a quality of observation is used just as a way to restrain the mind so that the mind does not go crazy with all kinds of things. But, if we want to pursue the practice in the same direction, with the same approach, that means just dealing with the sense understanding, with the controlling of the sense, with the controlling of the doors, then also we can go very deep with the insight. So instead of

going to a samatha practice for example, if we want to go for development with the sense faculties, then we can see that there are many ways that this can be done. But, still only with the sense faculties.

Like for example if we practice the mindfulness of the breathing, so we are aware of the breath, in out, in out, and then we are just with it again and again, its good if we are doing that then with the help of a specific object we orient our mind to a specific object, so with the help of the object we are guarding somehow the sense faculty because the mind is not running here and there, it is controlled, it is understood also to some extent.

But when the object is not there, when the object is lost, or if we don't have any object what do we do? If we are too tired just to focus on something very specific. Even in the case of vipassana. Of course in the case of samatha then we say, now observe your breath, or observe the kasina, or observe body parts, it can be very tiresome sometimes, because again and again we just do it and observe repeatedly and then the same thing we do with vipassana, we are just observing phenomena as anicca and dukkha and anatta, but still it's a kind of direction for the mind that can bring a kind of tiredness. So if we don't have the peacefulness, the tranquillity of jhanas or deep calm or concentration then we don't know what to do with the mind, so in that case, we just don't do anything, and we just observe the mind. We are just very attentive. So just the fact of being attentive to the mind, or being attentive to the sense door, now there is sound, or now there is touch, or now there is smell, or now I am looking.

For example, when we are looking outside, we don't look necessarily at our breath, we don't look necessarily at our meditation subject, sometimes we are just looking. So, when we are looking at something, do we really look at something? So if we are able to just look when we are looking without commenting, without interpreting, without being lost in other things that the mind is just proliferating, then in the looking, in the seeing there is just the looking, there is just the seeing. So with all the senses we are just aware of the sense itself, the sense door. It is just general, you don't need to feel it, you don't need to experience it on a body level, this is not necessary, you are just aware. You are just aware. So, by doing that you kind of use the sense object to help the mind come back to the present moment.

So when you bring the mind in a very easy way in the present moment, then you are able to observe the mind because the mind is with you. So then at the beginning you just restrain the mind. So that practice in the beginning is just to stop the mind going too much in unwanted directions, but once this is settled, once the mind is settled to a good extent, then the mental clarity that comes out of that can lead you to the practice of vipassana directly. That's why. But, it's very difficult if you don't have another basis, if you don't have something gross like the body. Just to observe the mind as the mind is something very subtle and not everybody can do it. So that's why we have the use normally of meditation subjects that are going to help us stabilise the mind. And once the mind is stabilised then we can look at the mind. But some people just by observing the senses, and then by observing the mind itself, they are able to stabilise the mind and then to look at the nature of the mind.

So this also can be done in continuity when we are walking, or when we are outside or when we are actually not meditating, then this can be a kind of meditation. But just to be acquainted, just not to lose touch of oneself, not to lose touch with our own mind and then that type of affinity that we have with our mind brings us much more easily to the meditation because the mind is never somebody foreign to us, it is our friend, this is how we make the mind our friend. This is how we are able to keep the mind close to us. And if the mind is our friend then it is very easy to develop in the way that we want to develop like when we are doing specific meditation subjects.

So yesterday the main point that I tried to convey was how do we guard the sense faculties. Since guarding the sense doors is part of the gradual training, so how is it fitting in our practice, and how is that practice different than other processes that we come across when we are practicing more precise meditation like samatha or vipassana. What is the difference? So yesterday there were 4

similes that I gave. So the first simile that was given was about when there is a sight or a form, so a visual object, then we see that the mind does not go after it by way of greed hatred. So if we see something, we don't get greedy, we don't get covetous, or we don't develop a kind of aversion type of mind. So we have to know the mind to some extent.

But, before I go on with the examples, maybe we should understand how consciousness is happening. So for consciousness to happen three things need to be there, so we need the senses, the sense object - so that means that for the eye consciousness to occur we need the visual object, we need the eye, the sense faculty and then we need the consciousness of it, so when these three things come together this is called the contact. So with the ear it is the same thing we have the sound, we have the ear sensitivity and we have ear consciousness, and the three of them put together is what is called contact, phassa. So the same thing with these other sense faculties, that means the nose, the smell and the smell consciousness, the taste, the object of taste and the consciousness of the taste, and also with the body, we have the body sensitivity, and then all the objects that are coming into contact with our body and then the body consciousness. So three things are happening with the six sense doors, if we are adding also the mind. So the mind also is a sense door, so for the mind consciousness to arise we need the mind object, we need consciousness itself and then that's enough. So we need the mind base, the mind object and then the consciousness of it. So, this is the principle for consciousness to arise.

So then we go back to the first example which is given in general which is if there is a sight, then you just have the sight, there is no greed or hatred that is coming together with that, that means you don't follow the object with your mind, you just remain with the impact. And then the same thing with the other four physical senses and the same thing with the mind. So that means if there is thinking, if you have an object on your mind, you are just aware that now there is thinking, or just now there is a mental object that is occurring with the mind, you don't feed it, but you are very much aware of what is happening. So because of that awareness there is also the possibility to make a discrimination.

It's like if you are watching a child, so as long as you are watching that child, the child will be well behaved. But if you don't watch the child, he just goes on and he's not there any more and then he will go to make all kinds of thing that might not be suitable. So our mind is the same. When we don't watch the impact, when we don't watch the sense doors, when we don't guard the sense doors, then the mind is just distracted and then goes here and then goes there and then fancies about all kinds of things and then we get lost. We just lose the mental togetherness because the mind just goes everywhere.

So the first example is just that when there is the object themselves then you just see that nothing unskillful is entering your mind. I like to give a simile for that, it is like when you play hockey, you have the goaler, and then the goaler is there and he is always watching for the puck. So the puck is always shot here and there and then tuk and then tuk tuk tuk. So the goal of the goaler is not to analyse anything, he is just there and then phh phh chh! His job is to stop the puck getting inside the goal. So the goal actually is our mind, and we are aware of the objects very much, but we don't let the false interpretations of objects that are going to make unskillful states of mind arise, so that means that we are very careful about that. So it's just a general kind of awareness, a general kind of mindfulness we could say with a certain type of discrimination.

So with this example we can see the example I gave at the end, with the seen only the seen, with the heard only the heard, etc. that means you just see, you just hear, you just feel the touch, it is as simple as that, the mind is not lost into something else, into false interpretation and all kinds of stories, no commentary.

So another way to keep guarding the sense faculties was like you tied the six animals, so you have the sense animals and they all want to pull you in this direction and then in that direction, so the idea is that if you fix a post then the animals are not going to go away, but they are going to stay around the post. And the post is actually the body itself.

So now I come back to say what is the difference with these two similes. In the first example that I just gave about the goaler, that you just stop the senses, is that the mind is aware of the objects themselves, that's all, in a very general way, you don't need to be aware of the senses, you're just aware that there's a sound, you're just aware that there's a touch, you are just aware that there's a flavour, you don't need to be aware of the body senses of the ear and everything, you are just aware of one object, and then the fact of being aware of that sense object will also make you aware of how your mind is processing it. So just by being aware of the senses.

But with the simile of the post and the animals, you are not necessarily aware of the objects towards which the animals are pulling you, but you are aware of the body itself. So we have what is making consciousness to arise, so we have the senses and the objects, the six objects and the consciousness. So the first simile you are aware of the object, so the mind is aware of the object and then by keeping your attention on these objects you stop the mind from wandering in useless places, in harmful places.

But when you are aware of the body itself, instead of being aware of the objects, then the mind also by being aware of the body itself is aware somehow of the sense doors that are related to the body. So the fact of having the mind directed towards the body stops it from going in a useless direction.

And then the third method that I also gave is that if someone wants to catch an Lizard that has gone into an ant-hill then he should close the five holes and then only watch one hole, and then you close the 5 sense doors and then you are aware, you put your attention on the mind door and then there you are able to catch the mind. So again we have the sense faculties, like the body sensitivity of these sense faculties, we have the sense object and then you have the mind. So we have seen in the first simile that you give attention to the objects and then the mind is guarded because you are very much aware of the objects themselves, so the mind does not get distracted. And then in the second simile you are aware of the body. So being aware of the body then you are very much aware of the mind, because the mind has a kind of reference, the mind is being occupied with the body itself, and so when there is a sense impact, because the mind is very attentive towards the body it will not go outside and run towards these objects and so it will protect the mind because the mindfulness of the body is a way to keep the mind stable without being distracted.

But with the third method of the lizard going into the anthill, then instead of watching the objects, instead of watching the body senses you are watching the mind door, you are watching the mind itself. So this is a little bit more difficult but the principle is the same, that means you don't care about the body, you don't care about the objects, but you just care about the mind. So you see how the mind is processing all these things, and then you are very attentive just to the mental happening. So the fact of being attentive to the mental dynamic then you are also able to guard the mind against going into useless field of proliferation, of unskillful states of mind.

So, then the question is if we practice these methods, shall we decide to use one of them at a time and stay with it for a certain time in order to become skilful, or can they be used alternately according to conditions, according to mind states, whenever it seems good to use them.

So, the point is that we are actually guarding the mind itself, so whatever method is fit for you to be aware that the mind is not sliding into unskillful states of mind, this is the good method. But also the approach that we have in the aspect of guarding the sense door is that the awareness is very general, so you don't look specifically at the sense doors, you don't go in detail and analyse the objects, you are just aware of the quality of mind and then the impact that these sense objects are having on the mind. Just in order to protect your mind from going astray.

So, another question is related to the practice of the four element meditation that can be done. Is that the four element meditation is actually a meditation on the physical phenomena on the

physical aspects of phenomena and then we start with the body itself. So the four element meditation is starting with the body, but it's the type of meditation that is classified into samatha. So when you start to do that it is used for calming the mind, but it will not lead you to really high states of samadhi. It can lead you to quite a good state of concentration, but you will not be able to reach samadhi, to reach jhana, absorption with this practice of four element meditation.

But the four element meditation actually is more specific, so you can use it to guard the senses, but the purpose is a little bit deeper than that. So, you are guarding the sense doors but you are doing something else. That means you orient your mind more specifically in the field of a meditation topic. That means you are aware of the body and then you constantly direct your attention into the physical elements that are the constituent of the body. But it's not conceptual. You can use some names to describe the experience, but the meditation itself is based on the experience of these elements, so when this meditation is being taught or when you learn it, first you have to know the body parts, or you have to know that meditation is related to the body, so the attention is going to be on the body, but when you are doing that, then you go with the experience of the characteristics of these elements.

So, the four elements are the air, the earth the fire and the water. So, you can start with any one of them and when one element is very clear then the other elements also are going to be very clear, so you start also with the characteristics of these elements and these characteristics are known through experience, that means what you are feeling, what you are sensing in your body, this can be classified as physical elements, but they are understood as the characteristics. For example if there is heat, so now you are feeling very hot for example, then the heat that you are experiencing is one of the characteristics of the four elements, if you feel cold, then the quality of the cold is also one characteristic of the four elements. If you know the fluidity of your saliva or the fluidity of the blood that is going in your body then this is the water element. And when you are breathing in and breathing out, then that quality of pushing, you see you are just pushing, so the movement that is being created in the body by pushing the element here and there, this is the air element. Like the heart beat actually is the air element that is pushing the blood through the body, but the blood, what is it, the blood is mostly the water element. And then the heaviness, and the roughness, the lightness, this is the earth element. So when we practice the meditation on the four elements then the mind is always directing itself towards what is being experienced in the body. Then by directing the mind again and again on the characteristics that are experienced inside the body, then with that you build up samadhi, you build up concentration. Then with the intensity that has been developed by that type of orientation of the mind towards the object then you start to see the object in a different way.

That's why the four element meditation at the beginning is used mostly to calm the mind and it's also classified in one of the forty meditation objects that the commentaries are explaining, and then these are classified as a samatha meditation object, but because the object itself is not a concept, it has its own characteristic, so because of that, that meditation object is also leading you to the practice of vipassana. So first you are using the four element meditation just to build up your concentration, just to bring your mind to a very balanced and also very good quality of mind and then with the same object that has been helpful to build up your samadhi you start to perceive your object in a different way, that is the object is the four elements in the body and you start to perceive the body just as four elements and then that perception of the body as the four elements is the entry toward vipassana and also the four element meditation is what has somehow to be done when you are starting vipassana and when you start to differentiate with the mental phenomena and the physical phenomena because in the vipassana that's all we have to observe, we have to observe the mind and we have to observe the physical phenomena, so when we are starting normally we start with the physical phenomena and we see them as the four elements, and when this is clear then the mind is also being seen in a deeper way, by way of element also.

So, for example the mahasi method if you are very technical and you want to classify and you want to understand how the mahasi sayadaw will explain his method in regard to the orthodox theravada meditation. So when he explains his method he says that now the yogis are observing the rising

and falling of the abdomen, but actually he says, and this is what it is, you are observing the air element. So the rising and falling of the abdomen is nothing but the meditation on the four elements, but is just on one element. So if you do that method systematically then the air element will become very clear and then from the air element the other elements are going to be perceived. But he does not explain that so much. And then he emphasise just you are seeing the rising and falling of the abdomen. But if you want to understand and also if you want to do it completely then it relates to the four element meditation.

So when you are watching the rising and falling of the abdomen you can use that to calm the mind and also you can use that as an investigation of physical phenomena.

So now another question is that I describe the difference between concentration practice and what I call doing nothing, or just watching the mind. You said that these practices could stabilise us for vipassana. Could you explain practically the difference between watching, noticing when x arise in the mind and vipassana.

Again it is a distance of distance it is a question of having psychological distance with the object. So when you are guarding the door of the senses then it is a very general type of awareness. So you don't go into the detail. You either notice very carefully, you orient your attention to any type of sense objects, then you are just aware. You don't give more importance to one sense door or to one sense object rather than another, you are just very general. So you listen to the sound, you are aware of the touch and you are aware of this you are aware of that in a very general way that is going to give you the possibility to guard the mind so that the mind does not get invaded. So this I call the psychological distance towards the object. There is no investigation and there is not specific directing of the mind towards an object like the body for example. That's why if we do that, we can do that with our practice when we just settle in the sitting meditation or when we are standing or when we want to just start the meditation, then we can just relax and then we are just in the present moment, we are just aware of whatever sense object is presenting to the mind, we don't choose.

But actually what makes the difference is you give a kind of quality to the mind to the extent that you are able to protect the mind from being invaded. So just being in the present moment with a general awareness this can be called guarding the sense door.

But when you want to practice samatha meditation, then the object towards which you are going to direct the mind has to be more stable. That means you purposely again and again direct your mind towards an object. Like if you are practicing anapana, then of course the fact of practicing and directing your mind again and again towards the breath is going to guard the mind. But the mind is closer to the object and it is purposely hitting again and again the object so that you can develop momentum, you can develop samadhi. So you are just watching the breath and if you want to succeed like that then again and again you are not distracted with the senses, you are not distracted with what is happening in the body you are just watching the breath, then incoming breath, then the outgoing breath, the incoming breath, then the outgoing breath, you don't give so much importance to the mind because you are training your mind to develop concentration that means you try to hit the target again and again. And then this is going to build up samadhi which can bring you a high state of concentration.

So not only the breath, but all the meditation subjects that are related to samatha have the same principles, so if you are doing the four element meditation it's the same thing, again and again you are aware of the characteristic of pushing and then the characteristic of supporting and then the hardness and again and again you are directing your mind towards your object of observation which is the four element seen in the body.

But with the practice of samatha then the samadhi that you are developing is actually going so close to the object that at a certain point the mind can enter into the object with absorption, or the object becomes so close to the mind that the object just covers the mind altogether and this is the

time of absorption. So like anapanasati the mind gets absorbed into the nimitta or the mind gets absorbed into the breath itself which is perceived mentally. And then with the other types of meditation subject it is the same, even you practice metta then the mind gets absorbed within the object to which you train your mind to be aware. So the psychological distance between the mind and the object does not exist any more, the mind is completely absorbed in the object.

But, with the practice of vipassana, the mind does not get absorbed in the object but nevertheless the mind is very close to the object.

So, I when you are guarding the sense you are just aware of this object and then this object and then you are aware that the mind does not get lost, the mind does not get unbalanced, that's all, so it's all everywhere.

But, when you are specifically orienting your mind towards an object of concentration, then you have the vitakka and the vicara, that means that the initial application of the mind and then the sustained continuous application of the mind. So we could say that the purpose of the function of the applied vitakka and then the vicara is just to hold the towel, so one initial application of the mind would be like this, so you take the towel and then you know this is my object I am looking on, and the other sustained application of the mind would also take the object with samatha then the mind also has to hold the object with vitakka and vicara.

But, then you look at the object, you look at the object, but so much you get absorbed like this - (towel over face).

But, with the practice of vipassana you are still looking at the object but at a certain distance, but it's not far away. Like if you practice just restraining or guarding the senses then you don't need so much holding of the object. So the difference between guarding the senses and then between and exercise of samatha and between an exercise of vipassana is just the psychological distance that you will have towards the object.

Because also when we practice vipassana, the objects of the mind have to be very clear - you have to know what you are looking at, and then you have to be able to hold the object and see the characteristics. So, first you have to hold the object very carefully and for that purpose you need the vitakka and then you need the vicara. So all the time when you are practicing vipassana you look at the object like this and then like this and then like this and then like that, so this is the investigating mind that is used with the insight.

So, that's why when you start your meditation and when you are just relaxing and then you just calm down the mind and you stay in the present moment, then there is no such investigation either with the samatha or either with the vipassana it is just aware of the present moment but with some kind of quality.

Yes, but if you jump from one object to another object and you don't investigate the object to which you are looking then it's not enough. So if you are looking at the object which is predominant but you are looking it and you see what the object really is, not just this object and then this object, then you are practicing vipassana. That's why if you start with guarding the sense door, then if you have a lot of quality with that attention eventually you are going to understand these three things. That's why if you start properly with any of these 3-4 methods that I said, the animals, or watching the sense objects or watching the mind, if you do it very carefully you will come to see the three components of the experience. That means you are watching the object very carefully, but at a certain point you will see that these objects are related to the sense doors, and these sense doors are actually the body process, so the relation of the body sensitivity towards the objects that are being contacted is understood, so you understand the object, you understand the sense doors and then you understand also the mind, so the dynamic of these three have to be understood when you practice vipassana.

So starting with any of them, then you will realise that the process of experience is conditioned by these three things. So that means the attention is so careful that you are seeing the whole component of the experience not only a general type of awareness. So that's why if you practice whatever sensation is predominant you observe it, if you observe it properly then you will see that actually the experience is based on an object, like a tactile contact and also it is based on a body sensitivity, if it is a physical experience and also you will see that the experience of it is the consciousness that is there, because you put your attention there, then the consciousness is there and then from these three the aspect of contact is arising and then altogether the other mental factors.

So that's why the careful observation on whatever experience you have that is predominant if you do it properly then that is also vipassana, but if you do it very generally and then you are just controlling the sense doors, because you are just aware of the sense, this is predominant and then this is predominant and then you are just jumping from one sense to another sense and this is not enough of an investigation because before we understand with insight the phenomena, the phenomena themselves they have to be clearly understood, they have to be clearly distinguished, then after that we can see the characteristics of anicca and all that but before the specific characteristics of this experience has to be clearly delimited.

That's why also I say that the place of guarding the sense like this can be a place of resting and it can be a state of just having a break when you are doing a lot of vipassana or a lot of samatha. Because with the samatha or the vipassana then always you are holding your object, either you are getting absorbed in it, or you use your mind to analyse it here and there, so sometimes you get tired by doing that. So when you get tired, then you take a break and then you are just aware of the present moment, you are aware of the quality of your mind or you are aware of the sense objects, or you can also be aware of your physical position but without deepening your analysis of what is happening. So in that way it's a way to relax and it's also a way just to keep on the right track.

Also the advantage that we see in that, is that if you don't have the alternative, that means that if you just think that meditation is just getting very absorbed in the object then when you lose the object of your concentration then you are lost, and then your mind is just running here and there and you have no control. So if you do it step by step, once you are higher with samatha or with vipassana, when you are able to really have hold of your object very carefully then it's fine, but when you lose that type of control if you don't know that you can also just remain in a skilful mental state without forcing so much, then it is very useful if you know how to do it. It is not very difficult. But if you know the difference then it is very useful.

So there is also a question about "does celibacy speed up the process of awakening, if not, then why did the Buddha and monastics engage in this practice."

So, of course for some people it can speed up the process of awakening, because you are not distracted, you are not caught up in things that need to be bypassed. So it is important. The Buddha's teaching does not deny sense pleasure, but it says that sense pleasure needs to be understood, so we need to see the gratification and we need to see the danger that is in sense pleasure, so we have to come to understand the escape from the knots we are forming with these sense pleasures. So for that reason celibacy is a way to understand something more of the limits that sense pleasures are giving to you. But it has to be something that comes naturally.

So the first step is just the precepts and then the second step is guarding the sense doors.

But if you take some other description of that then not only they mention the training but they mention the advantage we have by doing these things. So the advantage we have by doing virtuous behavior is peace of mind, like a type of happiness that is a happiness of a consciousness free from blame or remorse, because when we aren't doing anything harmful then we get a kind of innocent type of mind. So this is just from observing the precepts, then we remember, today I did

nothing wrong, I didn't harm anyone, and so if you do that regularly you get a type of happiness that's a kind of blameless type of happiness.

But if you go further and train your mind by restraining the senses then another type of happiness that is still more subtle and it's called the taintless happiness. That means you protect your mind from being invaded by unskillful mental states and so that brings more subtle happiness and it's the happiness that you have more clarity in your mind.

So after that the training goes with being moderate in eating and reflecting wisely you should take food neither for amusement or intoxication or for physical beauty and attractiveness etc. Just for the continuance of this body for ending discomfort and for assisting the body in the holy life. Considering that by terminating old feelings not arising new feelings I shall be healthy.

So, see, we eat food for health. I shall be healthy and blameless and shall live in comfort. So, we should never be afraid to eat, and we should eat to be healthy and then to live in comfort. And not only that, but by reflecting wisely, what is the meaning there? It means the reflection, what is the reflection, the reflection is when you are able to look at something and you are able to consider what is its place in a specific context. That means you are reflecting the contextual or the purpose of that specific activity.

So, by reflecting on what you are doing, not only eating, but on everything that you are doing, you will be able to put in perspective the reason for which we are doing activities. So you are eating to be healthy, but that means eating is not the end. We are not living for eating, we are eating for living. And what is the purpose of actions? We have to think, we have to think properly and also we have to develop our mind. So the reflection while doing anything is going to bring us a perspective that will help us understand the purpose of the action itself. So we see that while eating.

Then the following training is then they say that you should be devoted to wakefulness. And the description is that during the day while walking back and forth and sitting you purify your mind of obstructive states in the first watch of the night while walking back and forth and sitting of obstructive states and then etc. all the time, day and night it doesn't mean that you are necessarily practicing meditation it means you are aware of your mind. We are aware of our mind, and if we see that actually we are thinking of something that is a bit nasty, that's not going to be very profitable, we don't accept it, but before trying to reject it, we also have to understand it, so by observing it properly we see that it's not going to serve our purpose, and then we are training the mind like this. And so we have to be very aware of our mental patterns and just try to make sense of what is happening there in that mind. And so this is called devoted to wakefulness.

And then the next step, is one you are devoted to wakefulness, the next step here is come and be possessed of mindfulness and full awareness, so this is the name for sati and sampajanna. Act in full awareness when going forward and returning, when going ahead and looking away, when flexing and extending your limbs, when wearing your robes and carrying your outer robe and bowl, when eating, drinking, consuming food and tasting, when defecating and urinating, when walking, standing, sitting, falling asleep, waking up, talking and keeping silence.

So, here we have another very important practice and it's called Sati Sampajanna it's the practice of mindfulness and clear understanding. Again with all these descriptions I mentioned about the gradual training. But also the meaning is that we have levels of practice. And the practice of mindfulness and clear comprehension has also gradual aspects. The first aspect is that you are aware, you are very mindful of what you are doing. This is mindfulness. But the point is that mindfulness itself is not complete if it does not have perspective. That means the perspective of the purpose, that means why am I mindful of the present moment, what is my purpose, so that perspective is called samma ditthi, it's an aspect of wisdom, but here it's translated as sampajanna, so sampajanna is also related to wisdom. So pajanati is like panna, and panna is a synonym for samma ditthi, so the samma ditthi is a perspective and panna also is a perspective so with

mindfulness we need to get that perspective, we need to get that understanding of the purpose of what we are doing. We need to have the understanding of the purpose of what we are doing, how we are doing, the suitability of what we are doing physically here it is talking about the physical action so when we are doing, we describe a monk or a nun are using the robe or the bowl, and now you go also with your bowl, so when you take your bowl, you have to have clear understanding, and when you put your robe or your cloth you have to have full understanding. And that means you have to have full understanding of the action itself and then it's purpose, it means your not just blank in the present moment not knowing where you are, not knowing where you are going, so to explain a little bit the relationship that it could have with guarding the senses. Like you remember when I said about guarding the senses on the of the method, one of the description in the seen only the seen. Or here they say when you see something you see that the mind is not getting invaded by unskillful states. But when it is described in the seen, only the seen, in the heard only the heard, in the touched only the touched, then it's like if you take it just like this, then you think, oh I'm going nuts, everything is just blank, so then you have no purpose. But the idea of guarding the sense doors is just to protect your mind, it's just to see that your mind does not get invaded, it doesn't mean that you are not to think. It doesn't mean that you are not to do things and just to be attentive and mindful and aware in the present moment, it just means that that awareness which is also a type of mindfulness, it's also guarding the senses needs mindfulness, so that type of mindfulness has as its role, just to guard the mind. But here the type of mindfulness and the full awareness or clear understanding has as it's purpose to bring the activity into perspective. That means the physical activity has to be understood. It doesn't mean that all the time you have to reflect, but it means that at least you have to know what you are doing and where you are going, why you are doing something and the way that you are doing it is it correct or is it incorrect, and eventually also that type of clear understanding has to be applied to the mind.

Here the description is just with physical activity, but also it has to be applied with the mind. That means when you are doing something, what is the mind doing? So what you are feeding the mind with, we have to be very aware of that. So when we include also in this aspect of mindfulness and full awareness this aspect of meditation, then we see that the mind also has to be knowledgeable about what it is doing.

Start talk 5

So today we will continue just a survey of what is the meaning and how can we make sense of our structure of what we have called the gradual training that we see in the Buddha's teaching, so again we will start from the beginning. Just remembering that already we have covered basic aspects of Sila, then of guarding the sense doors, then of clear comprehension also we have seen a little bit, and today we will look a little bit about the hinderances.

So again you may think, oh the hinderances! I mean so many people talk about it, you have so many books about it, and every time you come to meditation you hear about the hinderances, so it's kind of boring, again. But I found, sometimes, before, that boredom itself is a hinderance. So, how we get bored? Because we lack of interest. And this should not happen so often, actually this should not happen at all if we are really interested in what we are doing. Even if we are doing nothing at all we should be interested, because the interest is not only with what we do, but with how we do it. That means since life is just action, this involves also mental action, so even if we are not doing anything, we are doing something, the mind is going on. So if you are really interested to learn about yourself, to learn about life, you also have to look and see how the mind is processing life, how boredom is arising, why do we get bored? Because we want something exciting and all life we are looking for something exciting, and we just want to be fed with a kind of stimulation that keeps us interested. But the interest, if it's only by getting something from outside will be lacking some deeper values. And this is why we are practicing meditation because we learn a little bit about our mind, and we learn not only about it, but we learn about the importance of knowing oneself, of knowing our own mind, how it works.

So we have seen also that hinderance are actually the first wall, it is the mountain also that obstructs us from seeing reality more clearly. And these hinderances and also how to abandon them and how to get rid of them it has to come before the actual practice of samatha meditation as real samatha and also as really vipassana. Most the suttas say the person gets the sila correct in many ways, and then the person deals with the hinderances and then later on then either it is samatha, and then also if the person is going with the vipassana approach then it is the satipatthana.

One point I will remind you again and again because it is very important and this is the aspect of observation. So, whenever we want to understand something we have to observe it very carefully. So in respect of observation we see that everywhere as in science, everything is based on adequate observation.

Notes from Talk 6

One of them is the hydropower. So the principle is that the water goes into the Turbine, so when we were there we saw the turbine and then you see these huge rivers and then they canalise the river and it's just a very strong current, it's a torrent, it's very steep down so when it comes down there it's very powerful and the turbines are so big and so strong that it can generate electricity that they are able to send to the places that they needed and also they are able to store it with all kinds of things.

So, again we have the human mind observing nature and then understanding nature, and eventually controlling nature in order to achieve its aim.

So, in the Buddhist teaching is it that we just let the things go? That we just take refuge in the Dhamma and then we don't do anything? The Dhamma is a principle of nature, so what do we have to do? We have to do according to specific purposes and we have to do according to specific aims that we have to decide for ourselves. So, according to what we are aiming at we can find ways to achieve it properly. So in Buddhism the aim is peace of mind, or nibbana or happiness, it's a kind of a deeper aspect of the mind where there is more wisdom. And how is that done? It needs a proper understanding of phenomena and that means a proper observation of phenomena which means the quality of the observation is going to affect the result of it. So since we are observing the phenomena with our mind the quality of our mind will greatly influence the result. So, for that reason, control of the mind, or the aspect of samadhi seen with the meditation practices is very important.

So it is just observation, it is just based on observation. So if we start truly from the beginning in the texts that you may know, MN 20 - the Boddhisatva before he became enlightened, he is just meditating by himself and is trying to figure out what the story is all about and then he was looking at his own thinking. And by observation he was able to distinguish between two types of thoughts - so the thoughts of ill will and then cruelty and then sense desire, sensual thoughts - and then the opposite, that means thoughts of renunciation, good will and non-cruelty. So he decided to control his thoughts and then to make a division.

So what was the division all about, it was according to his aim. So first he had a purpose, and then he thought what should be done to achieve the purpose. So he thought, ok now, what shall I do. At first there is a distinction of phenomena and then the understanding is for aim and purpose and then the action or the adjustment is according to what is aimed at. So the aim is that first of all the observation brought him to the conclusion that when he has thoughts of sensual desire and thoughts of ill-will and thoughts of cruelty, but that these thoughts led to his own affliction and to others affliction and to the affliction of both, obstructs wisdom, causes difficulties and leads away from nibbana. But when he considered that this leads to his own affliction then these subsided in him. When he considered that this leads to others affliction then they subsided in him, and then when he considered that this leads to the affliction of both they subsided in him. When he

considered that this obstructs wisdom and causes difficulty and leads away from nibbana they subsided in him.

So after consideration he came to a conclusion and then he was able to divide them and not to allow the things that really wasn't fulfilling his purpose by his own discrimination by his own understanding, but mostly by considering cause and effect - so he was considering a causal relationship. So by his understanding of cause and effect he was OK, this is what I want and I need to put these things to achieve my aim.

So, when he was using his thinking he was thinking OK now there is no problem, I can think of peaceful things and I can think about non-cruelty, so he can think about all the things that are very positive and very helpful for himself and also that are very helpful and very positive for other people. But at a certain point he was just a bit fed up with it, and he said 'if I think and ponder upon this thought even for a night, even for a day, even for a night and day, I see nothing to fear from it. But with excessive thinking and pondering I might tire my body, and when the body is tired the mind becomes disturbed and when the mind becomes disturbed it is far from concentration. So his aim was to get concentration.

So I steadied my mind internally, quieted it, brought it to singleness and concentrated it, why is that, so that my mind should not be disturbed. He was also concluding 'whatever a person frequently thinks and ponders upon that will become the inclination of his mind. If he frequently thinks and ponders upon thoughts of renunciation, he has abandoned the thoughts of sensual desire to cultivate the thoughts of renunciation and then his mind inclines to thoughts of renunciation. Etc. with regard to thoughts of non ill-will and then non-cruelty. And then he is giving a simile, and then after that his mind became so peaceful that tireless energy was aroused in him and unrelenting mindfulness was established, his body was tranquil and untroubled, his mind concentrated and unified, and then from there you know the sequence of the jhanas.

So the jhanas that were achieved by him was by complete understanding of the dynamic of the mind and then also by some kind of effort, he had to put in some kind of effort and he had to adjust the effort according to various skilful ways or means.

So the whole practice is not only concentration, but the concentration of the mind, that means the orienting of the mind towards the whole path of the practice. And if also we are looking at the dynamic of how the stilling of the thoughts, and also first orienting the thoughts in a specific direction led him to the practice or the achievement of jhana we could say it may be similar to the hydro-electric power principle, that means our thoughts are just a river, and if we know how to drive the river in the appropriate direction and also put the mechanism to tap the energy of the flow of the water then we can get a kind of electricity and why not?

Like you could say, oh well this guy is not even 100 watts, and this one is 200 watts and then this one is not even 40 watts, what is that, is there kind of some sort of brightness in our mind, is there some kind of luminosity. So they say also, like if you know, when the Buddha was preaching to his first disciples so then they say about Kondanna one of the disciples of the Buddha who was listening to the discourse of the Buddha, I think he was the first to get the sotapanna, but anyway, they were talking about him and then they say, ok now, Kondanna has realised the truth, but the way the described it is Cakkhum udapadi, Panna udapadi, and the way the described it is that the eye of wisdom is opened for him and also the light of wisdom is opened for him.

So that means that when the mind is very pure, we are talking about the tool, the tool of observation. When the mind is very pure then the phenomena that are being observed are seen in great detail. So the purity of the mind, and also the quality of discrimination and correct seeing and distinguishing phenomena themselves relate to wisdom. But to wisdom and concentration, both of them are very important.

So, if we are building up, or trying clean or purify the tools of our observation, could we say also by repetition, or how to generate the electricity, how to make such a momentum in the flow of the river that electricity is going to be produced out of the concentration of the water.

So, I think there is a kind of simile if we look the way the meditation subjects have been explained. So if we take anapanasati, so when the mind is settled, and then you say, Ok now I am going to develop. Of course we see that the mind has to be restrained sometimes, we have to protect, we have to guard the mind and be very mindful, understanding the fact that if the mind is not guarded then we allow unskillful things in our mind. So when the mind is guarded, then we go for development, then we have chosen a meditation topic, which is for example anapana, then again and again you just repeat the same type of observation on the same breath, in breath, out breath, in breath, out breath, so this is building kind of a momentum for the mind, because the mind is not distracted by other things and then it is also building a kind of intensity that will make the mind very luminous and also make the mind very clear and also you can reach states of mind that are called the jhanas, absorption with that intensity, but because of the repetition you are giving to the meditation subject.

This is for anapana sati, but also we see the same thing for the four element meditation. Those who are doing the meditation on the 4 elements it is the same thing, you repeat the characteristics, and all the time the mind is directing itself towards the observation of the elements and then this is building up a kind of momentum that will also strengthen the mind, and also with the strength of the mind, the object which is observed will also start to be seen differently. That means that the four elements are also going to be seen differently than what we think or what we just conceptualise of what they are.

And the same thing with the practice of metta meditation. As you know, most of you, when you are practicing metta then you start with one person that you love very much and then a feeling arises, and then you send the metta to another person and then another person, and then you feel this is great, if my life was full of love like that, this would be really great - and then you do it then from one person then you just end up having a very big mind but from the repetition, because you repeat constantly, because you incline your mind towards that object of meditation. And that also has its own qualities of metta, but also it is affecting the mind by way of strengthening the mind and purifying the mind for the reason that the object is very skilful, very good and also because the mind is not distracted by other things.

If you don't repeat it, that means if you don't incline your mind again and again on the practice of metta meditation, then you will not be able to reach deeper aspects of absorption, you will just have a very lovely character and your mind also will be very peaceful but the samadhi will not be uplifted up to the level of the jhana. But if you repeat again and again and you know how to balance the mind, then the jhana can occur.

But all of that is very fun - you just play with electricity and then you play with your flowers and you play with nature and you make it the way you like it, that's great. But what is the purpose of it? I mean finally you just get a huge electric power station and you have a lot of electricity, so what do you do with it?

So, that's not the final aim, the final aim is to use it for appropriate purposes. So if you are not so intelligent you will use it in bad ways. But if you are still using your intelligence then you have to define your goal. That means that here the purpose was for the good of others and also for the good of oneself and for the good of both. But even if you are to take only the good of yourself, what is the use of electricity? But here, more, what is the use of the jhanas? What is the use of a concentrated mind? So again, we did use understanding and observation to build up mental momentum. But the mental momentum that is being built up, is also to use it again for understanding and then for observation and understanding, so you build up the thing, you get electricity, but again to use it for still something else.

By wisdom you clean your tool, or you improve the quality of your observation, and then by wisdom also the quality of your observation will go for further development of further aim or purposes, so that's all it is, for the quality of samadhi for the quality of our mind is to understand deeper and deeper the phenomena of life and these are just ourself. So, we just try to see what is that body, what we call the body, and what is that mind and how do we relate, how is life happening and then what is the purpose of it.

Anyway, it's just a further way of inquiring into reality, but since the mind is more powerful, more clear that means the tool is more powerful, is more strong, then the object that you are observing now, being yourself, is going to be seen in a different way. So by the strength of our tools, we have different perspective. So, we come back to the idea that new findings and discoveries is not to find new things, but is to find new ways to look at the same thing.

So, with a powerful mind, then we look at the same thing, that same old self, that same old me, or we think we are and then we understand a little bit better, we understand also in a way that brings us different perspective, and this perspective also is going to bring us a different attitude it will change. Because the more we are understanding by observation, then the perspective is changing, but also the aims will change. So the more we understand, the more perspective opens for us and also the purpose for which we are practicing the meditation broadens up and also deepens because of the understanding that is brought about.

So again as a summary we have observation, understanding, adjustment. So, how can we translate that in Buddhist terms? So, I will say, that observation and understanding will relate to the aspect of samma ditthi. So Ditthi is also related to vision, to how we see the world, how we see things. So, samma ditthi also has many levels. Samma Ditthi is related to wisdom also, the aspect of panna, this is understanding. So understanding also has many levels, so first you start to understand basic principles of life. Like the principles of cause and effect by way of actions. Like at the beginning I suggested you see how certain types of actions physical, verbal or mental are influencing your mind, so by observation you see the relationship with your action and then what they are bringing as a result in your mind. So, this is the idea of understanding that is related to samma ditthi, right view.

But, it goes further than that. That means that once the mind is clear by doing skilful things that means you are having the river, you lead the river in the way that you are wanting it to go and also you are able to get energy from it, then what you are observing with this mind is also deeper, that means you go deeper into life, into yourself, into this body, and you see other levels of phenomena. Like if you are taking a microscope for example, like first you see this is just the body, but if you really examine it with spectacles or with a microscope it will change totally. So the perspective is depending on the tools we are using to look at the object.

So, if we look at the body with a microscope - the perspective or the object is changing. And then with a bigger microscope then it is the same thing, so there is no end to it. So why not compare also the power of the mind with the power of a microscope. So not only for the physical phenomena but for the mental phenomena. Is there not a dynamic in the mind that could also be understood by way of principle of energies, or principle of elements? Maybe, maybe, so this is where we see that samma ditthi starts from the beginning, from very basic principles that should be verified by experience. So from basic principles you go deeper and deeper and then you understand deeper, you understand natural laws on the very much deeper aspects, and these laws are again principles of causes and effect.

So, observation and understanding is equal to samma ditthi.

And then the third thing that I speak about it adjustment. So adjustment I would say will relate to samma vayama, right effort. So samma vayama, the aspect of effort can also be balanced, can also relate to the way you are adjusting the phenomena according to your aim. So, if you are for example practicing samadhi, then the purpose is to get the mind more concentrated. So that

means that a balance of the mental factors or of the mental qualities is very important. So the adjustment that is going to play here is by way of adjusting your own mental factors so that the mind is very harmonious, but by observation.

But sometimes the aspect of adjustment could also relate to all aspects of the path. That means your actions, your physical actions, also need to be adjusted. So all your actions and also your understanding needs to be adjusted, so we see here that in some texts definitely the aspect of understanding is coming first. That means the right view is first. So with the right understanding we have on anything then adjustment is done, you can adjust according to what you understand and then the adjustment by way of effort and also by way of mindfulness. That means the mindfulness, the aspect of sati is coming into play here, in the way that mindfulness, actually, is just the quality of presence of mind. So the mind is very present to a situation, it's very mindful. But the samma ditthi to be samma, that means it needs to be combined with the quality of presence, of observation, that means samma ditthi.

So, that's why sati and sampajanna, mindfulness and clear comprehension has to go together. So when you are very mindful, that means you are very present, that means you are really aware and you really face the situation, then the understanding that you have is going to inform the mindfulness. The mindfulness is always going to remember what you have to do, how you have to do, where you have to go, how you have to go. So the mindfulness is a kind of reminder of what your understanding has come to a conclusion. So the mindfulness is reminding itself, or is reminding the mind the aspect of purpose, the aspect of suitability, and also the aspect of domain, and also we could say the aspect of non-delusion. So, right understanding coming from observation brings us to deeper aspects of understanding reality and this is in the direction of non-delusion.

So, in the end, right understanding, panna, is related to non-delusion. So you are not deluded. So now, the purpose of panna, understanding, is to be non-deluded at all. So that's why in the deepest level of samma ditthi non delusion plays a very big role. So when samma ditthi is combined with mindfulness, then we have mindfulness and clear comprehension, but clear comprehension at this time, on a deep level, means that you understand without delusion.

But you understand reality on very deep levels, but just to say that samma sati is combined with sampajanna that represents samma ditthi, so observation, understanding, adjustment, that means samma ditthi, samma vayama and then sati, mindfulness, is just facing a situation and then reminding itself what is the purpose and what is the suitability and also what is reality in the deepest sense, so these three things, samma ditthi, samma vayama and samma sati turns all the time like a wheel around all the factors of the path.

So we have the right view and then the right effort and then the right mindfulness will turn around the right livelihood and then the right action, the right speech, the right effort and then the right concentration and right intention. So the factors of the path are always supervised by right understanding which is always accompanied by right effort and then also the right mindfulness that will remind you of these things.

So, we have to find our own motivation, we have to be motivated, that means we have to be interested, so to be interested in something we have to know why, and also we have to know how. So to understand this we have to know our reasons to continue to practice and then this is all what is called a motivation, so emotionally we are interested and then everything is coming together.

I would say also that in life it seems that we are always going somewhere. We have the impression that we are going somewhere. Now you came here, and then you will go there, and then after that you will go another somewhere. And also in life we always think that we are getting something more. We come here to get this and then we go there to get that, and then we go to work to get something else. And so going somewhere else, getting something more. But, with the Dhamma when we are doing what we are doing now, actually we realise there is nowhere else to

go and there is no thing more to get. And this we can also relate it to bhava, becoming, becoming you see in the twelve links of dependent origination we have the aspect of clinging, depending on clinging, upadana, then the becoming is there. So all life, it just a process of becoming, always something new, always something else, always getting more and then also clinging and then becoming, clinging and then becoming, so the problem, or not the problem but if we want to find a solution we have to understand the dynamic of the going. We have to understand also what we are looking for, what we are trying to get. So the more we are doing the meditation, the more we are understanding all that process, the clearer we become and also the more peaceful we become because we come to a place where there is nowhere else to go and nothing more to get, it is all inside of ourself.

So, in our practice we should also not develop the get rich quick attitude. So there is no hurry. Here you are, and here you have everything you need. So, I would like to finish here, but still the rivers are not finished, so in that hydro-electric power, then also they had different rivers, actually they put the electric power where they have the junction, I think it is of two rivers, you have two rivers and they come to the same place and then they meet. And then they thought, oh that's really the best spot to build up the thing. But the idea that we can make with our own meditation is that sometimes when the river, when there is no more water flowing, then what we do is we are using the second water, so when we are doing a type of meditation and then at a certain point we just get too tense or fed up with it, then we can tap our energy from getting a motivation from another source, that means we could change, or we could varyate temporarily our subject of meditation. That means if you mostly practice anapanasati, then sometimes when you get up, or you are somewhere else you can do the practice of metta meditation. Knowingly, OK now I just want to alternate, I just want to change. Just when it is needed. Of course if you really want to build up a particular meditation subject, then you have to give a lot of energy to it. But at a certain point if it becomes dry or if the energies are a little bit lacking, then we can get a little bit more of motivation from something else, not only the practice of metta meditation, but things that are inspiring for yourself. So you see according to the situation.

So, I think that's it, I think we don't have anything new to offer you, but we just try to find other ways to look at the same thing.

All those instruments although they play the same note, they will have a different effect on our mind, for the listener of music.

So the same with meditation object, we can select or we can chose. We don't need to have a very big variety of meditation object, but a few of them like anapana or like metta or sometimes thinking about death, or sometimes reflecting on sila or sometimes reflecting on generosity or sometimes practicing all kinds. If we have at least a little bit of variety which we can include in our practice, then depending on our mood we can shift and it can be very useful.

So, this is for samadhi, by being able to control to some extent our emotions, we get very calm and we get very peaceful and then when we get peaceful then we can see much more clearly, that is we can see the relation with the object and also with the subject. So when we turn to vipassana that strength, that power that we develop with the samatha to be able to focus on one object, that power will be used to analyse the object itself. But not only a specific object, but all kinds of object of object that are coming into our sense. And sometimes that power of analysis of an object can be turned to the observer itself. We can observe ourself, we can observe our mind, so we can observe also the observer with that skill.

So there are another five skills that are described. The following one is that someone is skilled in concentration, regarding concentration, but he is not skilled in the range, gocara. And he is not skilled in the field in which the meditation subject is going. We explain that actually the meaning is grazing or pasture, so it's where the mind is going to feed itself, but here "go" is the cow, so the pasture for the cow is compared with pasture for the mind, so that is the area or the domain that the mind is going for meditation.

So here a further explanation about that is that they define two types of domain, two types of gocara, and the first one is called the nimittaramana, that is the meditation subject or a field of knowing, or of observation and the object will be a nimitta, the object will be an image, you know like all the samatha practice, most of them will have an image as the object its an image that the mind will make and that the mind will be focusing on.

And the second type is the lakkhanaramana, that is an object, aramana and lakkhana - that is an object that is having the natural characteristics, the individual characteristic, like the field of vipassana for example, the objects are not concepts, the objects are having the intrinsic qualities to themselves, they are having the essence, an individual essence, they are realities, what they call the paramatha, so this is the field of vipassana.

So when a meditator is able to distinguish which type of object, which type of range the object is covering then it is very useful because his analysis will be deeper, his analysis will be more complete and he will not be deluded. For example when he practices anapanasati meditation on the breathing if he observes the breath itself then the breath is the four element. So the breath can be observed as the air element together with the other three elements, so this is an object that is having its own individual characteristics as manifestation. So this is the field of vipassana. But if he observes the breath in the sense of a concept, if he observes the breath as a unit without dividing it into kalapas and into ultimate realities then that breath can be used for further samatha and that breath for example will turn into an image and that will be also the field of samatha meditation.

And without the image the jhana cannot occur. A person who wants to develop jhana if he just observes the breath as the four elements he will not be able to do it. And also if the person is observing the breath, but relates the breath to the supporting conditions, that's if he observes the breath together with the body, and if you are breathing you are just aware of the whole body, you are just aware of the body itself, so the body itself is not the breath. The body is the supporting condition for the breath to arise. So if somebody observes the body this is the four element meditation. So like that, by observing the object then you will be able to identify the type of object that this is.

And the type of object also can be divided into the range in the sense of possibility. Like all the objects are not the same. Like if somebody is meditating on the four elements then the potential for jhana or further development will be limited because the four element meditation will not take someone higher than the neighbourhood concentration because he is having an object that has the natural characteristic and that is changing all the time. So because of that the jhana cannot occur.

So that's important, so to come back to a higher tone. So the pitch it is called, so if you have the low tone and then the higher tone and then still the higher notes that an instrument can play. So some instruments they are limited to a certain gradation. For example the bass is very low, so if you want some effect or if you want some low notes you are just using the bass, but if you want the notes to be higher you will have to change from the bass to the cello, so the cello is a little bit smaller and because of that when you play it it gives a tonality that is higher than the bass. And if you want to play higher notes you will take the alto and if you want still higher pitch you will take the violin. So those four instruments in the strings they are having different types of levels for the notes to arise. So it is the same with the meditation subject, so if we want some kinds of results we should know that some meditation subject or object are not going to bring us to that kind of higher concentration, we need to change the object itself and this is important.

So, here somebody is skilled in the range of the meditation subject but he is not skilled in the concentration, or somebody is skilled in both. He is skilled in concentration and in identifying the jhana factors, and he is skilled in identifying the range of the meditation subject. And of course we have the third one that he is not skilled in either of those two.

So another skill that a meditation can develop is the skill in abhinihara, that is the skill to resolve, to elevate the meditation subject for distinction. For example if someone can attain the first jhana, then she will have the possibility to go higher to the second jhana. So that skill to boost a little, to encourage our meditation to go further, this is something that has to be developed.

And then another one is that somebody is skilled in samadhi, but he is not skilled to act carefully enough to enter the jhana, sacatajari - that means he cannot go through, they say, the translation, as a through worker in concentration. So he doesn't know exactly how to proceed to enter the jhana, he is almost there but he is not sure and he cannot get into the jhana.

Then another one is that he is skilled regarding in concentration, but he is not skilled in perseverance in the jhana itself. Sadacajari. So he can attain the jhana but he cannot maintain it for a long time, he has difficulty to keep persevering in that attainment.

And the last one is that someone can be skillful in concentration but he is lacking to know what is suitable and what is not suitable. Because samatha practice are depending on many causes. So if we are not careful what types of conditions are going to bring a specific jhana experience or that is going to support our samatha practice, then we will not be able to maintain the concentration, we will not be able to develop the concentration. So it is important for us to study, what is suitable for us.

Because this is also another thing with the samatha practice, because it is very demanding and we need very specific conditions and when especially at the beginning we need a lot of calm and not to be disturbed by many other activities.

So the skills that we learn by looking at ourself and by seeing which things are going to support our meditation, we need to take that into consideration.

So those are the 11 types of skill that a meditator should develop.

So, again that type of combination is done like now they started with somebody who is skilled in samadhi, that is skilled in identifying the jhana factors and he is not skilled in the other like that. And after that they start again the cycle, and repeating the second proposition, that is for example to be skilled in the samapati, that is to be skilled in the attainment and they use that as the parallel to the others.

What is important to know is that there are many factors that are important and that are not to be neglected for keeping the concentration. So to be able to use those things that will benefit our practice of meditation.

So here as a conclusion we may say that the two main points of emphasis that I mention is that in samadhi we need to know the object and then we need to know the knower, so we need to know the object itself and then the range, and then we need to know which effect, how to observe ourself, how to observe our emotions. Because the jhana factors they are also part of emotion. So when we are able to do those things then clarity of analysis will get better and then with that understanding also will improve.

So samatha actually is a very precise methodology and also it has a very important place within buddhism.

So when we start our daily meditation, any time, when we are starting what shall we do? Always we need to start with what is there. So, for example, if we are sitting we are just looking at what is there, how is our mental states, and then how we can uplift a little bit our mind, how we can orient our practice according to the situation. So we are using many means. There are many means, you know, like to practice metta sometimes, and also sometimes we can just observe the hinderances, this is also something that can be an object of our observation.

So first we establish a peaceful frame of mind, then we are in the now and uplift our mind by a few means and then we see deeper, we see a deeper level of reality by the insight practice. So the more we get mental clarity with the meditation practice, the more we see and understand ourself and the more we see and understand life.

So the Samadhi is the key to the wisdom. And the samadhi also for it to occur we need to have the five faculties balanced so this is important.

So, to finish, just as a practical thing, so for example when you go to the laundry here, you use the washing machine. So when you put your clothes there, there are three modes on the machine, at least. So one is the super wash and the other one is delicate, and the other one is normal press. So you have to decide according to the clothes that you are putting there. So if you are putting the silk then you have to put it into delicate, if you have very heavy blankets with a lot of dirt, then you put it in the super wash, if it is just the normal thing, then you put it on the normal. So it is the same thing with our practice. We need to balance our faculties and we do not need to go full speed all the time, we need to listen to ourself, and we have to be very kind also to ourself. And we have to be patient and also we have to remind ourself that the practice is for our own benefit, so the more we practice the more we get some result, and the results are not always obvious.

Sometimes we don't see any result, we think oh why are we practicing, there is no progress at all. So there was a comparison when the Buddha says that progress is like a carpenter who is using a hammer. So he is having a new hammer and every day he is working with his instrument. And only after a few months or sometimes after a year when you look at the hammer, eventually you will see that the print of his fingers are there. So you can see exactly that the hand of the carpenter is almost carved into the wood itself. So how that happened, it did not happen from one day to the other, it took months of handling the instrument and just working with it, so its the same with our practice, we don't see the progress, it's not obvious, but all the time there is the progress.

And sometimes also we think that we are going back and we are not going forward, but if we know that we are learning all the time and what we are doing if it is done with understanding and also with intelligence and some kindness then there is always some benefit.

yes, but you don't pay attention to it, if your perception is changing then the nimitta will change, but the idea is that once you start to get a nimitta if you get your mind very stable and very concentrated and balanced then the nimitta will not be changing, so you try to stabilise the nimitta when it starts to arise, you don't make it change you make it stable.

So what is the meaning behind that, that he says that by travelling he is not able to go beyond and find the end of the world, but still it is not having reached the end of the world that one can find the end of dukkha. And he says that also that end of the world can just be found in this very frame of the physical body.

So then the question that Ruhitassa asked the Buddha was in reference to the stella system, all the galaxies and all the outside world. And the Buddha when he replied he replied in terms of the sangharaloka, the world of formations, the world of internal world.

And what the Buddha means by loka is actually dukkha. So the synonym of loka there is the synonym of dukkha sacca. And the synonym of the arising of the world is the synonym of the arising dukkha, the arising of suffering and the cessation of the world is the cessation of ill and the way leading to the cessation of the suffering is also the ending of the world.

So these days the scholars, this is one of the most deep sayings that the human philosopher, that the human had reached in terms of question. Because we look at the refuge, we look everywhere, always we want to learn something, always we want to learn, but in the end there is no satisfaction. We can go to school or university, but still, that question, where does one not get hold, where does

one not get reborn, die and be reborn again, that had been a question that motivated all kinds of research throughout humanity. But the answer that the Buddha gave is that you can find that inside, it's not by going round and finding outside these things, but the answer is just within us.

Some scholars they say that here in this commentary they say that the Buddhaghosa, he missed a very good opportunity to develop that question and to make a big exegesis of that, to comment. But the only thing that Buddhaghosa says is that what the Buddha wants to say is that when he is teaching the four noble truths he does not teach it in regard to grass and woods, but to the four elements in the body, the four mahadhatu. So we can stop it at there, but the Buddhaghosa explained in the visuddhimagga and in his commentary a huge way how to practice that type of meditation, because this is what it refers to. It refers to the mind, of course, but also it refers to the physical phenomenon.

Because what is the world? The world is something empirical. We know the world through the senses, so there is a perceiver. The external world with the five senses, and then we conceive the world, we interpret the world with the mind bases. That is with the six senses. So we have external objects and also mental objects and they come into contact with the body sensory organ and then they produce the consciousness and then from there all kinds of mental factors are following.

So of course we could start by analysing the external world and try to see what is the content and what is the. .But the point is that how we perceive the world this is how the problem is arising. Because if we see that there is a conflict somewhere it is at the source of the conflict that we should go.

So the world we have the external senses and then we have the physical sensitivity together with the mind base, and those things are based on the four elements.

So, as a practice, when we try to incorporate that type of philosophy or that type of search into something practical we have to understand the four elements and this is fundamental.

As a practical approach how shall we do that, or how shall we proceed. Last week we developed a little bit about the samadhi aspect, and previous to that relating to the bhayaberava (?) sutta we said that somebody who wants to develop the panna needs to be very aware, very clear about the conventional reality, the conventional terms, now this is a chair, now this is a light, now this is a window, now this is a snake, now this is a rope and things like that. So to be familiar with conventional reality this is very important, this is the basic, not to be fooled by things. Then we said further, the pali is (???) the definition of the object, what are the objects that we are perceiving?

That type of panna needs to be developed, we need to be concentrated, we need to have concentration of Dhamma and for that purpose we say that by choosing an object on which we can fix the mind on a long term then we can develop the capacity to observe and then to fix and then to keep the object for a long time. So by being able to fix an object, we are also able to see the subjective part of it. And then the more we can look at the object, the more clear the subjective part, the mental factors and the consciousness, the more clear the consciousness is going to appear with us. First because there is concentration, and also because the mind has got that clarity of wisdom, that clarity of perception. So by developing some Samatha practice, by choosing specific objects, then we see also that some objects have a definite impact on our mind by different types of kamathana, by different types of meditation subjects, that's why actually there are so many different types of meditation objects because depending on the temperament, depending on our attitude or our liking, we can chose one object, metta or karuna or according to our self and also according to the circumstances we are in and also according to the feeling we are at that moment, so there is a variety of meditation object that we can choose according to our purpose.

So the thing that I also emphasise last week by looking at the different skills we could develop or need to develop to have a firm foundation in samadhi, was the skill in defining the object. Amanana kusula (?) And the other skill that I was also emphasising was the skill of being aware of the mental factors. OK now I can go into the jhana and can be aware of what is the state of mind, what are the mental factors, and now I change the object, OK now I can keep the object for some time and then what is the quality of the mind. So that ability to know very clearly the object and to know what exactly is the mind, how the mind is reacting to that, this is an important precision of the methodology when we are talking about the samadhi. Because its not only samadhia in "now I'm going in bliss, for 4 hours I'm now in Jhana" that's fine. No, no, Samadhi has the purpose of course to give us the state of peace, to give us some rest, to give us some calm, this is for sure. But also it has the purpose to develop our wisdom, to develop our clarity of understanding. And this is also important. We can have some rest in Samadhi, but we can also use the Samadhi to develop our wisdom and this is why we are practicing samadhi mostly. To develop the jhana that is taught here is because of that precise methodology. Once we have that type of training and that type of knowledge and ability, then we turn to the essential, we turn to develop the wisdom of vipassana, to develop the wisdom of seeing the things as they are. No more on the level of conventional reality, but to investigate really what those things are, what are we experimenting, what are the sense objects, what are the sense doors, how do I experience the world? How do I interpret the world? In a good way, or a bad way. In the sense of does that type of perception I'm having of the world brings me happiness or suffering or what is that?

So, this is the thing. And, when we start to practice the vipassana, then we have the 6 senses, and also the 6 external objects and also the 6 external bases, but fundamentally, if we have not been able to define the four elements, then the meditation will not be complete. Because, those 6 senses, we can say on a gross level, now there is the eye, now there is the ear, now there is the body and the tongue and the nose, but actually it is a very subtle thing and it is a mixture of elements, so first if we are able to define very clearly the elements by practicing the meditation on the 4 elements, then the sense bases become much more subtle in terms of the perception that we have of them. And then once the sense bases also become subtle, then we see the impact those sense objects are having, and also the sensitivity, the refinement that we would have developed at that time will permit us, will give us the possibility to have a very clear understanding of our mind.

And we are aiming to understand ourself, and the mind and how, what is this? Is that dukkha? or what is the meaning of dukkha. So by seeing that, then one of the essentials is to see the truth of impermanence. So at the beginning we may have just have a glimpse, life is impermanent and everything is impermanent. But when we get a very strong samadhi and we have been able to develop that discrimination about the elements, then our perception of impermanence also becomes very much accelerated, it becomes really really fast, and at that time we see that actually the dukkha is not only the gross dukkha of pain and hurt, but it is the constant oppression with that incessant change. And this we have to realise it first with the four element meditation.

So that four element meditation is not that easy to come right at the beginning. It can be done just on a practical. Somebody who has not developed the jhana or who has not developed samatha then they can come to the perception of the 4 elements. So now we are just sitting, but what is that sitting? That body posture, we are just aware of it, we are just in the present moment and we are just aware of the posture. So what are we aware of? that body, what are we feeling. We are feeling heat, pressure, pushing, scratching the hardness of the cushion and the softness and all of those qualities that pertain to the four elements. But if the concentration is not deep enough, then that object that is a physical object will just be an object of the samatha, it will just develop the four elements in the sense of giving attention to the four elements, so that cattur ???/ can have 3 meanings, it can have the meaning of just paying attention to the four elements, it can have the meaning of the attention given to the four elements as a meditation subject, and also it can have the meaning of defining the four elements. So that defining of the four elements is that when we start to analyse the characteristics of those four elements we do not take them as a concept, we do not take them as an idea or a label that we are naming but as an actual experience, so this is the defining of the four elements that will come.

So when we start our meditation we should be very comfortable. So we should forget what we should do and then what other people are expecting from us. The goal of meditation is peace, so we have to start a little bit with peace. And also the goal of meditation is an individual search, so we should make ourselves happy. We should say, OK now I am doing that for myself, and I am searching peace, so we should have that kind of inner independence or that inner confidence that we are doing something for ourselves and what we are doing is also going to be very good for other people. So that attitude is very important. So when we start, if we are relaxed like that, then naturally the happiness will flow by itself much easier, and then with the happiness we will see also the inclination of our mind and we will be able to direct our mind as if we were directing a child. So now you do this, and now you do this and naturally the mind will be able to take a direction, provided we have a basic knowledge of what we should do. If we don't have any knowledge of meditation subject then it is difficult. But anyway, just that attitude.

So once the mind is calm and once we are comfortable and happy, because also happiness can come just like that. Happiness can be due to the sila, so if we are doing good things. So when we are sitting down, we are just so happy. We have no remorse and we have done all the good things whatever it is socially, or with the family, or with friends, or . . . we have done good things and then we are just happy. This is the type of happiness that is related to the sila, so that is quite supportive, it is a very important condition for practicing meditation properly.

Another type of happiness that can come is the happiness of not being distracted by external things, not being distracted by being carried away by all kinds of fancies and all kinds of hallucinations from the mind, all kinds of pulling from here and to there, the mind is just wandering and thinking about the past and trying to revive the past and longing for the past and wanting it to happen in the future, so when the mind is in the present then we can see much more clearly and then we can settle and can develop more samadhi and then also develop more panna, more insight with that samadhi.

So it is very important to balance our effort, we should have that type of effort and that type of energy that wants us to learn and to give our mind to what we are doing, that motivation is very important, but also we have to balance it with other faculties, like mindfulness, just to be aware of what is going on and also to balance it with the concentration as well.

So for today we will stop. The meditation on the four elements, if we start to explain it now it's already a long long long topic, so maybe in the future we will develop it. This is just the introduction, just to say that what the Buddha says is that by knowing the four elements that are in your body you are going to know the world, you are going to know the perception and your consciousness and you're going to know everything that you need to know to get rid of those troubles. So knowing that we should continue and we should persevere and have that kind of enthusiastic way just to go on and do our search because it's a really valuable thing that we are doing now and I think this is the most valuable search that we can have in our life. So we should never get discouraged and we should do it with interest.

Suppose you work in a supermarket and then someone comes to you and then he comes to you and he says, ok, I would like to have 500 grams of units consisting of folac, biotin, calcium, fat, calories and white colour. So, what do you do. You are patient and because you are a meditator you are a little bit patient, you have metta, so then you think ahhh, yes, that person has probably come from those abhidhamma classes and then he is speaking about kalapa. So, what is a kalapa? The question was asked, where is that coming from, we don't see that in the canon. But actually the word kalapa it is existing in the Sanskrit. And in the Pali text it is mentioned in the Samyutta Nikaya and also in the vinaya. And there are different meanings, but one of the meanings there is that it's anything that comprise a number of things of the same kind: a bundle, a bunch, a row, a multitude usually of grass, bamboo, hairs etc. So it's something that comprise many things together. Also another definition is a (quaver? quiver?).

But in the abhidhamma the meaning is a group of qualities pertaining to the material body. Rupa kalapa. So its a corporeal unit. And then also Buddhaghosa in the Visuddhimagga used the Abhidhamma terminology a lot so he has all those divisions of dasadhamma kalapa etc. So it is just a group of special qualities that are not divisible.

Related to the abhidhamma it is something pertaining to the ultimate reality and those qualities they bear their own characteristics. That is no other element will have the same characteristic as those. So a group of those qualities are called a kalapa. So it is not something that was created, it is just a term that had been used to denote something pertaining to a real phenomenon. Then of course in the sutta they just use a conventional reality, they just use a term that everything is going to understand, but in the abhidhamma the terminology is different, they don't speak any more about concepts and things that are commonly acknowledged, they speak about ultimate reality.

A kalapa is a concept, a kalapa is a group, so within that group there are some elements that bear their own characteristics that bear their own essence, it's a group of qualities, its a group of things that are not exactly the same, but also they are coming together, like the earth, the fire, the water and the wind, four elements together with the color, the smell, the taste and the life faculties and the sensitivities and things like that, you have many types of kalapas so you have many types of units.

So when you look to the rock there, then you say that is a rock. But if we look at it then there are spaces. And if you are a geologist you will take a hammer and then you will split the rock and just take a small little piece and say oh, no, the rock has this quality and that quality - and so every little piece, every little grain of sand that the rock is composed of they bear their own characteristic. So this is just as an example, as a grain of sand is not a kalapa, but somehow its a kalapa in the sense that it's containing some individual essences.

So samatha and jhana is not something that comes to everybody very easily, you know, you have to work for it, and we see some people who have been here for 2 months, only then sometimes they start to get the jhana. When they start to get it then it becomes very easy, but we must not forget that those people have been working for quite some time very seriously and those lucky that have come and got success very easily at the beginning were most of the time those who had a good foundation in their life and it was not too difficult for them to practice the meditation.

So when we start to teach the meditation on the four elements here, we just start the characteristic and then we repeat the characteristic and we are aware of those twelve characteristic that are a manifestation of the four elements in our body, so by repeating them and by experiencing them and by seeing them and by understanding them then the mind just gets very pure, the mind gets very interested and the mind is away from the five hindrances and its very close to the first jhana, but its not the first jhana it cannot go into the first jhana, but the quality of the mind is very similar.

So, when it comes to perceive the body at a certain point then it sees the body like a block of ice or like a gem, and this we can see we can see the reference to this in some sutta, that the meditator just sees the body like a gem and then he has a gem in his hand and he sees the body is just like the four element and the four element is just like a precious stone and he just looks at the body like that.

So when someone someone perceives the four element to that extent and with that quality of mind then the perception is changing and at a certain point he sees that those four elements are just particles, so it can be divided, its not a mass of solid materiality but its composed of just tiny little things called the kalapas, units.

And the next thing, what is called the derived materiality that is based on those four elements is the first five of them is the five sensitivities that the body is having, the sense doors.

So they say in the Samyutta Nikaya by understanding the all, "the Bhikkhu, I will teach you the all and listen to that." So what is the all? Last week we talk about the universe and that actually everything is in the all, and what is the all, the eye and form is the all, the ear and sound, the nose and odors, the tongue and taste, the body and tactile objects, the mind and mental phenomenon, this is called the all. If anyone should speak thus, having rejected this all, I shall make another all known, that would be a mere empty boast on his part. That means except for this there is nothing that can be known.

So it is starting with the four elements and then from the four elements we have the sensitivity of the body.

Chart - the first thing is discerning materiality, rupa peliga (?) - so this is the four elements together with the derived materiality.

So people say, when they meditate on their body to the extent that they develop successfully the meditation on the four elements then they see that body as a ice block. But actually it's like those transparent type of materiality and then an opaque type of materiality.

First the person, when you meditate on the four elements then there is no more the shape of the body. Like the shape is a concept. I will come back again to the person who is doing the four elements with the brief method. For example if you start with the air or if you start with the skeleton. Only by developing one of the parts very clearly then he establishes his mind on that and then he gets his mind very calm on that part, and once part becomes very clear then all the other parts also become very clear in the sense of elements.

So, it's like that, you can do the 32 parts and then one part will become clear and then all the parts of the body will be the same with the four elements. But you can do also, only a single one would be enough.

So once someone is able to see just the four elements in the body then that body becomes luminous and then the concept of a body doesn't exist anymore. Life for example, here we are in a hall. But what is that hall? It is just a concept, it is just a name. If somebody is a builder, if someone is an architect or someone who is skilled in construction of material when he comes here he will not look at it as we are doing, he will look at the quality of the wood, he will look at the type of ventilation that is there, the plastic that is there and he will look at the handle on the doors and he will look also at the type of material they use for the doors, and for the window also, is it the same wood as for the floor? And the paints, which type of paint, all kinds of thing that a normal person will not be able to detect.

And so, the idea, the idea of a building, the idea of a meditation hall is something that we have constructed, it's something that we have conditioned our mind to see. Actually what is that there is just the building material. So the building is just the four elements if we look further into that.

But if the building was to be demolished, then could we say that there is still a meditation hall? The concept is not there, but the elements are the same. So with the same elements, with the same material then we can build something else. So the idea of a meditation hall, or the idea of a kitchen, or the idea of a refectory it is just concepts. So the same thing with our body. We say that this is a body, but actually it is just the four elements.

And then, that body when it is perceived just as the four elements, what is striking is the derived materiality is the sensitive parts of it. Here we have windows, there are many windows, so the upper windows, the back windows there, the japanese type of windows and the windows on the side, so all those windows they reflect something. So if somebody is outside, if you look at yourself, if you look in the window now you will see yourself or you will see everybody in the hall. So that window has the possibility to bring a reflection for those who are looking at it.

So it is the same thing with those sensitive parts of our body. So some windows, let's say that our body is just composed of crystal, it is just a house of mirror. So if our body is just full of little mirrors that are sensitive to the sight or that are sensitive to the sound or that are sensitive to the nose, to the odor or to the taste or to the touch then it will vibrate, it will give a reflection on the sensitivity.

So here we are, it's like the windows that are the mirrors in that crystal body of ours, if we see our body composed of little mirrors, the senses, this is the same thing, so every time there is a contact with a sense object then there will be a reaction on the body with that sense organ.

So by starting to define the internal sense doors, the 5 senses together with the mind, then we are also able to identify the external senses.

In the chart, it is first nana, or the first nama rupa pativeda, or rupa parigaha - the first one is the definition of the four elements.

So, that knowledge is the knowledge of being able to identify every individual component of the body. Not body a body but every little part.

So you do like that, you just do the four elements, and then you discern the materiality and then after that you discern the mentality, that is you discern every mental factor and consciousness in each mind moment in the sixth type of the cognitive process.

After that you discern both of them, you discern both the mentality and the materiality. And after that you define the mentality and the materiality. So this definition you just come to know there is just the mind and the body, there is just the mind and the materiality. So it is full understanding of the known.

So first you establish the things that you want to observe and then you classify them into categories and once this is done, then this is the basic for the second nyana - that is understanding the causality, that is you understand the conditions of those things that you are observing.

So you do it, a little bit in the beginning, for example when you identify the different types of materiality in the body then you see that some materiality has temperature of the cause, some of them are caused by the mind, some others they are caused by the food, and then the fourth one are caused by the kamma, caused by previous actions then you discern that specifically in the last one when you do the dependent origination which is the following nyana - the paccaya parigaha.

So that's why when we practice vipassana if we go too fast to practice vipassana in the sense of seeing the three characteristics then we may miss something, and what is more difficult is to do those two knowledges.

So the full understanding of the known. That means you are establishing, you are identifying what you are observing very clearly and then you discern the conditions, so this is really very important. And once this is done you go on and you see the full understanding as an investigation. And then you see the three characteristics of the anicca, dukkha, anatta, and then the more you develop insight knowledge the more you get disenchanted and you get more peaceful also because you are not attached to things.

So those things can be explained in very much detail, but now I am not dealing so much into detail. So they say that the roots, or the understanding is based with the roots. So you have two roots for the understanding and this is the purification of mind and the purification of virtue. The first two practices that we have and the soil on which the understanding is based is the 5 aggregates, the 12 sense bases as I just explained and the 6 dhatu, the six elements, the faculties and dependent origination. So it's a vast field of inquiry, it's a vast field of investigation. And the trunk of the understanding is all the rest of it. And it culminates in the ultimate peace of Nibbana.

This is very important, the meditation on the four elements, so some people can do it fast if they have a good basic of samatha, but nevertheless it needs to be done in detail and it is very advantageous.

Also in some of the texts it says that the principle of anatta, the characteristic of anatta is not grasped or understood because somebody is lacking in defining the elements. So if we are not able to define the elements, if we are not able to see the elements as elements we are still grasping, we are still groping with concepts. The concept of me, the concept of another person, the concept of man, the concept of woman, of animals and things like that, as long as we don't break those concepts into ultimate reality which are the elements then we cannot understand properly, we cannot come to a deep understanding of reality, so that's very important.

Another last thing that I would like to mention, in one text they say that the practice of virtue and the practice of panna, they go together. And they say it is like the two hands that are washing each other. So the more you have panna, the more you have wisdom, the more it will be affecting your life, it will be affecting your behavior, your body behavior, your verbal behavior and also your mental behavior, so your sila will improve if you have more wisdom.

And the same thing if you have a good livelihood and a good purity of virtue, then this will also be a good support for your panna. So that concept, I like that very much, that the sila supports the panna and then the panna supports the sila. So when they compare that to the buddha himself, they say that he is a possessor of knowledge and conduct, vijja carana sampanno. So what he is preaching he is doing and what he is doing he is preaching also.

So we should not forget that what we are learning and what we are developing it has to bring some effect in our life. And the effect is more peace of mind, with either samatha or with understanding or vipassana and then also peace in our activities.

Q & A

A person perceives his own body as a block of ice, so it's like a mirror or a sparkling perception that is on the material phenomenon. The simile will be like, suppose your body is like a palace or like a house of glass or like a house of mirror so that perception can also be applied when somebody is doing the four element meditation. There is no more shape there is just a block, they do not perceive hair etc. - it's just a block together with the sensitivities and the other derived materiality.

Yes, but to understand materiality, once we understand the body as such, once we understand the five senses together with the mind bases, then we understand the sense impact on those 5 organs and then we understand the functioning at least of the 5 type of minds out of the six. Because we say, the mind, the mind, what is the mind? The mind is something conditioned by contact the 5 senses with the 5 objects and also the mental objects with another type of mind, so this is what is called mind. So that type of mind is not, we have to understand the process of it.

Now I just explained basically the principle of the 4 element meditation, but once someone is based on the four element meditation then they understand also the principle of the mind, and this is the second knowledge that I did not explain because when I take that, then I look at the Sayadaw's books, and I look at the books I can find in the library, and then how to start with this? It is better for you to read the books it would be clearer than if I was to explain. And the same with the mind, the mind is something delicate, maybe next time we can talk about it, but it's something, like you have 6 types of mind, so the mind is arising depending on conditions, but once we are able to identify rupa, materiality, we are able to identify all those types of mind, we are able to see also the relation that is with mind and materiality.

What is the mind, what are the mind objects? the mind objects are just full, it's everything, everything can be conceived by the mind, everything can be perceived by the mind, so the mental

objects are a part of analysis when we do the vipassana, and it is very detailed. For those people who have done the jhana for example, even the jhanic mind, the very high states of consciousness that people are achieving they are to be analysed, so everything is going under the microscope to be scrutinised.