

IMS Retreat: Examining Reality as a Path to Freedom

Meditation Instruction

So the practice of meditation is a practice of observation. And this observation needs quality. The quality of attention. The quality of listening. The quality of looking. We try to improve the quality by which we are doing things, from which we understand things. Everything has to be included in our observation.

Now. We settle in the now. What is happening in the now. We can just relax. We can just be here. We can also have just a general awareness of what is happening with the senses. A general awareness of our body posture. The sense objects that come into contact with the senses. We can just be aware generally of what is happening.

Today is the day of arrival. But our mind is always on departure. Where are we going? Where is this mind going? We need to be friends with our mind. Our mind is our friend. How can we keep it interested in good things? So sometimes the mind needs a break. And sometimes also, reflection can be part of our practice.

So from time to time, if you feel like doing so, you can just reflect, with appreciation at the chance that we have. All of us, to be seated here, to clear our mind, just to be peaceful, by doing nothing.

We can reflect on the quality of the teachers like the Buddha. We can reflect also on the quality of the teachings that were handed down through generations, through centuries. Just one little thing, a small reminder of something deep, that is meaningful to us, we can feed our mind with that, Dhammanusati.

Sometimes also by seeing good practitioners, around us, good people, then we get inspiration. So we can recollect and reflect about these good people.

And we are also part of these good people. To be here is very special, I would say, we are very fortunate, we are very lucky. How many good things you had done to end up here. Look at your life. All the struggles, the work, the responsibilities that you took with your work. With the hassles of life, with a family, with your parents, with your jobs. How these things are there, they are part of you.

But also they can be a source of nutriment, because you have done good things. You can remember the good things that you have done. Oh, I have

done this good thing. There is no need to hang around bad things, things that we regret. We acknowledge it. But the good things that we have done, all the good motivation that pushed us to do these good actions.

Actions of generosity also. Sometimes only mental actions can be considered. When we practice meditation, this is also a type of action. Sometimes we are very peaceful. We are very happy. Very contented. And in these blissful moments we are at peace and we share peace with other people, without forcing. It comes naturally.

So our practice is to be in the present moment. To be very clear about what is happening. But also, from time to time, we need to see with which type of thinking we are feeding our mind. Just be aware. Just be gentle. Patient. And take care of yourself. All the day is for you. All these hours are for you.

No one is telling you what to do. You have to see what is suitable.

So, look. So listen. Observe. Understand and adjust. And be peaceful with what is happening there in your body. What is happening there in your mind.

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So these simple reflections that I suggested that you do, these should be done from time to time. And it is just to put our mind in the right direction, in a good mood. So the basic thing for us is to understand the process of life. And this understanding has to pass through everything we experience inside ourselves and also outside ourselves. What is the interaction that is happening throughout the time that we are alive? This is the main purpose, so mindfulness, awareness, attention throughout the day in all the activities that we are involved in is what is of utmost importance.

So we have to be gentle with ourselves and also we have to be perseverant by way of mindfulness, by way of lucid awareness and careful attention.

So whatever we are doing, whichever position we are in, whatever is happening, we are aware, we are observing and we try to develop understanding.

2016 - 06/18 Meditation Instruction

So today, just to be more precise in a very concise way about what is the meaning of content and then the meaning of process, the meaning also of concepts.

So, content meditation refers to seeing the specific characteristics of objects. For those who like the pali, it is the vesesa lakkhana, the specific characteristics of objects.

Process meditation refers to seeing the general characteristics of object, samanya lakkhana, like anicca, dukkha, anatta and sunyata and things like this. So these characteristics, you are able to see them in all types of phenomena, but for content meditation, the specific characteristics will be seen only in some phenomena.

So, I would like to give you a very concrete example. This, you may call that, a bag of milk powder. So this is a pure concept. It's a concept, it's not ultimate reality. And then, what is the content, we will agree that the content is milk powder and things like this. If you want to be more precise about the content, to analyse the content in more precision, then you will say you have 665 calories, and then 7.5 grams of protein, and the fat is a total 9 grams and sodium 88 grams, and calcium - ok, so you know what is content. So, the analysis of content can be divided in many ways and also whichever way you like to divide it, it is fine. So this refers to a material process.

So, if we refer to the body itself, we are just like a bag of milk powder. But actually, it's not only milk powder, it's a little different. So the phenomena of mind and matter, these are content. So it's a concept, like a person, this is a concept, mind and body, this is also a concept. So, what the concept refers to in regard to content, if we take the point of view, not about biology, not of chemistry, but the point of view of Buddhism, then we see that the content of the physical body is the four elements, the four physical elements.

So, as we have been describing them yesterday, and as you experience them in your practice, the identification of the characteristics of these experiences can be classified in these four classes. So this is the content.

When we refer to the mind, then also the mind is a concept. And then the mind itself, if we divide the component of what we call mind, in Buddhism, then we have the four aggregates of the vedana, sanna, vinnana and sankhara, that means the feeling tone, then the perception then the consciousness, then the mental formations. Within these four categories, within these four factors that are representing the aspect of the mind, still

further categories can be subdivided. Like vedana, you can have many types of vedana. So, still within the field of vedana you can elaborate the content in the ways that you like. And also in the class of sankhara then a lot of mental components go under this classification.

So, whichever classification and terms you are using to define, and to divide a unit, then this is what we are calling content. So in this regard every content is not the same, that's why we say that every content has a specific characteristic. That means a bag of milk powder is not a bag of salt. So we have to be very clear, what is what. So that's why the classification is very helpful for us to define and to understand what is what, in order to know the relationship.

So within the physical phenomena we are able to identify what is what. So just very simply within the four elements, then you see that this is earth element, and then you have the other three elements. So we see by making a difference in the content, we are able to see how these physical components can affect each other. That means, what is the relationship between the earth and the water, what is the relationship with the earth and then the wind and the fire. All these material elements which are just content are affecting each other. So we understand a dynamic of relationship. And to understand a dynamic of relationship, it's not possible to do if we don't have a clear delimitation of what it refers to as for their specific qualities.

And it is the same thing with the mind.

So we have, also, a lot of subdivision even within the Buddhist frame to classify and then to categorise what belongs to matter, and also what belongs to the mind.

So if you take the Abhidhamma for example is very much elaborated. And not only is it going to give us a very precise analysis of the content, but also it's going to give us a very precise synthesis of the relationship between the different components of the group. So we see for example how different mental factors are related to each other and we see how the mind is influencing the body and also how the body is influencing the mind. But we see that very much in detail.

Like the more, as we said yesterday, that the closer we are looking at the phenomena then the more subtle our perception of these phenomena comes to be. And then our understanding also gets more refined just because we are looking closer and closer at the object and then the object comes to be perceived in a more subtle way.

So, a very practical question that I like to bring, because we can see it in the practice. And yesterday the question was how the practice of metta can be developed both as a vipassana object and as a samatha object, could you say more about developing metta as a vipassana object.

So, I might not have answered properly, but it's not possible to use the object of metta as an object of vipassana, because the object of metta is a content, it's a concept, whereas the object of vipassana is just a process. So when you go beyond the content aspect of reality then you come into the field of process and the field of process you just see energy, you just see movement, it is just a flux of changing phenomena. So, in that case, you are not able to stabilise the mind enough to keep that emotional quality when you are practicing metta.

So now, just for a few minutes, I suggest that we practice metta a little bit. If you are not interested to listen and you are not interested to practice, it's fine. But if you are in the mood, then you just pick up here and there the few words that I'm going to give you.

Also, about the practice of metta, we have to see, we have to realise that in daily life when we are encountering people, when we are doing things, then this is a way to integrate that good quality of heart in our actions, when we are dealing with people, real people, the direct encounter of social relationship, everywhere, this is one aspect of metta, it has to be done in our daily life.

But metta also can be used as a meditation subject, and this is now what we are going to do, use the metta for our meditation.

So first of all to be able to practice metta we have to be comfortable, so just make yourself very comfortable.

As you know, as we all have noticed, it's very difficult for us to have these good feelings if we are irritated, if we are upset about situations of people, if we are upset also about ourselves or many things that can bring that type of mental and physical disturbance within us, it's very difficult.

So sometimes, in our practice, we can ask forgiveness. And also we can forgive others.

If something or somebody is coming to your mind, or if a situation is coming to your mind, or in any case if there is not something very precise that manifests itself to your mind, you can just ask forgiveness.

Sometimes we do things, we say things, sometimes also we think things that are not very helpful and sometimes knowingly or unknowingly, sometimes we can cause harm to other people without knowing it. So in this case, we can ask forgiveness to all those we might harmed or done any kind of unpleasant things knowingly, or unknowingly.

Sometimes also you can ask forgiveness in regard to the whole universe, if you have done something wrong, may you be forgiven.

Also, sometimes some people might have done some harm to you, but they might not have been aware of it, they might not have known it, so in your heart you can just forgive, just forgive to whichever harmful things might have been done to us by other people, whether they knew it, or whether they didn't know it. We don't keep any kind of resentment, we are not upset about them, we forget.

We don't forget, we forgive.

We can also have that attitude of forgiveness towards ourself, sometimes how much self-hatred and bad aspect of guilt, remorse, is affecting us in not so good ways. So we accept ourselves, we accept our faults, and we can forgive ourselves.

Now you can be aware of your position, you can relax your shoulders, relax your face, your neck, you can relax also your legs, your eyes, all your body you relax it. This is metta to yourself, you wish your body to be well, healthy and comfortable. Just relax everything with this aspect of caring, for your body.

When we look at our mind, sometimes we are agitated, or sometimes we are upset or tense, so we can accept that, that acceptance is caring. So we care for the mind, we care for our mind, we can accept it, we can understand it, we can forgive it. This is how we can somehow send metta to ourself both body and mind.

Now when you feel peaceful, when you feel well, when you feel comfortable, then you can start to generate these feelings of metta, benevolence, caring, kindness, to anybody that comes to your mind, to somebody that it close to you, somebody that is far away from you, just send metta to the person.

Metta is an emotion, it's a positive emotion, so that feeling of metta, you express it with your mind, you can radiate it also throughout your body, but that's not so important, whichever way that emotion of metta can develop, can increase, can keep your mind interested, can keep your

mind happy in regard to a specific person, then you just keep to that. You have that feeling and also you can have an image of a person.

If you are not so visual, if images don't come so easily to your mind, it doesn't matter. Sometimes you can use the name of a person, sometimes also you can just have the sense, presence of the

other person, without necessarily seeing a mental image or picture in your mind. That specific person, you wish him or her well, security, happiness, peace, may she be happy, peaceful, secure.

If you like you can continue with the same person, and then you can get very concentrated with that intense feeling of metta towards that person.

But also you can change, and alternate with the beings. Human beings, those close to you, sitting in front of you, the person sitting next to you, or the person in the back, so you can just turn around with your mind and go around with your mind, around the hall and then include all the individuals that are here, that you can see, but you don't need to open your eyes.

Sometimes also there are beings that we cannot see. So it's not because we cannot see beings that they don't exist. So whichever beings are there in this hall, may they be happy, may they feel secure, may they be peaceful.

We can include the animals, the animals in the forest, or all kinds of species are there. So may they be peaceful and secure. We can extend also that feeling in the whole place here, in the whole centre. But also according to your imagination, according to your classification, then all types of beings can be included in this meditation. I will not go into details, it's up to you to develop it the way you like it.

Sometimes also, you can just radiate that feeling of metta in the directions: in front of you, all beings, very far away, very close, to the infinite as well, as much as your mind can go, you extend that feeling in the front of you. Also on the right side, on your left side, on your back, below, in the earth, so many beings are there. Under the floor, through the earth, above, in the sky, the birds flying, beings also that we cannot see. And then in all the intermediate directions, we radiate the feeling of metta.

So when you start to get a ride with this feeling, then a complete trust is being established in your mind, a complete confidence and then you see all beings as very beautiful, all beings as lovely, so you don't analyse so much, you just surrender to the universe, you just surrender with love and

sometimes with compassion. So you surrender yourself to the object on which the mind has developed that emotion.

So this is one aspect, or one type of meditation, that is purely related to samatha. It's conceptual, somehow, like the space, like the directions, the directions are just a concept of location. So it is conceptual. The beings in the directions are concepts.

So in samatha, we don't analyse too much, but when we proceed to vipassana, to insight, we have to understand the experience of what was going on. So still we can be in the mood of absorption, or we can be in the mood of serenity, but we try to understand what was the experience all about.

So the observation comes to be more analytical. And what are we trying to understand? First of all we just look at our own mind. So sometimes when we are able to tune to these vibrations, and then you really get into it, the mind is very happy, there is a lot of rapture, bliss, so these are qualities of the mind. So you look at this and you can define the content of your mind in regards, like if you are using the Buddhist frame of reference, in regard to the jhana factors.

And also among the jhana factors you can also go into more detail by understanding the various other components of the mental factors. Like saddha is there, mindfulness is there, concentration is there, attention is there. All kinds of mental factors that are related to the mind that is doing the meditation. So then you look at the mind and you see these different components.

And then you look at the body, and it's the same. On what the mind is depending to exist. The mind exists in relation to the physical body, so you look at your body and you can see that the practice of metta, the mind has affected the physicality of it. That means that maybe you feel a

little bit lighter, you feel less tense, so the elements, the physical elements have been effected by the mind. But the body is just the physical elements.

So now, you are able to define and understand mind and matter to a very brief extent. So this is an aspect of the content meditation. It is very important. Also you can see how the body is related to the mind, but now, mostly we see how the mind has been related to the body, how the mind is affecting the body with its good emotion.

Sometimes if you are in a bad mood, you can see also that anger, or hatred, or things like this are affecting your body. So in this case the mental components will be different from the components you will have when you are practicing metta. And then also you will see that what you are experiencing physically is a little bit different.

But still, it's the same thing, the classification is by way of mind and body in different categories.

Then when you go to the process meditation, then you see no more the beings, no more the content of what a being is called, or what is the content of the location or what is the content of your own five aggregates, but you see that as a process, that means it is just flux, it is just impermanence, it is just energy that is constantly changing. So this is what is the difference.

So if you keep on observing the process that is perceived with the mind of insight, with the mind of vipassana, then it's very difficult to keep the practice of metta, for example, stabilised, because you don't see beings any more, you just see a process. So in that case the object of metta will have been changed. So metta cannot be practiced with the eyes of vipassana, because the eyes of vipassana see things as a process.

Questions and Answers

Sometimes, before I mentioned that it was not necessary to visualise either the parts of the body or karuna, so could I say a little bit more about what points I meant?

So, if you are not a person who sees images and is having a very strong visualising type of mind, then if you scan the body, or if you look at the body, then the body parts you will not see the anatomy of it. But some people, when they scan the body for example, then they will see the body parts. Also there are types of meditation where you specifically determine which types of body parts. Like it's classified into 32 body parts, so you start with the hair and then the hair of the body and then the skin and then the bones and then everything and then the organs. So in this case, visualisation is necessary. But this type of visualisation is more oriented toward samatha. So you take a part, and you use it also with the colours, there are many variations that can be done in this way, just for the samatha.

But in the case of the vipassana, you can start with the body parts themselves, like for example you start with the bones, and instead of

keeping your mind on the concept of bones, then, in the bone, it is also helping you to locate some areas in your body, so you know, now the bones, they are there, they are throughout the body, so the location that the bones are referring to, you have that in your mind, but you don't see the image, you don't see the picture of a skeleton. Like sometimes, some people they do the meditation on bones, and then they just see the whole skeleton.

So this is for samatha, so this is why I say it's not necessary. But for those who like to do it, there are many ways to go on that type of meditation, and the details are also explained in the visuddhimagga for those who like it.

But if we go with the vipassana, if we are using the body, then we are using body parts, but just for the location, just for location purpose. So if I say, not put your attention on the head, or on the lips or on the shoulders, and just to locate your attention so you are able to be in these specific areas.

But when you put your mind in these specific areas, you do not need, and you should not see the parts themselves, if you are interested in the vipassana, because vipassana deals not with concept, it deals with a process. So, inside these parts, you just see the four elements, the characteristics of them.

What are we supposed to do with the knowledge, or experience or ultimate reality?

So, the experience and then the knowledge of ultimate reality gives us a new way to look at things and it gives us also the possibility to see phenomena in a more objective fashion. So instead of identifying with the phenomena, we just see, ok now, it's not my body, it's not your body, it's just a body, and not only that, it's not a body, it's just the four elements. So, the four elements inside and then the four elements outside. So this is how we come to an aspect of ultimate reality, and eventually, in these four elements we just see a process.

So, when we are looking at reality in this way, then it's another shift of perception.

Is it more important, more real, more worthy of my effort than subjective reality?

No, it is not more important, more real. Both of them can be also conceptual.

So, the subjective reality is very important. If we don't have that clear definition of content, then we cannot go to ultimate reality. Also, if you are just living in the ultimate reality, if you just see everything as a process, how can you manage your life? I mean everything is a bubble, everything is just a chemistry, I mean, you don't care at all!

That is why before reaching these high states of meditation you have to be very much grounded in a reality that is practical. That's why in the whole eightfold noble path, you have these factors of right livelihood. So right livelihood, that means you have to find a job, and you have to deal with the job according to what it is required. So this is a subjective reality, also it's a conventional reality that will have it's own speciality.

Like if you work in a business company, then you will be specialised in something, if you work in a kitchen then you will also be specialised in something. So the interpretation will be conventional according to the situation. But also there is a subjective aspect of reality that is there, ok now, this is my parents and this is my son, or this is my daughter, or this is my cousin, or this is my friend, so this is very subjective, and it's very important. If we don't know how to relate to people the way that they are called, or the way that we relate to them, then the human relationship is not possible. So it's very important to have that subjective aspect of reality very well established in ourself.

So when, also, we are able to have that foundation, then we are much more happy, because we are much more balanced, we benefit by dealing with people correctly. We benefit also by doing our job very nicely. So we get more happy. And then we see that people who are just doing that, we see sometimes in our life, we see people who don't practice meditation, but they are really good people, really good hearted and then socially committed and really sincere, so it's very beautiful.

And also if you see these people, then they are really happy, very satisfied, and they are aware of all the problems of the world, but still they are contented and they are able to be peaceful by themselves.

So they have their own meditation, but they don't have any specific practice of samadhi or meditation as such, or forget about the vipassana, although we never know. But anyway, they just go according to their own interpretation, according to their own reality, but it is very important just to have that foundation.

And then the other point is, shall we all just become monks or go and live in a cave like Milarepa to pursue the ultimate reality?

So, now, I don't know but there was somebody sitting here, and you notice she has very long hair. So she doesn't need to cut her hair and I think she has a good deal of ultimate reality. And the same thing with you, I mean who cares about the robe, who care about the hair, and it's just a way of practice. So if you are a monastic, then you have much more time. Everybody is offering food, and they are waiting for you to be served, both hands, so it's great! :) And otherwise you have to work, you see! :)

But, you don't need to be monks, you can offer things to monks! :)

So, the subjective reality is not meaningless.

Is the purpose of all Buddhist techniques to calm the mind and to sharpen the mind, so that we can directly experience the ultimate?

Yes and no. Yes and no. Because the mind needs to be calm, the mind needs to be clear and also very balanced in dealing with all aspects of reality. So, Buddhist practice does not deal only with ultimate reality, it is also dealing with very practical, very conventional reality. So the development that we are getting with the practice of meditation is helping us to deal with these aspects of reality.

But the more we practice, the more we see, that what is important to do our work adequately is the quality of our mind. And we see also that the problems that we encounter in society and in our family or wherever we are, the problem is psychological. So we see that a big deal of the issues, social issues, or any issues, have to do with the mind. Of course putting aside the medical stuff that can be just purely physical. But a big deal of the problems that we encounter in life are because of the mind.

So that's why the Buddhist meditation is just to put the mind in the right set-up so that we get very clear and very balanced and then, from that clarity, happiness is coming. So the first benefit that we get from the practice, from the daily encounter of the practice is happiness. So you get very happy because you do good things. You get very happy because you say good things. So that happiness is very important. And also from that happiness, the mind is more concentrated. So that's why the concentration that you are getting just enables you to do your work more efficiently.

But the point is that you don't stop there. We can still continue, we can still improve our mind. So that's why, from that basic thing, we go and try to see a little bit more meaning of life, and examine the reality of life in much

more subtle ways. And then eventually we come to very subtle aspects of reality.

It's just like research. You start with what is very apparent. And then the more you look at things, the more subtly you come to discover with these phenomena.

Questions and Answers

The whole ocean gets in the body, not physically, but the whole ocean is a symbol for knowledge. Our knowledge can be very vast, so how can that vast aspect of knowledge come to be perceived by the mind, if the mind is not able to include all of these things. So if doesn't refer to the body, it refers to the mind itself. So the simile is about the vastness and the kind of infinity that is associated with the ocean.

Also, the simile of the ocean is very beautiful, isn't it, because it reminds us, ok, we have this body, but the mind is not only limited to this physical body, the mind can be including a lot of things and also that inclusion that we can get with the mind helps us to have a wider field of knowledge. A wider field of wisdom.

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Yes, so the question is about the bottle and about anatta. So are you the bottle? Are you the bottle?

So, then, no problem.

So the thing is it's just like the mindfulness. So now we are trying to understand the principles that we need to understand with the meditation. So we need to know that now we need to be very mindful of what is going on. So the quality of presence in the situation refers to the body. We have to be very present here. Also we have to be very present of what we are intending to do. So our view, our understanding will tell us, ok now my job is to put the water in the bottle.

So the right view, the purpose and then also the understanding of what needs to be done, this is the right view, and then the bottle represents just this aspect of the body, and then the attention, the direction that you will be able to give to your mind in regard to that, this is the right attention and also the effort that you will have to put these things together, then this is the right kind of effort. And also I like to say that this is the kind of adjustment that you need to do. So these three things, they refer to the eightfold noble path.

But once, you don't need the filter any more your mind is so clear that you just have the bottle and it's just liquid that you have there. So at that time, the clarity of the liquid will give you the understanding that well, there is no self there, it's just physical phenomena and it's just mental phenomena. But before we come to that clarity of mind, we need some tools and some kinds of means to proceed, so that's the whole thing.

So we have to understand, if we say, there is not self, ok, there is no self, but it doesn't mean that you don't need to do anything, we have to do something, we have to observe and we have to, life is just movement, so if know that life is movement, then we have to adjust the movement according to what we are aiming to do, but also we have to adjust the movement of the mind also.

But, if we say, oh no, never mind it's anatta, then ok, what is the use of meditation, if it's just like that, if you have nothing to do. So we have to do things, but also understand that this process of doing, if we look at it very closely, there is nothing in that with which we can identify.

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So, in this case we need to understand, if I look at the object, which is the breath, in this way, this is what can happen. But if I look at the object, which is the breath, in this way, this is what can happen. So if you look at the breath as a process of energy, you are just aware of all the energies that are being created or that are connected with the breath in the body, then, this is insight. But, the quality of the mind that is having objects of insight can be very strong. You can develop very strong concentration with that. So it's just a question of choice, but also alternatives that give us the possibility to go to more concentration.

So at that point, when the concentration gets much stronger, when you are staying with the whole breathing body, then you incline more with insight practice.

Whereas if you like to do the samatha, by focusing more on the very subtle breath, then the perception that you will have about the breath will be so subtle that it may give you an anchor that will be more suitable for deeper aspects of concentration.

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The question is, if we are using some type of guidance or suggestion for observing the breath that it's going to turn into vipassana.

Actually when we are introducing, when we are entering the field of vipassana, the objects of observation are just this body and this mind and then we see the relation with these two. But when we look at the body, we have to see that the body is just a physical process. And then this physical process is in constant change. So if you are to look at the breath and then you see this physical body, actually as the four elements, if you see the breath just as the four elements and you look at that, then you will see that it is changing all the time. So by emphasising the physical aspect of the breath, not the conceptual aspect of it, but the physical aspect of it, then the experience will make you conclude that they are just changing phenomena.

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2016 - 06/17 Attempt to describe reality

And then I'm sure that every one of us will have a different interpretation (of reality). So what we are experiencing here is reality, isn't it? So there are many aspects of reality that are there. And we have to adjust, we have to adapt to the circumstances in which we find a level of reality.

So, much of material we can elaborate on this topic, that it's difficult to select. So what I will try to do is to make the difference between content meditation and process meditation. This is an issue that I would like to clarify a little bit. Also relate it to conventional reality and then ultimate reality. So we will try today just clarify these two aspects of the definition.

Last week there was a monk who came to visit and I happened to know him in Sri Lanka many years ago. And then he told me that when the Taung Pulu Sayadaw came to America, he gave a conference in California, and that person, who was a layman at that time, asked him a question was, what is the fastest way to enlightenment?

Yes, you are laughing! And then when he asked the question, everybody laughed. But he was very serious. But, we can see also that the terms can convey a very different meaning from the point of view of those who perceive it. So the teacher, the Sayadaw, was very serious about that. He didn't laugh at all. Whereas in some cases he would laugh at something that was very serious. But in this case he didn't laugh, and then he thought a little bit, and then he said, simply by paying closer and closer attention to subtler and subtler objects.

So, it's a question of giving a very close attention, a very close observation to what we are experiencing. What we are experiencing is

actually the objective field. So this objective field comes to proceed from the gross to the subtler.

But one distinction that we should not forget is that it's not because we are able to pay closer and closer attention to a specific object that means we are neglecting the far away observation of the same object. We need to keep the capacity to focus in relation to what we want to see. So this is very important, because otherwise we are just trying to force the attention and ok now, I have to be concentrated, I have to focus and I have to come to very subtle perceptions of these realities and then we just strain ourselves from an ideal that we have come to make about what we should perceive.

So if we know that the observation is just something very natural. So we just have to relax and open our eyes. We can do that from outside, just observing. So when that quality of observation is established within ourselves with very normal things, then we can bring that quality of observation to the inner process of the meditation.

So with the careful observation of phenomena, we start also to be aware, to be knowing about the subject, about the observer, we know the quality of our mind more and more. The more we pay attention, the more we know about how we are paying attention.

So that's why we should not force the process, we should not force also the approach. The approach is going to be very determinant in relation to the success that we will have.

So it is a refinement of the meditation and then it just goes like a funnel. So when we sit for example, we just can start with bare phenomena. So, if you like to start with the breath, then you start with the breath. But you are just aware of the breathing process, naturally, and then the mind settles, and then when the mind is more concentrated you come to perceive more aspects, more subtle aspects of the breath.

So there was a question, since we have been introduced to the four element meditation, and the four element meditation as it was explained relates to the characteristics of what we are experiencing with these physical sensations. And then also these sensations are the way we are experiencing these elements. The so called elements refer to what is happening inside and refer also to what is happening outside.

The question is, can you please clarify whether four element practice is for samadhi, or insight, or both. I was told it's for concentration practice. It

certainly helps me to concentrate, but it also gives me insight, especially when walking or eating.

So now, we are talking about samatha, we are talking about concentration, calming the mind, and then we are also talking about insight. So, the parallel that we try to make with these two types of meditation relates to content and process.

So content meditation refers more to a conceptual understanding of reality, whereas process refers more to an absence of concept, just a direct experience of reality itself.

So, with the meditation on the four elements, it can be because the object itself, it is the experience of these four elements in the body, this is observing a process. But since the observation is not yet clear enough, it's not yet calm enough, then it has the purpose just to calm the mind. For example, if you are using the practice just to calm, and then just to relax and then just to be aware of the body.

So some people like to scan the body, so you are just aware here and there, and then you get rid of the tensions in the shoulders and then you get more comfortable, and then everything relaxes, and then also together with that observation you associate the experience with these four elements, like ok now this is heaviness, this is the earth, and then the water is there, and then the heat is the fire element, and all these things.

So the experience itself, the way you approach the practice is calming the mind. But because the object that you are observing is a process. Then, if you continue with that, you are just going to shift with a content aspect of the meditation to a process. So in this case the four element meditation is not going to lead you to more concentration than the neighbourhood concentration.

So the four element meditation is not a samadhi practice, but it's a samatha, that means you can calm yourself. But since the object is a process, then it is directly connected with insight meditation.

So, for example, if you are eating, then many types of meditation we can do when we are eating. But if you are just aware of the sensations that the food is producing when it is in contact with your tongue, when it is in contact with your hands and then when it goes in your body, then that bare experience of sensations is just the four elements, you are just experiencing some aspect of the elements. It's hot or it's cold, or it's hard, or it's very watery. All these characteristics, you can see them in the food.

If you like to do the meditation on the food, then when you are eating, just be aware, of course you can be aware of these experiences inside your body, but also you can be aware of the contact,

when the sensitivity of the tongue or the hand starts to get in touch with the food. You see they are just the characteristics, they are just actually matter, it is just matter. So when you put that in your mouth, then you see what is happening in the digestive process, it's like a laboratory, it's like a chemistry laboratory.

So it's all a question of chemistry. How the saliva gets into the food, with heat it is getting absorbed, and then the heat of the stomach is making digestion, and then like a factory there is a kind of production of energy, with the oil, and you can explain it the way you like, but the thing is that you come to experience the food, not by way of experiencing what is written on the menu, but by way of the experience that is being created in your body.

And then you see the food is just like gasoline, it's just energy, it's just calories. We can put any kind of label, but actually our body is just food. We don't eat for even one day, and even there we see that the body starts to get thin and the energy is very low. And when we are eating, also, the energy starts to replenish and we are affected by what we are eating. So, in this case, we can associate the practice of the four element meditation with the input of the food.

So the same thing, when we are walking, if you slow down for example the movement of your walking, then actually you are also calming down the mind. Then instead of having the mind distracted about what it's going to do and what is going to happen and what you missed, so you just come back to that present moment, and then you are aware you are walking, you are lifting your foot and then you are ok, and then you arrive at the end of your walking path and then you have to turn, there is nowhere else to go, so you are just going up and down. So then it's very calming. You are getting acquainted, through the physical process, you are getting acquainted also with the mind.

So, you are using the four elements, by way of the posture, just to settle the mind, just to anchor the mind in the experience, so that both become the object of your observation and both come to be known in a more subtle way.

So if you continue with the walking meditation, then the four elements in the body start to be more obvious, but also the elements of the mind, so

the mind also can be represented by way of elements, so you start to know a little bit more about the dynamic of this psychological process.

.....

Most of us, we come to the practice because we are looking for something very practical, we are looking for some meaning that is not theoretical but is concrete. So sometimes we come with an intellectual understanding, but for me, I came with the interest of the practice. But, nevertheless, when we get closer and closer to the practice, we like to use the texts as a reference, and then we like to compare the texts to see to which extent they can help us to understand our experience, to which extent they can guide us to understand our experience.

So very often, for myself, I see that the more we practice, the more we are able to make a relationship with the pali texts. So here, a text that may be very appropriate in relation to what we are doing now is from the middle-length sayings, and it's called the simile of the cloth.

“Bhikkhus, suppose a cloth were defiled and stained and a dyer dipped it in some dye or other, whether blue or yellow or red or pink. It will look poorly dyed and impure in colour. Why is that? Because of the impurity of the cloth. So too, when the mind is defiled an unhappy destination may be expected.

Bhikkhus, suppose a cloth were pure and bright and a dyer dipped it in one dye or other, whether red or yellow or blue or pink, it will look like well dyed and pure in colour. Why is that? Because of the purity of the cloth. So too, when the mind is undefiled, a happy destination may be expected.

What bhikkhus are the imperfections of the defiled mind? Covetousness and unrighteous greed is an imperfection that defiles the mind, ill-will defiles the mind, revenge, contempt, a domineering attitude, envy, avarice, deceit, fraud, obstinacy, presumption, conceit, arrogance, negligence is an imperfection that defiles the mind.

Knowing that covetousness and unrighteous greed is an imperfection that defiles the mind, a bhikkhu, abandons it.

So with all these defilements, we abandon these things. But what is that? Isn't it what we are doing? Like we meditate and then we start to be aware of what is happening in the mind, whether it is connected with these things or arrogance or conceit, or. . . we are just aware, ok now, the mind is a bit greedy, or the mind is a bit agitated, whatever the qualities of the mind

that are there, the experience makes us realise that this is not very skilful, and then by just observing.

Now you see and you would say, I'm sure, that your mind is clearer, that your mind is not so much defiled as it used to be when you arrived here. I hope so!!

So, if it is the case, and I think it's the case. Now you are not aware, because you are still in the laundry room. Although you have cleaned a good part of your dirty stuff, you still have quite a big load waiting for you. Anyway, just to that extent it's fine, it is fine.

So from time to time, when you wake up in the morning, then you hear the birds and you don't worry about the schedule, and then you are so happy. So then that happiness is just a manifestation of purity. So there is a lot of clarity, and then you are happy. But also when you reflect about what you have been understanding by this practice, then you get very happy.

Then the text continues, 'so when we abandon these defilements, then we acquire perfect confidence in the Buddha, in the Dhamma (it's not necessarily a religious type of faith or just blind devotion, it's just a practical aspect of something that we can experience and the realise) so we reflect about the quality of the Buddha and of the Dhamma and then we get a kind of faith, we get a kind of inspiration and a kind of trust.

And then it comes to bring us a feeling of, 'oh, this is good stuff, it's good stuff, it seems to work.' Right, so then we get possessed of perfect confidence in the practice or in the teaching or in the Buddha, or in the people who are practicing also. And then we gain inspiration in the meaning, we gain inspiration in the Dhamma, etc., and then we gain gladness connected with that. And then when we are glad, rapture is born in us. And when we are rapturous, the body becomes tranquil. When the body is tranquil, we feel pleasure, and then when we feel pleasure the mind becomes concentrated.

So it is just that gradual thing, from the gross to the subtler, the gross to the subtler. So that natural process that helped us in putting everything together, brings a kind of harmony, and then that harmony is bringing us understanding, and then the understanding gives us trust. Yes, this is good. And then, that brings us also a type of happiness. And then the happiness brings us pleasure, and when we are happy, then we get very concentrated, meaning interest and clarity of the mind, that's all.

Here also the text that may be relevant to what we may be trying to do, one whose body is tranquil, feels pleasure, in one who feels pleasure the mind becomes concentrated. He abides pervading one quarter with a mind imbued with loving kindness, likewise a second, likewise a third, likewise a fourth, so above, below, around and everywhere and to all as to himself. He abides pervading the all-encompassing world with a mind imbued with loving-kindness. Abundant, exalted.

Is that only in the texts, or is it something we can feel? Something that we can experience? So sometimes when we are not very clear about what is going on, then we can tune ourselves in that direction, to see what makes us happy and to also rejoice with what we are doing. And with that

happiness we are just more comfortable, and with that comfort we can go with developing the metta, developing also the compassion towards ourselves and towards everybody, the whole world, exalted, immeasurable and without hostility and without ill-will.

And then the text goes on to say that it is done with compassion and with sympathetic joy and with equanimity and the pervasion is just all around and then infinite.

So here, I would say that this is a kind of samatha practice. So, we are able to manage our mind in ways that the imperfections or the things that are very disturbing don't disturb us any more. And then with that clarity of mind, we use the practice of metta just to radiate these qualities. But still, on that level, we are dealing with an aspect of content. That means a being, a person, an animal. All these things relate to a conceptual understanding of reality. So we are talking about persons, we are talking about also the directions, it's kind of conceptual.

So from there, if we want to shift from a practice of samatha that is done with the brahmavihara, then there can be a shift in perception. And the text goes on to say that after that, after the mind has been exalted like that, then the person understands thus, there is this, there is the inferior, there is the superior, and beyond there is an escape from this whole field of perception.

So, what it means that we are able to manipulate the perception in a way, what we are perceiving in ways that will bring a lot of strength and clarity and concentration to the mind. So we are using objects, just for that purpose. So when the mind is strong enough, then we look at the process that has happened, the process that is happening at that time, and then

we deconstruct the experience, especially in regard to the perception. So we see that all these things are just the product of our perception.

Like yesterday we spoke about the perception that insects will have. Like the dragon-fly with I don't know how many hundreds of types of eyes. So we see that the perception is relative. But also the perception that each of us is having, is also relative. So that's why we like to say that this is the field of the content.

But when it comes to the process, then you just see that these perceptions are based on a subjective interpretation of reality. And then we come to see the process as a process.

So this is how the practice of metta can be used as samatha and also it can be used as vipassana. So when the vipassana is going on, then the perception of beings doesn't exist any more, we just see a process of mind and matter.

We can say that in Buddhism we have two aspects of reality. We have conventional reality and then what is called ultimate reality. So, everything that is conventional, like the social conventions, the words we are using, the culture in which we are growing, like a being, like now this is your name and this is your address and this is your job and you are a lady or you are a man, and things like this, these are concepts. So, we are creating concepts, and concepts are very important for proper social interaction. If we don't have that conventional reality, then we can't function in the world.

So, those who are afraid of getting into that weird dimension of process, you should not be afraid of that, it's just a question of balance. So we have to use conventional reality, we have to see also, how conventional reality is helping us to get the mind clear, to get the mind happy and then to get the mind peaceful.

From Wikipedia - Process Philosophy.

Although it's not directly related to Buddhism, then it is very close to what it means. And if you are interested in that academic or intellectual explanation, you can just read it and then the details are

very clearly explained. So, now instead of using the Buddhist texts, I will read one phrase here and there.

So the philosophy of process is a venture in metaphysics. The general theory of reality. Its concern is with what exists in the world and with the terms of reference on which this reality is to be understood and explained.

And modes of change rather than fixed stabilities. For processes change or every sort physical, organic, psychological is the pervasive and predominant feature of the real.

And then also the historical aspect of that, this is not new and it has not necessarily to do with Buddhism, but you have that with the ancient Greeks, and he gives Heraclitus, he was also one of the founders of this type of approach, or explanation.

For example, he says that process is fundamental, the river is not an object, but an every changing flow, the sun is not a thing, but a flaming fire. Everything in nature is a matter or process, of activity, of change.

So, process philosophy, what a thing is, consists in what it does. Also, they say that this type of philosophy, you have also many camps, you have many opinions and many types of conclusions that came to be brought about with this way of seeing reality.

After all, differentiation is sophistication, detail is enrichment. So to sophisticate, to get more detail, we get more rich.

The person who merely sees the bird does not see as much as the person who sees the Finch. And she in turn does not see as much as the person who will see a Darwin Finch. The realisation and enhancement of detail, bestows not just complexification as such, but also, sophistication.

So, it's just from grosser to subtler.

So here also, 'on this basis the humans complain, one experiences doing this and feeling that but one never experiences oneself, is much like the person who says, I see him picking up that brick and fixing that batch of mortar and troweling that brick into place, but I never see him building a wall.

From the process point of view, oneself is just this complex process composed of the various physical and psychic experiences as actions in their systematic interrelationship.

Process metaphysics proposes a limit to determinism that makes room for creative spontaneity and novelty in the world.

And also, the term process has been applied to science, it has been applied to philosophy, it has been applied to psychology, it has been applied to business, and also it has been applied to theology. So you have what is called process theology, and then those who use process philosophy to understand religion, then they see God also as a process. So it is very interesting that there are many types of interpretations of God. So who is making God? So if you use that approach, then God is just natural forces.

So, what is interesting, is that even among the theologians who have these theories, they still have different opinions, and they still sometimes don't agree with each other.

So, that's why we have to remember that whatever interpretation we give reality, it's our interpretation, truth is beyond the interpretation that we give to it. So when we come to truth, this is what is most important. And then words are a field of understanding, if we discuss properly, but

also it can be a source of misunderstanding and a source of conflict. So we have to be very careful by what we mean with our own words.

.....

So, what is the difference with the experience of content meditation and then process meditation.

So, process meditation is more a direct experience of what is going on by way of physical energy, like if it refers to the body, you are just experiencing what is there by way of characteristics of hardness and then pushing and then all these things. But also, what you experience inside, without the concepts, the characteristics of elements, then you can also experience that from outside. So that intuitive and direct knowledge of what is there inside, is also reflected with what you see outside. If we refer to the body.

For example, if I tell you, this is the table here, so you understand, this is the table. So, when you take this one and you lift up the table and then you put the table there. So this is a concept. So you are carrying a table, but actually the table, it's just a word, and it is just an idea, it's just a convention that language has fabricated to denote what is that.

But actually if we look at the table itself, then we can say that this is wood, but also if we look at the wood, if we look at the tree, if we are just looking at the substance or the content of what is the wood, it is just the four elements.

So in the tree, or in the wood, you just have the characteristics of the four elements. So a chemist or a scientist will have a wider possibility of definition. So the terms that are going to be used in chemistry or in physics are going to be a little bit different. But it refers to a more non-conceptual apprehension of reality. So the hardness of the table, the weight of the table and the temperature of the table are something that is not conceptual, they are something that you directly experience.

So, the same thing with the body. If you are just aware of your body, then when you are experiencing these things, then instead of saying, oh now I have pain in my bones, then bones is a concept, and nerve also is a concept. So if we are to look very closely to what we are referring as a way of anatomical parts, then we will see that these parts also are just elements.

Like for example, if we look at the ancient types of medicines like we find in China, or we find in India or Ayurveda or Acupuncture, as you know, the doctors they just deal directly with what they are feeling from your pulse. So they take your finger and then they evaluate by the quality of the pulse they can evaluate a lot of things, a lot of things they can know, a lot of conditions in regard to your health they can know just by the touch.

And not only they will be able to know the imbalance or the balance of the elements, because the evaluation, their medical diagnosis is made by the elements, so they will know the elements just by the experience of it and they will know that the person has this or that disease. But they are also able to know the state of mind, sometimes, just with the elements, so they will see the aspect of your mind, just by your pulse.

When they express it, they will use language, they will use concepts, so they will say you have a problem in your knee. So the knee is just a concept, but it refers just to a kind of imbalance in the physical elements.

So that's why when we are looking at ourselves, then the way that conventional reality and then the ultimate reality is divided in the Buddhist texts is very often they use the word the *suttanta* method, and then the *abhidhamma* method. So the *suttanta* method, it deals with persons, it deals with social contexts and then names and this is what we could call a conventional reality. And then it's clear, you should not, for example, put too big spoon full in your mouth. That is just a concept and it is something that is very clear. Spoon is just a spoon and then the amount of food that is on

the spoon is this amount of food. But if you use the abhidhamma method then the food is not there, it's just the elements, so you see, ok now, this is just the elements. It is just the water, fire, earth and wind. So, if we train ourselves to be acquainted with these elements, then we can shift from a content perception to a process.

.....

I think we need to come closer to the object of observation so we get more subtle ways of looking at the phenomena. So if we are to look at the phenomena of the manifestation of suffering, then we can see it from the subjective aspect. So you look at how a psychologist will treat someone who has difficulty in his life or her life, then it's very conceptual. And then he is talking about suffering. But if you are talking about suffering on the process level, everything is suffering, but the conception of it, the definition of it, will refer to something else. So just because it is a process which is constantly changing, then it has no substance, it has no stability, it has nothing that you can hold onto.

So just that fact makes it unpredictable, and then it has nothing that will bring satisfaction. So by itself it is suffering, so it is just a deeper knowledge of suffering itself, so instead of having a purely subjective interpretation of this is my suffering, and then I suffer because I have problems with my job or whatever, then you see the suffering in a more objective way, but still the suffering is seen, but in a very different dimension, but suffering has to be understood on these two aspects.

We cannot just say, ok now everything is a process, we have to be able to deal with the reality that has to be dealt, the convention type of things.

.....

Bhikkhus, as to the source through which perceptions and notions by mental proliferation beset a mind if nothing is found there to delight in, welcome and hold to, this is the end of the underlying tendency to lust, and then aversion, and then to views.

And then what is interesting also, this is the end of resorting to rods and weapons, quarrels, brawls, disputes, recriminations, malice and false speech. Here, these evil, unwholesome states cease without remainder.

So, what he is describing here is that we can understand the process. But what we do with it is more fundamental. What is that leading us to? What it is leading us to is that the world in which we are living is a subjective representation of what we make out of it. So we are interpreting the world

and then when we come to dispute with each other because we are attached to what we think is pleasant.

Not only we are attached to the things that we hold as pleasant, but also we are attached to the opinions that we are making out of them. So a lot of difficulties that are arising are because of that misunderstanding of misrepresentations. So we have to be very clear about that.

But here it gives a very practical aspect of how to come to resolution, and then it's just basic things. So they say, dependent on the eye and the forms, then eye consciousness is arising. So there is eye sensitivity and then you see colour and then you see form and then, eye consciousness, you know that you are seeing something, and then the three is contact. So when you put the three together, that means what you see and then the eye sensitivity and then the eye consciousness, these three is contact. And then from the contact, you feel something and then from the feeling, we perceive.

So what we are feeling, actually, with the sense impressions, we come to perceive, we come to identify, and what we perceive we think about it what we think about, then we mentally proliferate,

and with what one has mentally proliferated as the source, perceptions and notions tingled by mental proliferation beset a mind with respect to past, present and future.

So in respect to all the sense experiences, we interpret the thing, and then we just end up in trouble with craving and then with views and then with things like this. So it comes back to what we are trying to do now, we are trying to get grounded in the experience, and then from the grounding that we get from the meditation experience, we come more and more close to understand how these perceptions actually are arising, due to the sense impression of everything we encounter in life.

06/20 Morning Instructions

As soon as consciousness arises, it passes away. As soon as sensation arises in the body, it passes away. Dissolution, dissolution. No stability. No permanence. Arising, passing away, vanishing, departing, all the time.

.....

We have seen the elements, the four physical elements, this is our whole body. We can see also the four elements, outside our body, in material things. We can experience them through the body.

The ear base, and the sound are the four elements. The sound is just a vibration outside the ear base, both are the four elements. The eye base, the eye itself is sensitive to colour. This is the four elements. All the sense bases are the four elements. But each base has a specific characteristic. So the ear is not conscious of colour. The eye is not conscious of sound. The body is not conscious of smell, etc.

The eye cannot see, the ear cannot hear, the body cannot feel the touch impingement. Only the various consciousnesses of these various sense doors can know their respective objects.

For example, we have the eye, and then the form, outside, the visual object, and then eye consciousness is there. The three coming together is the experience, the contact. If you like you can go and see in these respective and specific sense doors to understand their dynamic and process. But, it's not that necessary. Sometimes if you find it too complicated, you just keep on the sense of the body, the sensitivity of your body, because it spreads in a bigger area. The body is all over, so just by being aware of the sensitivity in your body, could just be enough to help you to be aware of the consciousness that is arising.

All these phenomena are a process. Mind itself is a process. One consciousness arising after another, never the same. Seeing things as processes, or content, depends on the way we look at the same thing. The mind that looks at content, that mind is also a process. The mind itself can be seen as process, or it can be seen as content.

Now we have two types of observations. Mind seeing at the content level. This is an observation that is more rational, analytical. The mind observing at the level of process is more intuitive, it's more a direct observation.

From the Buddhist point of view, there is no space, no gap, between vedana and phassa, between feeling, or sensation, and the sense impression. Vedana and phassa arise at the same time, together, and they disappear at the same time, together. However, in these different moments, there can be a difference, when vedana is associated with craving or when vedana is not associated with craving, tanha.

So we have vedana, phassa, and also volition in every conscious moment.

Sometimes you can purposely direct your mind to specific areas, specific phenomena, inside, or outside. Sometimes you can just be aware of what is happening, in general. But the mind must be very clear.

Suppose you like to note the things that are happening. You are on the level of content. When you just see movement and change, you are at the level of process.

Somehow it is necessary to pass by the level of content, before going to the level of process. Observe very carefully and you will be successful.

Questions and Answers

What is distraction, as opposed to constant change?

So actually there is no distinction, there is no difference. It is just that when we are distracted, there is no mindfulness. So, when we are distracted, we cannot be aware of the constant change, because the mind is not mindful.

Is there a particular focus meditation for paralysis?

So that means if you have some physical difficulties, is there a specific meditation for that? So, of course, this is a physical issue, so you have to see also what maybe the specialist in this field will tell you to do to improve your condition.

But in case that you want to include the mind into your therapy, then it's possible to do it, and I'm not a specialist myself in that, but definitely some people, like if you have some meditation then it's also possible with your meditation to send some metta, and to send good energy there, and then you will see that actually the body condition starts to be able to develop more of a natural dynamic, the energy can become a little bit more flowing easily by themselves. So that's all I can say.

But definitely you have some people who are using the elements to heal themselves, to control what is happening there. And some people also they can use some meditation with the colours and things like this, again, to cure some specific diseases in your body.

But here, the purpose of our meditation is not so much oriented with that. But definitely if we work on our mind then it can have a very good affect on our body.

Can you speak more about the relationship between waiting and me, myself, I?

So what is waiting, what is waiting giving us, which possibility, or which opening is waiting giving to us? Waiting gives us the possibility to observe, doesn't it, because then you cannot reach the goal that you are

expecting to go to, so then you are forced to be in a position where you have to wait. That means the moment of your arrival has not yet arrived, so you are stuck to observe what is happening at that moment. So if you use waiting by way of observation, then that observation of the waiting process will lead you to understand your motivations. What makes you move. But the way to understand the process is to see how it is happening with the body.

So when you are waiting you can see now the body is waiting somewhere, like in a line, or somewhere, and then you are just waiting for something. So you can just be aware of your body. But by having the body as an anchor for the mind, then you can become more and more aware of what is happening in the mind.

So when you are aware of what is happening in the mind, then you can understand a lot of things. And also your attitude in regard to what is happening will also be influenced by that.

So if you know how to observe properly, like what we try to do with the meditation, this is body, so we try to make a difference with the phenomena, we try to deconstruct the experience, we have the physical phenomena, this is the body, for example, then we have the mental phenomena, the sensations, the volition, the attention, all of these refer to the mind. So we make a kind of distinction with the physical and then the mental.

Once this is done also we see how consciousness itself in regard to the six doors arises supported by an object. That means the sound or the smell or the taste or the touch, a mental object, whatever they are, mind is arising in relationship to an object.

So if you see the process being deconstructed in such a way, then you can start to develop an attitude of not-self in regard to your body. So you see, is there a self there? It's just a body. You see the changing phenomena. You see this is just a physical phenomena. Fine. And then when you look at the mind, then, when the mind is very calm. Like, before, some of you did like to count the thoughts. This is a way to be aware of your mind, you count your thoughts. You don't need to do that, but if you like to do it, it's fine. But at a certain point you can look at the thoughts themselves and then to see the content.

So from time to time if you like to have fun, if you are bored with your meditation, then you look at the content of your thoughts and then see which type of thinking is happening there. And in most cases you will see

that the thinking is about me, myself. Oh I did this, I should do that, oh I should not have done that. And then all kinds of things that are just related to me, mine, I. So, the proper attitude that will help us to have the objective understanding of non-self is just to see that the thinking itself is just thinking.

So instead of thinking I want to go there, you just see there is just a wish, there is just a wanting. Instead of thinking about I was such and such in the past, you just see there is thinking about the past. So instead of a thinker, you see thinking just as a process.

So the more you are able to do that, then the less and less you will identify with the whole process, and then the solidity that we have made to create our personality will kind of dissolve a little bit by itself and then you will see that this mind also is just a process of arising and passing away.

In one text it was in relation to the same type of question, the Buddha gives the simile of a conch. Still in some countries they use a conch, and they put a trumpet opening there and then they blow it and it can go very far. So, the simile is about someone who is hearing the beautiful sound of a conch, very far away, and he thinks, I must get that sound, it's such a beautiful sound, and he comes closer and closer to the sound and then he comes to the guy who was just playing with his horn and then he says, where is the sound, I want that sound! And then the guy says, well the sound, it doesn't exist, except when you blow in the conch.

So, actually, the idea is that the sound is just dependent on the conch and then for the sound to happen you need to blow in that. So we see that for the sound itself, as the mind, as the eye, then it's just depending on different conditions. So if you see that these conditions are just supporting the creation of the phenomena then it's much easier to get a disidentification with it.

So that's why with our meditation we try to divide the understanding into content, and then to separate, oh no, this is body and this is mind, and inside the mind there is sensation, there is volition, there is attention, there is mindfulness, there is greed, there is hatred, there is metta, so all these divisions that we are making by analysis of the mind and the body are helping us to see just the whole thing as a component.

But if we just look at the packet, then we think, oh this is a nice packet and this is a real packet, but by seeing that the packet is just a component of various factors, we see that the packet itself, like a packet of milk-powder, is nothing more than a bag of container.

So the same thing with ourself, there is no self as such because these are just the phenomena that manifest themselves through causes and condition.

But also, we have to remember that this type of seeing doesn't mean that you reject everything that needs to be dealt with with your personality, with your responsibility and everything, you can assume your identity, but see in that identity there is no self. So when you are meditating, that aspect, that wider aspect you can have on the process can help you just to see the things in different ways, and then be less attached to them and from there also being a little bit more peaceful.

What is the best way to spend ones time?

So it will be different for me, it will be different for you.

But one clue that we can get is that we can ask ourselves, suppose I have only one week left to live. You go to the doctor and they say, no more than one week man, or lady, so what do you do? What do you do? So then the sense of urgency that you will have by seeing that the life is very limited will bring you to the seeing or the the realisation that you better do the best thing that would be worth doing for your life.

And then also you will think that OK, before I pass away next week, so you can think that before dying, what would have I liked to do to be satisfied. What would have been the meaning of my life? So when you see that in this way, then you can use your time the best way. So it's quite relative.

So we can have many ways, as long as it is wholesome, as long as it is wholesome, as long as the way we are using our time, in whichever fashion we like it, as long as these moments are embedded with quality. The quality of intention. If your time is spent with quality, then not only you will spend your time in the best way, but when you die also you are more likely to be a little bit happier.

Similes for Vitaka and Vicara.

Some people were mentioning about the flies that are coming here in the summer time. So, we all know about these flies and you have a fly that is called a deer fly, and it buzzes around you and then at some point it just lands on your body and then it just bites. But it doesn't stick into your skin, it just takes a piece of meat, and then it goes away.

So to this simile we can apply the four things. The guarding, then the fly is just guarding itself and then mindfulness and clear comprehension, then the fly knows, now that is a very tasty type of meat and then he turns around you, and the fly really knows what it is all about, and then when it is landing on you, then the vitaka, the initial application the sustained application is there. And then when it bites, the taste is there, and then this is like the vipassana.

But, we have not yet talked about the aspect of samatha. Here, you have heard about the dangerous tick. They bite you, and then after that you have to go to the hospital and you have to have your blood tested and well, unfortunately sometimes you can be sick. But the thing is, these small insects, they have so much faith that they trust what they are getting into and they don't analyse so much. So, actually they know about the situation a little bit, and then they land on you somehow, and then when they start to taste it, then their whole head is there, so this is full absorption.

So, they can stay like that for about 2 days, full absorption.