



**“THE
GREAT
STONE
FACE”**

Sayadaw U Jotika

Dhamma Talk

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Transcribed by Viet Hung
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V. 01.00

Transcript: The Great Stone Face

(I speak) broken English, not perfect English. If I try to speak perfect English, I won't be able to speak at all. Don't worry. I will speak good broken English. Some of you, I don't think I've met before. Oh, but you... Wow, wonderful. Will you please introduce yourself to me? You see, I don't want to be your teacher. I never think of myself as a teacher. I want to be your good... Do you know the Pali word for good friend? Kalyàna-mitta... Yeah, you know that word already. Kalyàna means good or beautiful. It has many meanings. Mitta means friend. And Buddha even refers to himself as kalyàna-mitta. So, you see how important it is to be a kalyàna-mitta, to be a (good friend). I cannot tell you what you do and what not to do. And I don't like doing that either. What I like to do is, as a friend, I can share my knowledge and experience. I can share and tell you what mistakes I made, if you have enough time to listen to them. Because naturally, being a very stubborn person, I made a lot of mistakes. But I learned from my mistakes and I learned from good teachers. And I did some things that really changed my life, which I feel is

very fortunate. Otherwise, I could be a very rebellious, bad person, so to speak, to make it short. Because I like to do things in my own way. I won't listen to anybody. I don't take any orders. Very difficult to deal with me. My parents always were very upset. So from all that mistakes, I have learned a lot.

And sometimes I regretted that I made so many mistakes in my life. And then sometimes I told myself that, "Well, I've learned so much from my own mistakes that those mistakes were so worthwhile, so useful". Otherwise I wouldn't really understand how you hurt yourself by making mistakes. And after learning from my own mistakes, I learned how nice it is to feel and know that you are becoming a better person. That is the joy of my life. I am not a perfect person, but I feel that I am getting better and better. That's the joy of my life and it will go on and on until I die.

So, what have you heard? Who told you to come here? Please. "It's my friend. Cause she received a SMS. Then she invited us to join her. So that's why today we are here". So, you see another good friend send you an SMS. So, you are here. What do you expect? Just tell me openly, when you come here, what do you expect? You expect to meet a monk, you have never met before? So, what were your expectations? "We are just here to listen, to [can't get the word]. You give us the best things, to teach us

what is right and what is wrong?" So, in the religious term, you came here to listen to a Dhamma talk, right? "Yes". Well, you'll be very, very disappointed again. Because I am not going to give a Dhamma talk. Are you already disappointed? "No, no". Why not? Why not? "We are so glad that we can come and see you. I'm so happy". Well, then I feel much relaxed and happier. Because when I told you that I'm not going to give a Dhamma talks, you are still happy. So, very good. Thank you.

What I am going to do actually is I will tell you a story. Since I was very young I liked reading books. And the first books that I read were naturally story books. Because I just learned how to read books, just about ten years old and just became a member of a library. So, started borrowing very small books, big letters, and beautiful pictures. I hope all of you have read story storybooks like that. Did you love story books and stories? I love stories and I love story books, and now I love books and books and books, all kinds of books. So, I read a lot of story books. And when you read a good story and love it, naturally you want to tell that story to some of your friends. So, in the evening, about sunset, when the street lights are on, we, all of the children, me, myself included, we get together near a primary school where there was a street lamp also. In those days in our country, street lamps were newly installed at that time. So, people, especially young people, are very happy to be under

the street lamp, in the evening. So, they play near the street lamp in the light until very late. So, naturally, I was a boy, so I went there. And sometimes I sat there and started telling a story. And some of the boys and girls, they sat around me and listened to the story. And that became like a habit, like a ritual, a daily ritual. And then when sometimes I ran out of stories, still they will come and ask me, tell us a story. Well, I cannot say no and I don't want to say no. So I invented stories, just made up stories. As I go on. I started telling about somebody. I didn't know the story. So, as I tell the story, I made the story. So, that's how it went on for years, years and years until I was ready to go to university. And the last exam in my high school exam in Burma, we call that 10th standard. So, even when I was studying for the exam, even when there was going to be an exam tomorrow, still, the night before the exam, I sat near the street lamp and told stories.

So, you can see that for so many years I told stories and later I read in story books also about story tellers. Have you heard anything about storytellers? If you read history and different cultures, especially ancient cultures, before there were books, how did people learn from each other? How did teachers teach? By talking. There were no books. So, I asked myself, were there wise people, intelligent people, knowledgeable people, before there were books? What would you answer? What would you say? Before there were

books... Yes, yes, there were a lot of wise people, before there were books. There were a lot of wise people, before there were schools like modern schools. You go to a person who has learned something and you learn from him mostly just listening. And I read history and cultures, and in many countries I came across a story about a storyteller. I love that very much. And I saw paintings and pictures. And in Japan they have a statue, a stone image of a storyteller. Just lately I saw that picture again, and the storyteller dressed like a Japanese, of course, in kimono and holding a fan, a Japanese fan like this and then talking telling story. I look at the picture. Oh, I love that so much. The old wise storyteller. So, in those days, storytellers were wise. And telling such stories is not a frivolous or superficial pastime. It's telling a story is very serious, very important. It can change you. It can inspire you. So, in the end, each story there is a lesson.

Sometimes, although we call that a story, actually, it's what happened before, really happened before. It's about somebody who lived before, a real person. So, it's like a telling about a biography, about a real person, a hero, a leader, a teacher, a wise man, a Saint, maybe. So, that's how, when I read books, I read about the Buddha also, and I read about the Buddha as a story. Because whatever you read in the book is a story. And the more I find out more and more about the Buddha, the more I love him. As a young man, as a young boy in my early teenage, I was looking for

somebody I can love and respect. I was looking for a hero. So, do you know anything about hero worship? Hero worship? Do you like that hero worship? Whether you know it or not, you love heroes, somebody who has done something that is very hard to achieve, somebody who is very strong minded, somebody who will do something in spite of all the difficulties and hardships. So lately, just a few months back, maybe it was in August or September I think, a hero passed away. Do you know who that hero was? Who I mentioned, talking about? Steve Jobs, yes. He also was a hero. Yes, he designed this. Look how beautiful and perfect it is and how simple it is. You know, when he was making computers by hand soldering, a businessman came and told him that he will invest. I think it's about half a \$1 million. And Steve Jobs asked him, "why are you doing that?" He said, "oh, it's a business". You know what Steve Jobs said? It's not a business. What did he say? Anybody know? He said, "it's a spiritual revolution". He is changing the way people understand the world. You see how he feels about his work, his vision. He will change the way people live and work. Personal computer changed the whole world.

So, heroes are very important in our lives, in our daily life and also in Dhamma also, we have heroes. My teacher, my preceptor was a hero also. I looked at him. He was so calm and quiet and collected. So wise also. So, every time I look at him, I feel very happy. The

first thing I feel was very happy. And then when I listened to him and talked with him, I feel very inspired. The way he treated everybody, without exception, equally lovingly. No specialty, no bias. So, I watched him and I think to myself, if he can be like that, I can be. That thought has changed my life. So, have you ever thought like that? Have you ever met a person or read about a person and thinking about that person and telling yourself that, “if he can be, then I can be too”. So, we need heroes. We need to read about heroes too.

So, the first story, when I was very young that I read in a book... It's here in my computer. I always carry that story with me. And this is the story I'm going to tell you in brief today. Can everybody see this? What's the title of the story? “The great stone face”. That's the first story I fall in love with. And I still love it. And I still read it. I don't know how many times I've read it already. I first read it when I was about 15, I think now I'm 65. Carrying this story with me for 50 years. Why? It has a very important message. The story has a very, very important message. If you understand the message and apply that message in your life, you can be anything. Believe me, you can be. So, how much time do you have? Do you have enough time to listen to the whole story? I can make it shorter. Well, those who have enough time can stay and listen to the end of the story. But if you are busy, and if you have to go, feel free, please feel free.

So, the first line... I will read the first paragraph now, "one afternoon..." Oh, it is so good to read aloud. I love reading so much. I love words and sentences so much that it tastes good in my mouth when I read something. It's like reading a poem also. So, reading a poem is like singing. So, for me, reading aloud is like singing. So, "one afternoon, when the sun was going down..." Well, that's the time that I like very much, the evening, most of the things are done in old days, not today, not these days. In old days, in the evening when the sun is about to set, things are done. So, people are free. So, "one afternoon, when the sun was going down, a mother and her little boy sat at the door of their cottage." Cottage means a small house, one story house, maybe one and a half story. "talking about the great stone face. They had but to lift their eyes. And there it was plainly to be seen, though miles away, with the sunshine brightening all its features". So, they were there, sitting together, mother and son. See that in your eyes? A middle aged mother, maybe 30 or so, and the son, maybe about ten years old, a young boy, not too young and a very loving mother and son relationship. The mother not so busy like mother's today. So, the mother has a lot of time to talk with her son. And the son also, no need to go to the school the whole day and then go to tuition again in the afternoon. So the son was also free to just sit and talk and enjoy this beautiful relationship. And look at the stone face. It's on a cliff when the sun was down

and shades appear, in one place of the stone cliff, a face appears.

So, I'm ahead of my story now. And what was the great stone face? "Embosomed amongst a family of lofty mountains, there was a valley so spacious that it contained many thousands of inhabitants". So, there was a valley, a big wide valley surrounded by big, high mountains just like Switzerland, imagine it. Have you seen pictures of Switzerland? Big high mountains and cliffs and some valley and grassland and farms and huts, places like that. "Some of these good people dwelt in log-huts, with the black forest all around them, on the steep and difficult hillsides. Others had their homes in comfortable farmhouses, and cultivated the rich soil on the gentle slopes or level surfaces of the valley". So, people lived there doing farming and cattle's and all kinds of things. A very simple, peaceful, quiet life. So, I will skip a little bit. Not just the story, I need to tell you much more than the story. So, people living in that area had the great opportunity to look at that stone face every evening. So, this mother and child, son also sat there and looked at the stone face and talked about the stone face. "It was a happy lot for children to grow up to manhood or womanhood with the great stone face before their eyes, for all the features were noble features". Mentally, the face look noble, kind, gentle, wise, calm, peaceful, confident, strong, gentleness and strength together. "and the expression was at once grand and sweet, as if it were

the glow of a vast, warm heart". Because of the warm, gentle heart, the face was like as if it is glowing. So, when I watched my teacher, also, sometimes I felt that some kind of very gentle light coming out from his face. So, you can imagine that in pictures also. Sometimes you see an aura, a circle of light around some people who are noble, saintly person. So, this is natural, I think.

"It was an education only to look at it". This is the point. How can that be? Looking at the stone face. It's not a sculpture. It's a natural cliff. And because of the sunlight, so some shades appear at a certain time in the afternoon, which makes it look like a face. So, people look at that face every evening. Most people do. And here the story writer said, "it was an education only to look at it". That's a very important point. Can you understand that? How can that be an education, just looking at a very gentle, calm, quiet, peaceful, wise, strong feature of an old man, or maybe an old woman, a mother figure? Just to look at that picture.



You know what this picture represents? It's a picture printed. You know it represents Buddha. You sit here and you look at that picture every day and imagine that he is sitting there alive. It's not just a picture, but a real person sitting there alive. You imagine the whole forest, imagine the smell of the forest, imagine the sound that naturally you can hear when you are in the forest. And nearby is a pond or a lake. So, there are lotuses there. And the time, it seems is just about this time. Very soon the sun will set and you look at the features of the face of the Buddha. Very calm, very

relaxed, the eyes half closed, not totally closed, and probably deep in some meditation or jhana. Or maybe he was reflecting his loving kindness to all the beings. Look at it and imagine. Take your time. Forget about everything else. Just sit there and look at the picture and imagine that. That's a Buddha. And think about him more and more. He is always happy. He is never miserable. So different from us. He is calm, quiet, loving, patient. Look at him and think like that. Day after day, day after day, for years and years. Not just for a few seconds, for a few minutes. And not only that, imagine that somewhere not far from the Buddha, you are also there sitting. From the place you are, you can just look at him sitting there. Oh, well, I am with him. If you imagine like that every day, day after day, year after year, what will happen to you? Can you just guess? You will develop some qualities of the Buddha yourself. Not all... It's very difficult to become like a Buddha. And you will love him so much that you aspire to be a loving disciple or even a loving son or daughter. "Oh, I wish I were his daughter" or "I wish I were his son". "I wish I were his disciple". How fortunate it would be to be living at the time of the Buddha and learning from him, talking with him, seeing him even just from a distance. How fortunate that would be? So, in the same way here, the storyteller said that, "it was an education, only to look at it", to look at the stone face.

So, when I read this story, because I love this story so

much, and I read it so many, many times, again and again, I elaborate on what I have read and think of the Buddha also. So when I was quite young, I had an image of the Buddha very similar to this, but it was in the wide, angle view. There were more lakes and trees and even rabbits and deers around. And I had a picture, that picture on my desk, so that when I sit there and read or think, I get to see the picture most of the time. So, I look at the picture and I imagine. I'm a dreamer, I imagine things. My imagination is very much alive since I was very young. Even now my imagination is very, very much alive. So, here, mother and son, sitting together and talking about the great stone face. "Mother," said he, "I wish that it could speak, for it looks so very kindly that its voice must needs be pleasant. If I were to see a man with such a face, I should love him dearly". Oh, this boy's name was Ernest. I feel like I was that boy. I am Ernest. And this little Ernest said this, "Mother, I wish that it could speak". Looking at the stone face and he loved that stone face so much that he said if "it could speak, for it looks so very kindly (looks so very kindly) that its voice must needs be pleasant". So, I imagine, how would the voice of the Buddha sound if I were to listen to the Buddha? The quality of his voice. It comes from his loving, compassionate heart. It comes from his wisdom. It comes from his calmness, peace. So, the voice must be really warm and gentle, but with a lot of energy and life. The word must have life. So, as I was reading this story, I was thinking of the

Buddha at the same time. How nice it would be to be with the Buddha and listen to him.

Then the mother said, “if an old prophecy should come to pass”, answered his mother, “we may see a man, some time for other, with exactly such a face as that”. So, it means there was a prophecy saying that someday a man will come who looks exactly like the stone face. So, there was a legend like that. There was a prophecy, and everybody knew about the story. So, the boy Ernest asked his mother, “what prophecy do you mean, dear mother?” eagerly inquired Ernest, “pray tell me about it”. Please tell me about it. Pray means the old way of saying please. Please tell me about it. So, I read this. Oh, this little boy, he wants to know more about this prophecy. Because he wants to meet this person so much. So, even the name of this boy, Ernest, I think, is not just an accidental name. I mean, the author really thought carefully to give the boy this name, Ernest. What does Ernest mean? Eager, diligent, very strong desire to do something good. To be earnest. Not prevalent. To be earnest. So, his mother told him a story that her own mother had told her. So, you see, in the old days, people carry story from one generation to another. They keep telling the same story again and again. That’s how the teaching of the Buddha was carried over and over from one generation to another. Only after about 450 years after the Buddha passed away, some monks got together and wrote the teaching of the Buddha on

palm leaves they say. We still have those palm leaf manuscripts in Myanmar.

So, the mother told the story that someday this old man will come. So, Ernest said, "oh, mother, dear mother". You see, he was so excited. "Oh, mother, dear mother", cried Ernest, clapping his hands above his head. Imagine that, "clapping his hands above his head". He was so happy and excited. "Oh, mother, dear mother, I do hope that I shall live to see him". Live to see him. That means that I should live long enough, and hope that that man comes before I die, so that I will see him. So, do you want to see a Buddha, the Buddha? Sometimes I imagine like that. Oh, how fortunate that would be. Even now, when I go, when I travel, I look for some wise old man all the time. Not necessarily monks, even laypersons, some wise old laypersons I've met. I know some of them. They cannot teach me much from the books, but the way they live their life is enough. Very calm, very confident. They never complain. I know one old man like that. He is now 92 years old. I have never heard him complain about anything at all. I never saw him worried, sad or depressed. And he has enough money. But he never talked about money. He had quite a lot. He saved quite a lot. He was a professor, actually, in Oxford University. And so he had enough money. Because he never wasted any money. And his wife passed away. His son passed away too. So, he's now quite alone, living with his sister and his nephew. And

I meet them twice a year and spend about 15 days with them each time I meet them. So, I watched this man. I did not ask him any questions. And he did not teach me anything. We just talk about simple things. But I noticed that he never said anything bad about anybody. He had a long life and experienced so many things, met so many good people and bad people too. But he never says anything bad about other people. So, what do you say when you talk about a bad person behind that person? What do you say? Gossip. Yeah, gossip. Thank you. So he never gossip. It is very rare to find a person who never say anything bad about another person. He is very much well-read. So, he knew the history of most countries. And when he talks about the history, he never denounced anybody, even those people who were really bad. He said, understanding the situation they were in, this is something inevitable. So, this is a very rare person. So, are you looking for somebody like that?

Yesterday I told some of the people who came here. I told them that no matter how old we are, we are looking for a wise, old, loving, compassionate father. A father figure. And some young people even came to me and said, "Will you be my father?" So, I felt so, in some ways, very happy. But also, I felt like I want to cry. This young person, a boy, a young man or a young girl, he or she wants me to be his or her father. So, I try to understand that person. What is he or she is feeling? Where is that desire come from? You know,

to go and tell the person, will you be my father? Not, not usual. People naturally won't do that. Even though they feel it, they won't say it. So, there must be some very strong emotion, strong yearning to really express that. So, I try to understand this person. What is he or she feeling? Where is this yearning coming from? And I think I understand. It is our nature also. All of us, no matter how old we are, even myself included, when I meet an older person, calm and peaceful and dignified, gentle, loving, kind, generous, oh, I love that person so much that I wish he were my father. I lost my father when I was 15 or 16 and he was always busy. Never told me anything, never taught me anything. Too busy to teach, too busy to talk with me. He was a business person, workaholic. And my mother passed away when I was 35, I think 35 or 36. And she was not very well educated. Although a loving mother, she couldn't teach me much. I learned mostly from my teachers and some old friends. And then later, when I read about the Buddha, I learned much from the teaching of the Buddha. And then later, when I met my preceptor, my meditation teacher, I learned from him too. And my meditation teacher, my preceptor was, when he passed away, he was 91, very thin. I used to carry him. Sometimes when he couldn't walk, I carried him in in my arms. Very light, very thin person. But I never saw him disturbed. I never saw him upset or angry. I never heard him say anything bad about anybody else too. Never worried. Never talk about possessions. Never talk about fame. So, I met a few people like that, very

fortunate.

So, all of us need that kind of wise old person, wise old father, wise old mother. Even though our parents were not really so wise, we love them. And we are very grateful to them for what they have done. But still we are looking for a wise old man, a wise old woman too. I know one lady who is about 90 now. When I look at her, I feel like she was my mother or she is my mother. And when I relate to her, I relate to her as if she is my mother. So, deep inside us, we are looking for somebody wise and also older. Somebody we can trust. Somebody who can really give us good advice lovingly, compassionately and gently, not threatening us, do this or else. No, not like that. Very gently telling us to do what is good. So, being a very stubborn person, when people put pressure on me, I don't like that. Even though what they are telling me is good for me, if they put pressure on me, I will refuse to do it. Give me freedom. Give me choice. Respect my freedom and dignity. Then I will think about it.

So, here this little boy Ernest said, "oh, mother, dear mother, I do hope that I shall live to see him." But I have seen such persons, living persons in my life. So, very fortunate. So, his mother said, "perhaps you may". So, I will make the story shorter and go quicker to the end. He grows older and older, and then people who were born in that valley, but went away to some other places and become rich or famous, one became a

general, another became a very rich person, another became a writer, a poet came to this place again, to the valley again. And then when people heard that this person is coming back, all of them expect that this person must look like the great stone face. So, when the person comes, all the villagers get together to watch this man. And then some people say that, “yeah, yeah, he he looks like the great stone face”. But this Ernest, because he watched the stone face every day, he knew every feature in detail. So, he looked at the man and he said, “There’s no compassion on that face. I don’t see compassion and wisdom on that face. I see pride. I see some kind of arrogant. And even the person who came back rich was not generous”. He said, “there is no generosity in that person”. He couldn’t be that great stone face man.

And then later one day, the poet came and the poet heard about this Ernest. But at that time, this Ernest is not the boy anymore. He is much older, maybe about 50, maybe about my age. Who knows? In the story, it didn’t say anything about the age. So, the poet heard about Ernest and came right to the house. And there Ernest was, sitting on a bench and looking at the stone face and also holding a book in the hand, reading a book. So, this poet came and asked Ernest, can you give shelter to a visitor? And Ernest said, of course, of course you can come stay at my home. And then Ernest asked this poet, “who are you?” And the poet said, “if you have read the book that you are holding,

you know who I am because I wrote the book". And Ernest said, "oh, I'm so happy. I like your writing very, very much". But the poet said, "I wrote the book. I thought those thoughts, but I don't really live them. I can think beautifully, I can write beautifully, but I don't really apply those thoughts, those ideas in my own life. So, don't think that because I wrote that book, I'm that wise". So, sometimes I feel that way too. A lot of people read my books, and I'm very happy that people read my books. A lot of people said, "oh, we are so inspired. We are happy". Then I said, "the person who said those things or the person who wrote those things is a different person". I feel like there's two person in me. There are two persons in me. In me there, I feel like there's an old man deep inside me, but physically and now I'm quite young... I'm only 65, but although I'm 65, my mind is still about 30. My mind cannot grow old, I don't know, it doesn't grow old anymore. It stops at about 30. So, my mental age is still about 30. I learned a lot more and become more knowledgeable. My body is growing old. I don't know how old I look like, but I'm 65. But deep inside me, I feel that there's a very old man, an ancient man. And I look for that man even in the history. All old history, looking for a very wise old philosopher. Deep inside me, there is that person.

So, sometimes I imagine maybe some of you have the same feeling. I'm not sure, because I don't know. I don't think that people feel the same way. Do you

think, or do you feel that there is somebody inside you who is much wiser, sometimes at least? Right? Yes, some people are nodding. You see, don't be afraid to admit that. You are much wiser than you think. You really are. Even though sometimes you make mistakes and you think that, oh, how stupid I am. You blame yourself. Still, just because you are wise, you see that you have made a mistake and you are stupid. So, sometimes I give advice to people. They come to me for advice. Sometimes I say, "why don't you ask advice from yourself?" Does that sound reasonable? How do you understand that? You ask advice from me. "Well, why don't you ask yourself, from yourself?" Go and get a mirror, a big one. Put the mirror there and look in the mirror and ask advice from that person you see in the mirror. You really are wiser than you think. Believe it. This is natural.

And also from another point of view. I have lived with people who remember their past lives. When I was very young, I did not believe that. I said, "when people are dead, that's it. Finish. The story is over." But later, I found some people who can remember their past life. I lived with them. I did not just hear about them. I lived with them for a long time and one of them was my teacher. Maybe some of you have heard him. His name was Sayadaw U Silananda. Anybody heard about him? Oh, you heard about him. Yeah, very fortunate. He remembered his past life. And I lived with him in his monastery in Mandalay. He lived

downstairs and I lived upstairs. And I have met another person who was a woman. But in this life he is a man. And he meets with his children or her children from past lives. (In the) past life, as a mother, he gave birth to a few children. But in this life he is a man, very young, and he meets with those children who is now much older than him, and he meets with the former life husband. Think of that. So, life is very strange. You have lived many lives before and you will live many, many more lives. And deep inside you, somewhere there is a kind of wisdom. But because you get so involved with daily matters and spend too much time just thinking of what's happening around, you don't get the opportunity to develop this wisdom again. So, when I was young, very young, I felt that I was an old man. Whenever they have seats around for any kind of ceremony, I will go and sit in the best and highest seat. And my parents said, "get off". It's not for you. But I don't know. I felt like that's for me. So, life is very strange. I feel like deep inside me is a very old man. And I don't even know how old that man is.

So, this poet came. Back with the story... And he said, "although I have written that book, it's all from my thoughts. I don't really live what I wrote." And this poet heard about Ernest. And he knew that Ernest was a very wise and kind person. He helped everybody. He is very generous. He is not very rich, not proud. So, just before sunset, Ernest said, "ah, I must go and talk with the villagers now". So, in the

evening, the villagers get together and Ernest will be there and answering the questions, giving them advice, or sometimes telling them stories. Because telling stories was very normal in those days. So, Ernest went there and talked with the villagers, and the poet was also nearby, and the sun was setting and the great stone face was there, appearing more and more clearly, more and more clearly. And this poet looked at Ernest and looked at the stone face and said, "look, Ernest looks like the stone face". And the villagers looked at the stone face and looked at Ernest and said, "ah, yes". But Ernest was telling them stories and giving them advice, and then later he took the arm of the poet and took him back home, hoping that someday he will meet with the stone faced man. He did not think much about being the same, like the stone faced man. Because he was not arrogant. He was so humble. But he really became like the stone faced man.

So, what message is in this story? How do you understand it? Because I learned the message from this story and I applied that in my life. So, what is this? What you are saying is right? Right? Yes. Please. Please take your time. Relax, relax. This is very important. You know...

When Ernest see the stone face, he reflects and he cultivates what he sees and what he learned. So, this is how he practice. He wants to be the stone face one day. So, he has to slowly, slowly and day by day, he

see the face and he see I want to be that person. That person is the future Buddha. I want to be the future Buddha. It is something like that. So he's trying to cultivate. In one day, maybe in the millions years he will be the future Buddha. Something like that.

So, what this message means is you become what you love. The gist is that.

You can be everything, anything, if you really... work very hard, one day you can achieve what you want. You can be anything in this universe.

Yes, yes. That's it. That's a lesson, you know. So, I ask you, what do you want to become? Yes, that's a question I have written down. What do you want to become? Do you know what you want to become? You must find out. If you don't know what you want to become, what will you become? (If) you don't know, anything can happen, maybe good, maybe not good. Not so good. Maybe just live day to day, day to day, day to day. Get old. So, the question is what do you want to become? But there's another question which is much more deeper. When I ask you, what do you want to become? You may answer that, "well, I want to become an engineer". You can answer that like that. But when you answer like that, it means not you, it means your profession. I want to become a doctor. I want to become a lawyer. I want to become a minister. I want to become a president. It's okay. It's

okay to become all these, if you choose to. But there's another question which is much more important. What kind of a person do you want to become? Not a profession. Because your profession will not last for your life. A doctor retired, an engineer retired. And very soon my friend here will retire by the end of this month. Only a week more... Then after that, he won't be the engineer anymore. Although he had all the experiences. A doctor retired, a president retired, a minister retired. So, you ask him, are you a minister? He will say, "no, I'm a retired minister". You are not a minister, but you are a retired minister. So, what kind of a person do you want to become? That is more important. So, can anybody give the answer? Not just one answer. The kind of person you want to become includes many, many qualities, not just one quality. What kind of a person do you want to become?

Please, louder. Okay, I will paraphrase your answer. You are helping me, if you answer the question. Paraphrase means I will change a few words. What you are trying to say is that you want to learn the truth. Yes. And then you want to help other people learn the truth. Help them. They can also understand. Yes, help them understand the truth, four noble truth. Generally speaking, make it more simple. It means "I want to understand the truth and help other people understand the truth and live their lives truthfully or in many other ways". Yes, that's a very good answer. And I also want that. I want to know the truth, learn

the truth and practice that and then help other people to learn it. So, in my own small way, I'm doing it. But not as a teacher, as a friend. And what more... I want to become... I want to be peaceful. I want to be confident. I want to be free. I want to be loving. I want to be compassionate. I want to be healthy. Go on and on. So, think about this. What do you want to become is a very good question. But what kind of a person do you want to become is much more important and fundamental. Because the kind of person that you become, you will be that person until your last moment. But your profession will not last for a long time.

Even that you know... Even when you are living and working, you are a doctor in the office. If you are a doctor, you are a doctor in the hospital. But if you are at home and you are talking with your husband, or with your wife or with your children, are you talking to them as a doctor? At that time, are you a doctor? No. When you are talking with a friend, are you talking with your friend and behaving like a doctor? No, you are talking as a friend. So, a person is a different person in different situation. In the hospital, when you are talking with your patient, you are a doctor. But at home, when you are talking with your wife or with your husband, you are a husband or a wife. When you are talking with your children, you are a father or a mother. You are not your profession. Understand this you are not your profession. Your

profession is a job. Although you may be really devoted to your job, being devoted to being a doctor, being a teacher. So, me also, I'm a monk. Well, this is something like my profession, huh? But when I meet with my children, I have two daughters, I'm just a father, not a monk. One of my daughter is in Japan. Just now, I was talking with her and I told her that in a few minutes I'll be going there and meet with people and answer the question. We have a discussion this evening and I'll see you after the talk. So she said, "okay, bye bye, daddy". "Bye bye, daddy". "Bye bye Sayadaw". No, no. She never called me Sayadaw. She always call me daddy. Cause when I'm with you, I'm a monk. But when I'm with my daughters, I'm just a papa. I'm just a daddy. So you see, there's a big difference. So, what kind of a person do you want to become?

You must ask this question when you have really real time, when you are not busy, be very quiet. Early in the morning is very good. But sometimes when I go deep into the park near the cliff there, it's so quiet and peaceful. I just sat there. Sometimes I went there alone and reflect on myself, on my life. Or sometimes just meditate. So, when you are in that kind of quiet, peaceful state of mind, think about it. When you are not greedy, when you are not angry or upset about anything, just think about yourself. What kind of a person do I want to become? Things disturb me so easily. You see something, you are disturbed. You hear

something, you are disturbed. Somebody says something, you are upset, angry, sad or depressed. How come I get disturbed so easily? I wish I can be the person who never gets disturbed, who never get upset. It's not so easy, actually. But think about it. I want to be peaceful, confident, strong, mentally, spiritually, bodily and go on and on.

So, you see, in the teaching of the Buddha, there is a meditation called *Buddhanussati*. Anybody heard about that? Do you practice it? How do you practice it? Just recite the words. Reciting the words is not real practice. When I practice *Buddhanussati*, I don't recite anything. I have read all that. I understand all the meaning, but I don't repeat the words mechanically. Very gently, quietly I bring Buddha alive in my mind. Can you do that? Just now I told you that I looked at the image of the Buddha. And I try to feel the qualities of the Buddha. Very calm, very wise, very gentle, loving, compassionate. All the good qualities. And then I imagine that I am with him, near him, meditating with him. So, when you practice *Buddhanussati*, don't just recite words. Bring Buddha alive in your heart. Make him alive in your heart. So then, if you keep doing that slowly, because you have brought the Buddha alive in your heart, your heart, or your mental situation, mental condition at that time matches the qualities of the Buddha. Because the object, the thing you think about brings forth similar quality from inside. When you think about a loving,

loving person, how do you feel? You look at the Buddha, “oh, I love him and respect him so much”. What do you feel? He’s so calm, so gentle. And look at him. He’s so strong. He’s never worried. What do you feel? Can you say or can you think of, “oh, I love him so much” and feel angry. You cannot. When you look at the Buddha and bring him alive, his loving nature, his compassionate nature at that time, at that moment, you cannot be hateful, you cannot be angry. Impossible, because your mental condition and the quality of the Buddha must match.

So, this is one meditation practice that most of you understand. But there’s another meditation practice most of you never heard of. And I’m going to tell you. But I’m very reluctant to tell you. Very reluctant. Because when I do this to some people before, they told me that, “well, if you do that, then you’ll be very much self-centered”. So, that’s why I feel very reluctant. Sometimes people are so bound by words that they cannot think freely. They cannot do anything freely. They do things according to some formula. But as I told you, I’m very imaginative and in some ways creative too. And I create my own meditation practice. How do you understand that? You think that you must learn meditation practice from a teacher and practice strictly according to the instruction. I learned meditation from very good meditation teachers and I followed the essence of their teaching. But I also invented my own meditation practice. So, is it okay to

invent your own meditation practice? Do you think that it's a good thing to do? Or, it sounds really funny or arrogant. So, I'm reluctant, but I'm going to tell you. That's why I started talking about it. Reluctantly, I will tell you. Think of all your good qualities and make that a kind of meditation. Not just the only meditation. Make that a kind of meditation. Look at yourself in the mirror and look at all the good qualities in that person. Have you ever done that? Yes, yes. Very good. Wonderful. That's wonderful. Oh, that's really wonderful.

Just now I told you, you know, you asked for advice from yourself: Go and look in the mirror and ask for advice. And I told you that you are wise. Sometimes, because your mind is so agitated that your thinking becomes all screwed and you don't get the right answer for your own problem. But when you become really calm, you are much wiser, naturally wiser. So, look in the mirror and then think of all the good qualities you have. Basically, some of the qualities you may not have developed to a higher level, but you still have the potential. Don't you think so? For example, you are a good person. Do you believe that? Is there any doubt in your heart that you are not a good person? Do you believe that you are a good person? Wholeheartedly, fully 100%, are you a good person? Yes, yes. Say that, "yes". Don't be ashamed of that. By saying that you are a good person, it doesn't mean that you never made a mistake. You made a mistake,

naturally. But sometimes you know that, “uh, I made that mistake. Because I did not know what is the right thing to do. But now I’ve learned that this is a mistake. I learn from my mistake and I correct myself. I will not repeat the mistake again and again”. So, you are a friendly person. Okay, another quality. Is there anybody who don’t agree with me? You are a friendly person.

It should be like... I believe in like it. We are in in our body. Just in the beginning that you have say in the body. We are sometimes like two person, right? Right. We have very good character and we have a very bad character. It depends on what your mind is thinking, how you cultivate. Certain times you will be very good. Certain times your mind is very demons. Mhm. It depends how you see things, how you look at it. Mhm.

So, deep inside you, there are many, many good qualities. And without really exaggerating, I can say that you have all the good qualities that any wise person has potentially. So, you are a good person, you are a friendly person and you are loving. Don’t you think so? Sometimes, you hate people. True. But you want to be a loving person. You know that it’s good to be a loving person. Sometimes, you find it very difficult to love somebody. Sometimes, you find it very difficult not to hate somebody. But in spite of that, deep inside you, you are a loving person. You are a

compassionate person. So, reflect on all your good qualities. The Buddha, you look at an image... In the story, Ernest sat there every evening and watched the stone image, really lovingly and respectfully and yearning to meet with this old man who will one day come. He is always waiting, expecting to meet with this wise old man. So, have an image of yourself. What kind of a person? Calm, quiet, peaceful, confident, loving, compassionate, forgiving, patient person. And wise is also. Wise and getting wiser and wiser. Think of yourself, I'm getting wiser and wiser. I'm getting more and more confident. I'm becoming more loving, more compassionate. Keep that image in your mind. An older you, maybe five years from now, ten years from now, how would I feel and think about myself and the world? And if you keep that image in your mind always, every day, that will happen. Because what we keep in our mind as an image, not just words, you know, image creates us. The image in our mind creates us. So, psychologically speaking, words don't have much power. They have power, but they don't have much power. Images have more power. And emotion also. When you are thinking of that person, you see yourself there. You love yourself and you respect yourself. Self love, self respect. You have heard these words already.

So, when you practice metta meditation, where do you begin? "May I be happy." Yeah, you begin there. "May I be..." Isn't that sound like a self-centered,

then? Because you know why you have to begin there. If you cannot begin there, you cannot make any progress. If you don't love yourself, don't tell that, "I don't love myself, but I love everybody else". That's impossible. Even Buddha said, "Atta pemaṃ samam nathi". There is no person that you love more than yourself. You love yourself most. You take care of yourself more. You think about yourself more. So, don't feel guilty about loving yourself more than everybody else. It's natural. So, in the same way, "may I be wise, may I be calm, may I be peaceful". You can invent all these words. Take the general instruction and paraphrase. Add more and more. And not only words. This is what I'm trying to emphasize not only words, but the image. The image is more powerful. So, when you say, "May I be happy", imagine yourself as a happy person, not just say, "May I be happy". Close your eyes and look at yourself in your mind: Very happy, smiling, laughing. Do that. Images are much, much more powerful than words. Understand this. If you want to change yourself, have that image of you that you want to become. In the same way, if you want to help your children become a better person, don't just tell them you are a bad boy, you should be doing this and you should be doing that. That doesn't really help much. Help him to understand that he's a good person and he is becoming better, and help him to imagine himself as a better person.

So, this evening, this is the only message I'm trying to

communicate with you. The image... What kind of an image (do you) have of yourself? So, when you are thinking about yourself, be happy. Well, I met a man, a person, I mean, not a man. I met many men and many women. But I will tell you about one woman I met. Her name is Tadia Bozinovska. She was Polish, but she was born in America. Her ancestors were from Poland. I met her in America. She came to the monastery and she looked not very well. She looked very sickly, thin, very thin. And I can guess from her facial appearance and impression, I can guess that she must be taking drugs. But I did not mention that. I asked her, "Tadia, why do you come here?" And she said, "A friend told me to come here". Because somehow people spread word about me that. Go and see that monk. I don't know why. So, people came and I said, "oh, good". And I asked her a few things, and there were many other people around me who wants to talk with me. And I help my teacher to teach, instead of him. Because he couldn't speak English. My teacher couldn't speak English. So he said, go and talk with these people and help them learn meditation. So, I was there sitting and talking with many people. So, Tadia came and I talked with her for a while and she said she couldn't sleep. I said, "why do you come? What do you expect?" She said, "I couldn't sleep". That was the only reason she gave me, why she came. I said, "well, most people these days have a very hard time falling asleep and staying asleep". That's why they take a lot of sleeping pills.

And I was very busy and had been busy talking with people almost the whole day, so cannot spend much time for each person individually. So, I told her, "Tadia, for today, I give you this very short meditation instruction. Practice loving kindness. And it's not difficult. It's very simple". Anybody can do it. Even a child can do it. Think of yourself. May I be happy. May I be healthy. And all the good things you want for yourself. And then also think of your mother and father. May my mother be happy and healthy and prosperous and all that. May my father be happy and healthy. And if you have brothers and sisters, think of them. May my brother be happy and healthy. May my sister... And then your teachers, may my teachers. And then my friends, and then all the rest of mankind. May all beings be happy. And I ask that, "do you understand what I mean?" She said, "oh, yeah, yeah, I've heard about it". "Okay, now for today, go and practice just this". So, she went and practiced that. The next day she came back and I asked her, "Tadia, how was your meditation practice? How was your loving kindness meditation practice?" She said, "I couldn't do it". So, I was a little puzzled, why, couldn't practice loving kindness? How can that be? It's impossible. Everybody can practice loving kindness. It's so easy and simple. If I ask you, can you practice loving kindness meditation? Is there anybody here who will answer the same as Tadia answered, "I cannot practice loving kindness meditation"? I have

never met that kind of person before, until I met Tadia. So, I was a little bit surprised and struck dumb, so to speak. I didn't know what to say. Then I said, "why Tadia? This is the simplest meditation practice and the most basic meditation practice. No matter what meditation practice you practice, you have to practice loving kindness meditation". She said, "I hate myself and I don't want to think about myself".

You know, I felt so sad for her. I can see that she was very truthful. She was not just complaining. I can see that she had difficulty practicing loving kindness meditation and that is a very serious problem for her. So, I said, "well, everybody loves himself or herself, even in the teaching of the Buddha. Buddha said, "Atta pemaṃ samaṃ nathi". There is nobody else that we love as much as we love ourselves". She said, "I don't want to think about myself". She was also feeling a bit sad, I think, to have to say that. Then I said, "well then what about your mother? Everybody loves mother. Don't you love your mother?" "Oh, my mother, especially my grandmother. Oh i love my grandmother so much. I still want her back. My old, old, loving grandmother. So, we left our mother. We left our grandmother". She said, "I hate my mother". Not just "I don't love my mother", she said, "I hate my mother". "When she told me that she was coming, I told her, 'don't come. If you come, I will jump off the Bay bridge and kill myself. I don't want to see you". And when her mother called sometimes she said she

put down the telephone. "Don't call me. I don't want to hear your voice". She said she hated her mother. Then I asked "your father?" "He left when we were very young. I don't even know who he is. He was an alcoholic, didn't work and didn't support the family and left the family when we were very young". And I said, then "your teachers?" She said, "there isn't any teacher I can think of lovingly". Then I said, "what about your friends?" She says, "I have no friends". You see how desperate she was? Desperate situation she was in. Put yourself in her situation.

She said, I have no friends, and I was there, lost. I don't know what to do with this person. Then I said, "Tadia, I'm not blaming you. I understand the pain you are feeling. I understand the loneliness, your loneliness. You must be so, so lonely. And you are struggling I know that. I know your pain and struggling". There are so many beings in this world and most people love many people. Not all. I don't mean that everybody loves everybody. I cannot do that. For most people, I am just indifferent. I don't care what happens to them. Well, so I said, "there are so many people, so many beings in this world to love. And this is the first time I heard from you that there's nobody you can love". So, she was also very sad, and she was still very quiet. And I was quiet too. I was not in a hurry. And then she looked up at me and said, "I love my dog and it's not really my dog. It's the dog of the person I share the place I live in". Not even her

dog. She didn't own the dog. Another person with whom she shared the place, the house or the room owned the dog. She said, "I love the dog, and I feel very happy when I play with the dog". So, I felt a bit relieved. At least there is somebody that she loves. So, I said, "Tadia, think of that dog lovingly". We need that loving heart to become a human being and to meditate. If we are not loving, forget about any meditation. Don't think about it. Impossible. So, I told her to think of the dog. "Imagine that you are playing with the dog and feeling happy. Do that for a few days". So, she stayed in the meditation center for a few days. And then she came back and she said, I have to go. I said, "why?" Free of charge she can stay here. But she said, I have to go, I have to go. I said, "okay, you go, go back. But keep practicing this and then come back when you can come. So she went away". Do you know why she went back?

Drug, drug, yes. She was addicted to drugs. So, after a few days, she cannot abstain from taking drugs. Because in the meditation center, at least, you have to keep five precepts. So, she quit. She went back. But later she came back again. And then after many times, she told me that this is the only place that I found where people care for me. See? Then I taught her, gradually, step by step, a few more things to learn, to be more mindful and compassion meditation also. Have compassion for yourself. You know you need a lot of love and care. And you expect that from other

people. Give that to yourself. I love myself. I'm compassionate to myself. I have been through so much difficulties in my life, so much loneliness in my life, so much deprivation in my life, so much suffering in my life. So, have compassion for yourself. And gradually, step by step, step by step, after months, she learned to meditate, mindfulness meditation. And then I think after about 6 or 7 months, she came back again and she stayed in the meditation center longer and longer. One day she came back and she said, "last day was full moon day". And even though it's one day after full moon day, the moon looks full. So she said, "I woke up in the middle of the night. Everybody else was asleep and it was so quiet". And the meditation center was far, far away, deep in the redwood forest, far away from the city. It was about six miles from the city. And not many buses go on that road. So, the place was really quiet. Big, tall redwood trees. Have you seen redwood trees? Do you know how tall a redwood tree can be? I went and saw the mother of the forest and the father of the forest, and as much as I can remember, one tree was or it might be still there, 356ft tall. Unbelievable. Another one was a little shorter, but they said that the top was broken. Actually, it was the tallest, but the top was broken. So, it is now the second tallest. Very quiet in that redwood forest because of the tree. And the bark of the redwood forest is very porous, soft. So it can absorb a lot of noise and vibrations. So, strangely, very, very quiet place. So, she woke up in the middle of the night and

she went out to do walking meditation, and the moon was bright and everybody was asleep. So, there was nobody watching her. That was very important for her, because she did not like people looking at her. Because she felt that people were judging her all the time, not really respecting her. So, she went up and she got up and walked, did walking meditation for a long time. And she said she felt so calm and peaceful that this was the first time she felt calm and peaceful. Very deep, deep calmness and peacefulness. And she was very happy. And I said, "this is a breakthrough in your meditation practice. Keep doing it. But don't try too hard. Just keep doing it. If you try too hard, you lose it". And so, she kept practicing meditation like that.

And I spent one year and four months in America, and before I left America, she stopped taking drugs, she stopped taking alcohol. And she went back to school and she learned accountancy. And I came back, and I want to make the story shorter. Because this is a very long story. I knew her life in every detail. So, I went back. At that time it was 1984. That was 1984. The first time I met her, it was in 1983. I left America in 1984. Then I went back to America in 2001 again. And I was staying in a monastery, and somebody came in from the door and I looked at this lady, looks like Tadia Bozinovska. But she looked so healthy, glowing. Her face looked very healthy. At first, she did not have enough to eat. She was very unhealthy, sickly. But

now she looked very healthy and she gained much more weight. And she came down and bowed down to me. I did not ask any Westerners to pay respect to me, bowing down to me. I said, "it is not necessary. You are not a Buddhist. You don't need to do this". But she said, "I want to do it". And the moment she came in, I recognized her and said, "Tadia, you look so healthy". I did not ask her, "how are you doing?" That's just a casual way of greeting a person. I don't like this casual way of greeting persons. You do that with strangers. But with a friend, you don't have to do it. So polite and casual. So I said, "you look so healthy". She said, "I am healthy". And she said, "I own my job. I own my house". And not only that, she said, "I have an altar in my office and in my home too". She became a Buddhist. I never told her to become a Buddhist. I never taught her anything Buddhism. I just taught her to develop her good qualities, to become more and more mindful, to love herself, to respect herself, to be good to herself. So, you see how a person can change.

So, what kind of person do you want to become, you can. It shouldn't be as difficult as Tadia Bozinovska. So, think very deeply about the kind of person you want to become, and then try to find out anything that helps you to become that person. So, what are the things that can help you to become that person that you want to become? For example, I read biographies. I read biographies of good people who did good

things. It doesn't matter the nationality or the religion. For example, one person that I love very much and respect very much was Doctor Albert Schweitzer. Anybody heard of Doctor Albert Schweitzer? You heard about him? Who was he? What did he do? Yeah, in Africa, he was a German. He went to Africa and he built a hospital. He made the the building himself also, and treated these Africans. Sometimes, these Africans were so superstitious that they won't allow him to operate. You cannot cut or they won't allow him to do this blood transfusion because they are very suspicious. You shouldn't receive somebody else's blood. So, sometimes he was even threatened. They will kill him. He said, "okay, if you want to kill me, kill". Once there was a woman who could not give birth to a child. He said, "I must cut the womb and bring out the child". And they said, "you are going to kill the mother". And it could happen, quite possible. Then he said, "if the mother dies, then you kill me". Think about it. So, he cut the womb, bring out the child and stitched it back again, and tried his best. And he gave his blood also. And all the nurses, he said, "come, come, give blood if you have the same blood type, come". So, he gave his blood so much that he became anemic. Because when he asked other Africans to give blood, they said, "no, I cannot give my blood to anybody. If you take my blood, then you take my spirit away". So superstitious. So, when he had no money and no medicine, he will go back to Germany and Europe and went around, giving talks and

lectures. He was a professor of philosophy at first and became a doctor later, and he was a very good musician. So he made money, and sometimes he begged for the money from his friend. "You are rich enough. Please help. Please help! There are people dying there". So, his friends gave him money and he will pack all the medicines... At that time there was Second World War, French and German and British fighting in that area. Sometimes, the hospital area was taken over by French, sometimes by German. So, he was in danger. But he didn't care whether it's enemy or friends. Anybody who gets hurt can come. He will treat anybody.

So, when I read about him, I respect him very much. He was not a Buddhist. It doesn't matter. So, I read so many books about good people. That reading so much somehow made me absorb their good qualities. So, if you want to become a better person, one thing you can do is meet with good people, the best way to do it. And another thing you can do. What else? Just guess... Right, meet with good people and read biography of good people. Very important. Even watch documentaries and biographies movies, you know. I've watched many good movies, too. One person, Madame Curie. There's a movie about Madame Curie. Do you know anything about Madame Curie? She did research on physics and found radium. Because of that, she lost her fingers. And then she got cancer. And she died. So, I know a lot of stories, biographies about

good people, good scientists, good philosophers, good teachers, good writers, all those good people. I'm still looking for good biographies. I want to know all good people who lived and contributed something for mankind. And what else can you do? Meet with good people, read about good people, watch movies about good people. Yeah, think of yourself. At least you can say that. I wish "I can become like him or like her". When I met my teacher, I looked at him. He was so calm and quiet and peaceful and so relaxed. That's one quality I noticed. I couldn't see any kind of stress in his body. Even the fingers look so gentle. The eyes... He never tried and strained his eyes to look at something. His lips, his voice even so gentle and soft. When sometimes he talks softly, I said, "I couldn't hear you". He said, "come closer and pay attention, then you will hear". He wouldn't raise his voice, very relaxed. So, I said, "I will learn to become really relaxed", and I learned it.

So another law, so to speak, is what you think about growths. Many people said the same idea in many books. What you think about growths? Can you tell me something similar that the Buddha taught? If I read it, you will say, "yeah, I've read it already". "Mind is the forerunner of everything". Manopubbaṅgamā dhammā. Mano means mind. Pubbaṅgamā means leading or going in front. Dhammā can mean anything. Whatever happens for a human being in human life begins from a thought. So,

that's where you begin. Think about what you want to become every day, many, many times a day. Have that image in your mind. If you want to become a doctor, think of yourself as a doctor, very skillful. Uh, what else can you say? Very, very much learned, very kind, very confident – a doctor. If you want to become a teacher, think of that. A teacher who is who loves learning, who keeps learning, who is so excited and happy about learning and helping students to learn. If you are a teacher and if you don't love learning, you cannot teach. You may have a degree, a big degree, but if you don't learn, if you don't keep learning, if you don't love learning, you cannot be a good teacher. And you want to be a good mother maybe. Some mothers want to be a good mother. Think of yourself when you are talking with your children, imagine how can I talk to my child in a very gentle way, without putting any pressure, without scolding, without punishing, without accusing, "oh, you are bad boy. You are bad girl. You should be good." Without saying all that, those things, how can you talk to your children in a gentle way that makes him feel good about himself or herself? If you want to help a person become a better person, make him or her feel good about himself or herself. Like I told you about Tadia. I told Tadia, "Tadia, I understand you very well. You want to be a good person and you are trying very hard. Because of the very painful circumstances you have been through, you try to find a way to relieve your suffering by taking drugs. That doesn't mean that you are a bad

person. You try to solve your problem and the only way that you know how to solve the problem. Now you know there's a better way to solve the problem. So, I know that basically deep inside you, you are a good person". And she felt that. And she also told me that, "when you told me like that, I felt your kindness". So, only with kindness you can help another person become a better person, not with anger. Anger cannot help. Only kindness can help. And with kindness, you make that person feel good about himself or herself. Don't make anybody feel bad about himself or herself. That doesn't hurt. Very important to understand. As parents, we want our children to be good and we punish them every day, even by a look. "Uh, you're bad now, huh?" "Where have you been?" "What have you been doing?" "You are not studying hard enough". "You are not doing this. You are not doing that". If you keep a child what he is not doing and how bad he is, do you think that will really make him become a good person? No, no way. So, "mind is the forerunner".

To become a good person in every way. So, "I want to be happy". Have you think about that, like that? You think about it. I want to be happy. That's good. But not just want to. Think of the image of you happy, not want to, already happy. Do you do that? Just thinking I want to be happy doesn't help much. Try to understand. This is very deep psychology. Just thinking and saying that, "I want to be happy, I want

to be happy, but I can't". Because naturally, logically, that follows, "I want to be happy, but I cannot". And you will say, "I want to be happy, but I don't know how". It doesn't help. How is not important. See in your mind yourself a happy person. Calm, peaceful, collected, confident, gentle, relaxed. See yourself. See yourself not just thinking. Image, the image is important. So, if you tell yourself that, "I don't want to be unhappy", do you think that thinking "I don't want to be unhappy" will make you happy? Never. No matter how long you think "I don't want to be unhappy. I don't want to be unhappy. I don't want to be unhappy, and I want to be unhappy", so at that time, what are you thinking about? Unhappiness. It won't make you happy. And you think about "I don't want to be poor. I don't want to be poor". Do you think that will make you rich? Think about "I will find a way to work honestly and make enough money and more. More to spare. And when I make more money, I will help my parents and brothers and sisters and friends, not only for myself. I want this for many people", not just for yourself alone. And then also you think "I don't want to be lonely. I don't want to be lonely. I don't want to be lonely. I don't want to be lonely. But I'm lonely". That will not make you overcome loneliness. Think about all the good qualities of your friend. Think about all the good qualities of yourself. I am a friendly person and there are people who are very friendly and I like to meet with them.

“Oh, I’m so happy even to think of going to see my friend or even call my friend”. “Hey friend, how are you doing? I’m thinking of you and I’m feeling very happy now, just thinking about you”. So don’t say that, “I’m lonely. I’m lonely, I’m lonely”. It will make you feel even more lonely. That never solved the problem. It makes the problem worse, worse, worse. And “I don’t want to be sick. I don’t want to be sick. I don’t want to be sick. I don’t want to be sick”. Keep thinking about that, do you think that you will become healthy? No. Imagine yourself running, jogging, eating vegetables. Fresh fruit, not packaged food, not junk food. Fresh vegetables, freshly cooked food. And then walking fast and running, jogging. Imagine that every day... And also do that as much as you can. Go and do that. Then you become healthier. So, very simple. It’s very simple. Simple psychology this is.

And the same idea in a different way. You may have heard that our mind works in different modes, so to speak, different mode in conscious mode and in subconscious mode. You have heard about it. It’s one mind, but it works in different mode. It’s not two mind, one conscious mind and another one unconscious mind. We have one mind, but this one mind can work in different mode and sometimes it works like a computer, multitasking. Part of it is working consciously, another part is working unconsciously, subconsciously, so to speak. And the interesting thing about our subconscious mind is that

it does not understand the word “no” and “not”. This is really interesting and very strange, you know. Our subconscious mind does not understand the meaning of the word “no” and “not”. Got it? If you say, “I don’t want to be unhappy”, you know what, your subconscious mind will interpret it... It will mean, “I want to be unhappy”. The word “no” or “not”, the subconscious mind cannot understand. It deletes that word, so to speak, delete that word. If you say, “I don’t want to be lonely”, you know what your conscious subconscious mind will say? It means, “I want to be lonely”. And if you say, “I don’t want to be poor”, your subconscious mind will say, “I want to be poor”. And it will do that. Actually, 24 hours a day, our subconscious mind is working. It never sleeps. Even when you are asleep, your conscious mind is asleep. But part of your mind, which we call unconscious, is still working. So, the kind of image or instruction, or the kind of belief that you put into your mind will affect your life. So, what kind of image or ideas or beliefs or instruction or request are you giving to your subconscious mind? Positive or negative? Positive. But most people, a lot of the time giving negative instructions, by saying that, “I don’t want to be poor. I don’t want to be lonely. I don’t want to be unhappy. I don’t want to be this. I don’t want to be that”. And that’s what you get. So, that is the point that I want to communicate today. And I must stop here. Because when I talk, I keep talking and talking and talking and I don’t know where to stop. So, I want to give you a

chance to give me feedback. So, please give me feedback. This is a time for feedback. Anybody can have the microphone or a question or tell me a story about yourself.

From audience: Uh, they want to ask two things, but it's not related to your, uh, your your thoughts there.

Okay. It's okay.

From audience: Yes. I don't know. I quite curious that, Aṅgulimāla, the killer who killed 999 persons and he still gained Arahantship. And the other person is King Ashoka. He creates so many wars, and he killed a lot of peoples. But at the end he reflects that what he do is wrong. Then he became a Buddhist, become a better king, and he built temples, built a lot of things, a lot of good things. But the problem is, I do not understand, if you do something bad, if you kill a person, you got to pay back the kamma.

Right, right...

From audience: So, I'm quite curious. How come this Aṅgulimāla, he killed so many people, 999 people, although it's... The instruction is given by the teachers. But no matter how, to what I study that, whether right or wrong, whatever things you do, even you are children's, you do something wrong. You got to pay for it. You kill a person, you got to pay. But

how come he can escape? He kills many peoples and the King Ashoka...

I understand your question. Yes, yes, yes. I think some other people also have the same question, I think. Well, I cannot give you a definite answer. I can give you the general idea of how the mind works. Because I have not lived with Aṅgulimāla. But anyway, all of us, without exception, must have done a lot of unwholesome deeds in this life and definitely in our past lives too. It is so easy to do something unwholesome that we must have done all that. And in spite of all those. Unwholesome deeds, we are here, and we are good people, good persons. And we are... We love Dhamma. We listen to Dhamma. We read books, Dhamma books, and we practice meditation. So, my understanding is that a thousand unwholesome deeds and one wholesome deed, if you put in the scale, the one wholesome deed would weigh much more than a thousand unwholesome deeds. That's the way I understand it. Otherwise, we won't be here. As I told you before, sometimes, this is something very difficult to talk about. I told you that I have two person in me. One is very old. This is a feeling that I had. I have since I was very, very young. So, I imagine that I must have lived a very long life in my past life. And I feel drawn to old ideas, old histories, old books, old people, everything old. I love old people also, old books, very old books. I really love very much old things. So, I must have lived in my previous life and

did all those things too. And another thing that I felt very strongly when I was young, but I don't feel it anymore now. I felt that I was a warrior or something to say, like a general of an army. So, I must have killed a lot of people. I'm not sure I cannot prove it. I was like a... I wanted to be a soldier, actually. When I pass my 10th standard, I wanted to join the army training. But my mother said, "I won't sign this" because I need my mother... My father was dead already, so I need my mother's signature, permission. My mother said, "no, I will not allow you to do that". Then I went to the university, I joined the university training as a soldier also, two years. Because I like wearing uniforms, I like guns. And without getting enough training, I shot the gun and hit an eight inch ring, five bullets in the eight inch ring. And before that, I never showed a live, live bullet, before that. So, the first time I shot the target and hit and the bullets got into the ring, eight inch ring. Never learned that before. And many other things I have done without having thought to do it. So, I feel that in my past lives I must have done a lot. I must have learned a lot too. And I love learning and doing things, and I love doing things that are risky, hard to do, risk your life. And when I read about cultures, when I read about soldiers, I still like it. I thought, I think to myself, "I'm a monk, I shouldn't like these things". You know, when I read about Japanese history, I love samurais carrying two swords, one to kill the enemy, one to kill yourself. I love it.

So, what I mean is that I must have done a lot of bad deeds in my past life. Understanding my nature, I really feel definitely sure that. But, this but is very important... Maybe not far from this present life, I must have loved Dhamma books or monks or some stories of the Buddha. Because I went to a Roman Catholic missionary school, nobody taught me anything about religion. My parents were too busy. They were not learn it. They did not read books, they only read newspapers. And my father did not even read newspapers. So, they did not know much. So, they did not teach me anything. I went to a Roman Catholic school, and I learned more about Roman Catholicism than any other religion. And I got interested, I still read. Later, in our Burmese subject, we were taught, Jataka stories, and one of them is about Mahajanaka. It was not required for us to learn the Pali part of that story, only the Burmese translation of the story. But when I read the Pali part of the story, I loved that very much. But I couldn't understand anything. So, I tried to find out what it means. Not difficult... In Burma, it's easier to get books. So, I learned the Pali parts also. And I got interested in this Pali language so much that I picked up more Pali books and read and read and read. And then when I became a monk, then I became a monk, to tell you the whole story will take an hour. Then I became a monk and went to a monastery and meditated for a long time. And then I wanted to learn

Pali literature deeply as well as I can read English. So, this is another foreign language I want to learn. And so I went to a teacher, and the teacher told me, “oh no”. the first thing is my preceptor sometimes got sick and he cannot sit down and read books. So, he told me to get the book and read. So, I learned how to pronounce it. So, I read it. And when I made a mistake, my teacher told me, no, this is not the way to pronounce this word. But strangely, as I read that, I can understand something, not every detail. I can understand something. So, when an important point comes up, my teacher said, “do you understand what it means?” I said, “I think this is what it means”. So, in most cases I was right. So, my teacher said, have you learned Pali language? I said, “no, I just pick up books and read Pali”.

Then I went to another teacher to learn Pali grammar. But before he taught me, he found out that I could already read Pali. So, he just gave me books. Go, go, go and read and do exercises. So, I went to learn Pali Grammar with Sayadaw U Silananda in his monastery in Mandalay. He gave me the Pali grammar book, written by Buddhadasa Thera. Pali Grammar... I forgot the title of the book. So, he just gave me the books. So, I read the books and I did all the exercises. He correct, if there were any mistakes. And that's how I learned to read Pali. So, you see, I must have loved Dhamma in my previous life. That's how I believe it. I cannot give any proof. I love it so much. So, what I

mean is that I must have done a lot of bad deeds in my life, and I'm a very stubborn person. I don't want to take orders. I never work for anybody. I was not employed even for one day. Because I don't want to work for anybody. I want to work for myself. I want to be independent and free. So, I thought, I must be that kind of person who never took an order from anybody in my past life. Because I can never take an order, not even from my parents. So, what I'm trying to say is that no matter how many bad deeds we have done, trust in good deeds. The good deed is much more powerful than a bad deed. I cannot tell you why Aṅgulimāla Thera became...

From audience: I think it's because of the level of the good deeds. If you do some of the good deeds, which is like donation, and those things are the lower level. If you do the meditation, you start sort of the higher level good deeds.

Ah, that's a point. Very important, I think. I think so what.

From audience: We do with the higher level good deeds, you can control your mind. For those you did some of the bad thing, but you can control your mind the way you want to. That's the reason why he can be escaped from all those suffering, which is as a consequence of killing other people.

Right, right. Meditation is very, very powerful. Very, very powerful. Your answer is the right answer, yes. So, I told you much about myself. I was a very rebellious, stubborn person. And in my quarter, most parents told their children not to associate with me. Because I was a bad boy. I could become a really bad person, but fortunately I got in touch with some Dhamma books and met with some people who meditate and learn to meditate. And that saved my life. I have a very strong mind, I know that. If I put my mind to do something like an atomic bomb, I think I will succeed in doing it. Yes, I can become an atomic bomb scientist if I want to. I feel so confident that there is nothing that I cannot learn and do. If somebody else can do it, I can do it. That's how confident I feel. But that doesn't mean that I can really do it. But that's the way I feel it. I've taught myself many things, all subjects. I've learned many, many subjects. I went to university and studied electrical engineering. I loved that subject very much because electricity is mysterious. It's the most mystical phenomenon in this world. Electricity. Tell me what it is. I've studied about it for many, many years, I still don't know. You can tell that it's positive charge or negative charge or this and that. Still, these are all words and words and words. It's something very mysterious. But I learned many other subjects learn a lot about religion. Why do people want to believe in something? That's the basic question. There are many different religions in the world. I have studied almost

all religions, the very beginning religion, which is ancestor worship, believing in Gods, ancestors died and become God, believing in that. That was the first religion in the world. So, I studied religion, I studied history, I studied biology and chemistry, little, not much. Physics, I studied a lot of physics. Astronomy very much. So, I can learn very easily many things. But after I learned to meditate, then I feel so happy that this is the best thing I have learned. It doesn't matter whether I learn anything else or not, but this is the best thing I've learned. And I know for myself for sure that that has made me a better person and that has saved my life too. So, meditation goes to the root of your mind and change that for the better.

From audience: Yeah. One thing I also have a feeling like sort of... I was sort of angry to my mother and my sister and sort of those things. Like a few years back, that when I happen to meet a man and he taught me how to meditate. And after I meditate, I find that it is the mind changes. When I am angry that I realize that I am angry, I know it. The next level, once I am going to be angry, I know it. The next level, once the mind want to trigger anger that I know it. The things that never happened, it stops there. Once you can control your mind, you will start to realize that. Oh, this is there.

Please let me correct you, not control, looking at it directly, not controlling.

It's not you just. It's. It's hard to say. You have to...

You watch it. You watch it very closely so that the moment it tends to appear, you notice it and feel it. I understand that point very much. It's that... That changes your mind. It's not control. Controlling, you have to keep controlling. It never ends. But if you watch it and that watching mind, that mindfulness, is very powerful. It's like laser. Laser is concentrated light. So, your mind becomes so concentrated that when you watch anything, it's like shooting the target. So, anything negative appears, if you watch it with real strong mindfulness, with equanimity, it disappears. And you learn the nature of it, too. I can tell you much more in detail, but I feel a bit tired already. If you have more time next time, I can tell you how mindfulness works. Because that's what I put a lot of time to find out when I learn... When I went to the Forest Monastery to learn to meditate, I had only one object in my mind. I want to know what mindfulness means, real 100% mindfulness means, and what will happen to me if I become, if my mind becomes 100% mindful. I've learned many different kinds of meditations. So, when I learned to become more mindful, I can see the mindful state of mind. And I love that state very much. So, it's not controlling, it's looking. So, any kind of negative emotion you have, those negative qualities are not afraid of being fought. If you fight any negative emotion, it will fight you

back and it will become stronger. But if you just stay calm and focus and just watch without being disturbed, with equanimity and sometimes even patiently and lovingly and compassionately too. You watch the state, oh, this mind state is just like a naughty child. You are not angry at that negative mental state, but you are willingly watching it, sometimes very patiently, compassionately too. Then you learn the nature of that negative mental state very well. And the stronger your mindfulness become, the weaker the the negative mental state becomes. And when you are really watching, it's not you as a ego watching another you as an ego. Both of them are not ego, not self. It's the mindfulness and wisdom watching another mental state. So, it's impersonal. And that impersonal attitude, or impersonal wisdom is more powerful than personal. So, understand that it's not "I am meditating", it's just ... meditating is also another mental state. And this mental state which is coming with wisdom also, together with wisdom, is watching another mental state without fighting it. So, I think I need some rest now. I don't know how long I've been talking.