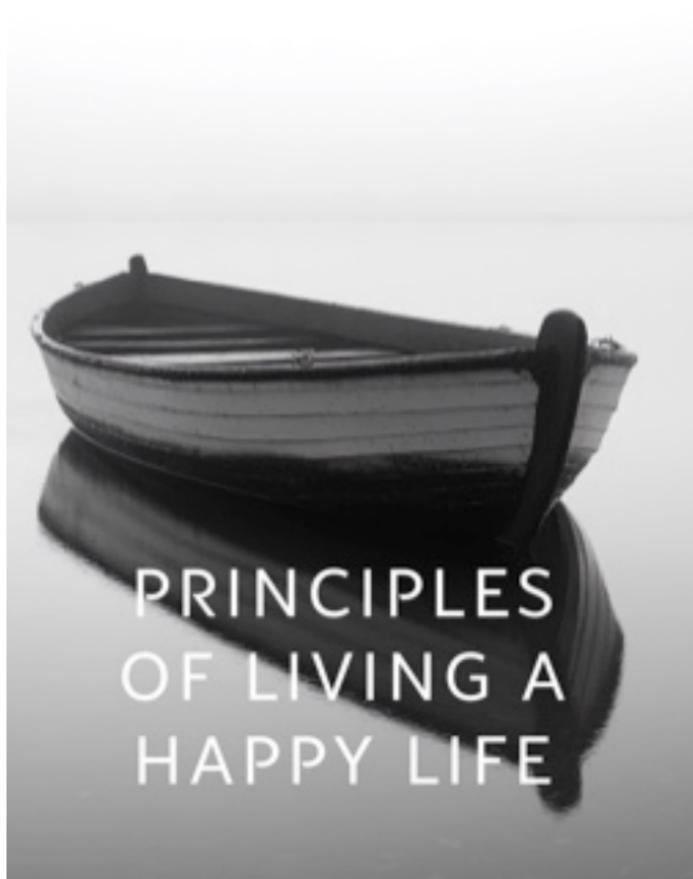


SAYADAW U JOTIKA



PRINCIPLES
OF LIVING A
HAPPY LIFE

Dhamma Talk

Principles of living a happy life

Sayadaw U Jotika

*Transcribed by Viet Hung
with support of Sonix.ai tool*

Words from transcriber

This dhamma talk was delivered on 06/25/2004, by Sayadaw U Jotika. It was originally named as “Solitude”, from the audio. It is the name of the poem that Sayadaw U Jotika used to share his thoughts. But in my opinion, what Sayadaw U Jotika taught goes much more beyond that name “Solitude”. For me, it is more about the principles of living a happy life. That’s why I changed the name to read “Principles of living a happy life”.

May all mindfulness, peace and happiness be with you.

Việt Hùng

Recorded Audio

Recorded audio can be found here: [https://
viethungnguyen.com/2022/07/21/dhamma-talk-
principles-of-living-a-happy-life/](https://viethungnguyen.com/2022/07/21/dhamma-talk-principles-of-living-a-happy-life/)

V. 01.00

Principles of living a happy life

Let us begin our dhamma discussion tonight by paying respect to the Buddha, reciting: “Namo Tassa Bhagavato Arahato Samma Sambuddhasa”.

- Namo Tassa Bhagavato Arahato Samma Sambuddhasa
- Namo Tassa Bhagavato Arahato Samma Sambuddhasa
- Namo Tassa Bhagavato Arahato Samma Sambuddhasa

This is the third time I'm here. I hope there are some old friends here. We met before. Are there anybody here? Sit as you like. Make yourself comfortable. I see some of you have got books, notebooks to take notes. That's very good. I've got my notes, too. I like reading poems. So I found a poem which I like very much. And I would like to read the poems and tell you what I think about it. And you also try to understand in your own way, how you want to understand that poem. The title of the poem is very good. It is called “Solitude”. It was written a long time ago, written by somebody who

lived, who was born in 1850 and died in 1919. So almost 85 years ago. And some of you may have read this poem, or at least part of this poem. Because this poem is very popular.

“Laugh, and the world laughs with you”

The first line is: “Laugh, and the world laughs with you”. How do you like that? “Laugh, and the world laughs with you”. I know some people who laugh a lot. Everybody, especially my friend who is sitting way back, she laughs for hours. So, laugh and the world laughs with you. The world means people. So, if you are happy and if you say jokes and laugh, people like to come to you. Because people want to be happy. Therefore, if you want to have a lot of friends coming to you, you must be a happy person. And when people come, you must have some things to say to make them happy and laugh, which is quite natural. But for us, monks, it is not allowed to laugh loudly. So, we have to suppress ourselves when we want to laugh. And you may have read that Buddha only smiled sometimes. But monks sometimes laugh. I know some monks, some of my friends, they laugh quite a lot. Because they are happy. So some people are naturally happy. Their temperament is happy temperament. So, people are different. People have different personalities. Some people are naturally quite happy. And whatever happened, they will look at that situation from a very funny point of view and make fun of it. Sometimes, they even make fun of

themselves. They tell stories about themselves and they laugh. That's a very good thing to do. Because taking things too seriously sometimes makes you feel very unhappy. But there are things that we must take seriously. Don't take everything seriously.

Today, where I am staying, we invited many other monks to, including the monks here, the two monks, these two monks here, and one very old teacher who is 89 years old. And this is the first time he visited Singapore, is visiting Singapore. And all of us were very happy to see him. Not because he laughs a lot. But he was just very calm and peaceful and relaxed and natural. I watched him very closely. I met him before. I went to his monastery in Myanmar, in Rangoon. So, I know him quite well. And he is a friend of my teacher, very close friend of my teacher who passed away two years ago. So, I watched him and he was so calm and peaceful and relaxed and so natural. He was not acting. He was just being himself. He was not self-conscious, although there were a lot of people around sitting and looking at him. He was not feeling tense or self-conscious. And while he was eating, also I was sitting opposite from the table and watched him eating too. And this friend of mine, he helped that old teacher eat his meal. And he put what is proper, what the teacher may like in the spoon. And the old teacher took the spoon and put it into his mouth. Just very natural. And just to watch him eating makes me feel very calm and happy. He was so

kind, so natural, so gentle, so relaxed.

So, people like people who are peaceful, kind and relaxed. If you feel tense most of the time, if you are upset most of the time, and if you are unkind or if you complain too much about this or that, if you complain too much about people or situations, people feel unhappy so they avoid you.

So, laugh, and the world laughs with you is very important. It means be happy. If you are happy, then people will like you more, which is quite natural. If you don't want to be lonely, learn to be happy. And in the Mangala Sutta, there's one point in Mangala Sutta, in Pali it is *samaṇānañca dassanaṃ*. Some of you are nodding. I think, you know, you know that part. *Samaṇā* means somebody who has overcome all defilements, who is pure, who is calm and peaceful. And to see such a person is a blessing. And the word blessing is not really the correct translation of the Pali word *mangala*. When I look for the correct meaning of the word *mangala*, I found that, that is the cause to make life fulfilling, successful, and that makes, that which that makes you grow. So, that which makes you grow. That which makes your life fulfilling is *mangala*. So, how does that help you when you see somebody who is calm and peaceful and relaxed and who is pure in his mind, in his heart? How does that help you?

From my own experience since I was very young,

whenever I see people who are calm and peaceful and relaxed and happy, I watch them very closely. And I found that because in those days I was not very happy, whenever I met people who were calm and peaceful and happy, I thought this is amazing to be calm, to be peaceful, to be relaxed and to be happy. It's amazing. It is so easy to be unhappy. And some people are happy when they get what they want. Well, people are happy when they are singing and dancing. And people are happy when they have a birthday party or some kind of party. That is usual, not difficult. But those people that I met are happy for no good reason. They are just happy. No reason. That was really amazing. So I met a few teachers, laypersons, and also monks. Whenever I met them, I watched them, they are always happy. When they are working, they are happy. When they are talking, they are happy. No matter what they are doing, I watch them, they are very calm, relaxed and happy and very kind, very generous. So I thought, this is amazing. So, other people are happy. But if you ask them, why are you happy? They will tell you, "Oh, I am happy because I got a lot of money today". That's not extraordinary. Nothing unusual. Anybody will be happy if he or she gets a lot of money today. What about you? If you get a lottery today, will you be happy, if you win the lottery? Of course most of you will be happy. But real happiness has no reason.

So therefore we must understand that there are many

different kinds of happiness. In the teachings of the Buddha, Buddha talked about kama sukha. Kama sukha means sense-pleasure, enjoy sense-pleasure, happiness you feel when you are enjoying sense-pleasure. When you see something very beautiful, you feel happy. When you hear some good music, you feel happy. And I like good music too. I was a musician. I am still very much attached to my violin. So when you hear good music, you feel very happy. But sometimes when I hear music, I feel very sad too. But even that sad feeling, I enjoy that very much. Sometimes people enjoy sadness, too. And when you eat, when you get to eat what you like, you feel very happy. When you meet with somebody who love you, you are very happy. So they are happiness, which depends on situations and people. And Buddha also talked about jhana sukha. Jhana sukha means when you meditate, your mind becomes very calm and peaceful. Your mind stops thinking. Your mind becomes very concentrated. So you are not thinking about anything that will make you greedy or angry. So your mind is focused in one object and absorbed in that object. So when your mind get to that state, you feel very happy too. So, that is called jhana sukha.

And there's another kind of sukha, which is vipassana sukha. You meditate and you look at your body and mind and you see the true nature of the body and mind. And you develop wisdom and that wisdom makes you become more mature. And because of that,

you feel a kind of joy. So, wisdom gives you joy. Wisdom also gives you security. So real security comes with wisdom. Without wisdom, no matter how much money you have, you will not feel secure. Because nothing is permanent. Everything changes. Whatever you have, you will lose someday. At least when you die, you lose everything you have, including even your body. So when you practice vipassana, you develop wisdom. And because of that wisdom, you can accept anything. So because of that acceptance, you are more relaxed and peaceful and calm and happy. So that is briefly vipassana sukha.

And when you attain enlightenment that is called magga sukha and phala sukha. Because at that time you can get absorbed into what we know as nibbana, the cessation of all phenomenon.

So, there are many different kinds of happiness. But most people only know the lowest level of happiness, kama sukha only. They want to see good things, which is okay. I like to see good things too. And good sceneries especially. And when you hear good sound, you feel happy. And I like to listen to birds, especially. Birds are very happy. I never saw a bird who which is depressed or unhappy. You listen to the birds and you feel that, Oh, this bird is happy. Sometimes when I listen to the birds, I imagine myself the bird and feel how that bird is feeling when it is singing. So, normal enjoyment of sense pleasure is okay. Because it is not

evil. But some people cannot restrain themselves. They want to enjoy sense pleasure, and they go beyond the boundary. They break the precepts to enjoy a sense of pleasure. And if you do that, you may feel happy for a while, but you'll feel guilty. And guilt is really painful. So, to enjoy sense pleasure at the cost of your integrity, I mean, at the cost of the precepts, then you'll be unhappy. So we must understand that this normal sense pleasure should have a limit. But we must also understand that this sensual pleasure, which makes us happy, can also make us unhappy. Anything that can make you happy, I mean the worldly, sensual pleasure, anything that can make you happy can also make you unhappy.

And when you enjoy sense pleasure, there is a limit to how much you can enjoy. For example, you like to eat chocolate? I like to eat chocolates, too. Every morning here, my friend, he gives me chocolates. But before I eat it, I must think very carefully how much? Because I have diabetes and the chocolate has got sugar. So I eat chocolate. It tastes really good. So I eat it mindfully. But I stop when I need to stop. There must be a limit. If I eat too much, what will happen? It will make me sick. So no matter how tasty a chocolate is, if you eat too much, it will make you sick and it will not make you happy anymore. So, any other kind of sense pleasure, like music, if you listen to music for a few minutes, well, it will make you happy. But if you listen to that music for the whole day, then it becomes very

painful.

So for me, the best sound that I want to listen to is silence. Silence is really not a sound. But you can learn to listen to silence, too. And this is very important. We must train ourselves to listen to silence. So when I was younger, even now, whenever I get a chance, I'll go into the forest, find a nice and quiet place, and sit there and listen to the nature, birds, wind. Sometimes even the birds not singing. It was very quiet. No wind, sometimes very quiet. And I will sit there and meditate and the mind also become very quiet. So it's quiet outside and it's quiet inside. When the two comes together, then you really feel quietness. You can really feel it. The mind becomes so quiet and peaceful.

So sensual pleasure, if you enjoy too much, it becomes painful. But the kind of enjoyment or pleasure or happiness you get from meditation is quite different. No matter how long you meditate, your mind becomes more and more quiet, more and more peaceful. And you feel more and more joy. And it doesn't make you tired. Sense pleasure makes you tired. It has a limit. But the pleasure or the joy you get from meditating doesn't make you feel tired. So, we must understand that the range of pleasure or happiness we can enjoy must be big, wide range. Most people have very narrow range of pleasure. I noticed that some people enjoy the same thing. They have very narrow range. But some people have a wide range of enjoyment. So,

learn to enjoy harmless pleasures. And I have read a few books and one books, one of the books is called "Simple Pleasures". So, we must learn to enjoy simple pleasures. It doesn't cost you much. It doesn't make you tired. It's not evil. You don't break any precepts to enjoy those pleasures. So, train yourself to enjoy more then your mind will be more cheerful most of the time. Those who have narrow range of enjoyment, sometimes become very depressed because the usual thing that they were enjoying does not give them any satisfaction anymore. So, they feel boredom. They feel depressed. Therefore, it is very important for us to learn how many different kinds of pleasures we can enjoy. So we must learn to enjoy pleasure.

Because these days I noticed many people who are depressed. And when I ask them why they are depressed, or when I find out why they are depressed, I found out that they are not interested in many things. They are interested in only one or two things, very narrow. And they don't have many friends. They don't have hobbies. When I ask them, do you like playing musical instruments? They say, no. Do you like painting? They say, no. Do you like gardening? They say, no. What do you like? They don't know. So, if you have a very narrow range, sometimes that will not give you any happiness any more. Then you become bored or depressed. So, not only sense pleasure, learn to enjoy meditation. Meditation is really enjoyable. I learned to meditate because I enjoy

meditation. And I keep meditating because I enjoy meditation. It's not something I must do. It's something I want to do. It's something I like to do. So, as you grow older, as you become more and more mature, what you enjoy also must become higher and higher. So, we must learn to enjoy higher forms of happiness. So, jhana is also a higher form of happiness. And vipassana also is a higher form of happiness. Therefore, Buddha said jhanasukha and vipassanasukha.

But let me read you the other part of the poem, too. Because it's a very long poem. "Laugh, and the world laughs with you". So if you have many friends, learn to be happy. It's our responsibility to be happy. Well, yeah, another thing here. Not only is there a right to be happy, there is a duty to be happy. How do you like that? Not only is there a right to be happy. We have a right to be happy. When you are happy, nobody can say that: "Why are you happy? You should not be happy". Nobody can say that. You have a right to be happy. But sometimes, strangely, some people feel that they have no right to be happy. Have you met people like that? Strangely, I've met a few people like that. Whenever they feel happy, they feel guilty. Because they feel that they should not be happy. So, that's a kind of sickness. We have a right to be happy. But not only that, there is a duty to be happy. Why is that? Why is it a duty to be happy? Anybody can guess the answer? Right, right, right. It's contagious. Anything

is contagious. Yes. When you are happy, then anybody who comes in contact with you feels happy, too. So, unhappiness is also contagious. Depression also is contagious. Anger also contagious. So in the same way, happiness also is contagious.

So, when we are happy, just by being happy, we are doing something good for the whole world. Just by being happy, we are contributing to the whole world. So, not only is there a right to be happy, there is a duty to be happy. So much sadness exists in the world that we are all under obligation to contribute as much joy as lies within our powers. So, so much sadness in the world, we see and we hear. Therefore, we must learn to be happy. And also we must help other people to be happy too. So, that is one of our obligation to contribute as much joy as lies within our power. So before we learn to help other people happy, first we must learn to be happy.

So, there are many things happening in our life. Sometimes good things are happening, sometimes bad things are happening. So, when good things happen in our life, we feel happy. When bad things happen in our life, we feel unhappy. So our happiness depends on the outside situations. So it is very uncertain. But if you learn dhamma and meditate, you'll find that your happiness depends less and less on outside situations. So then, you will find yourself happy without any reason. Like the old teacher I told you just now. He is

just happy and very content, very relaxed and peaceful, loving, cheerful. Although he's 89 years old, when I look at his face, it seems like he is a child. He looks like a child. 89 years old. So innocent, so calm and so relaxed. So we must learn to be like that.

“Weep, and you weep alone”

Therefore, well, let me read this:

“Laugh, and the world loves with you

Weep, and you weep alone.”

How do you like that part? Weep, and you weep alone. Do you think the world is fair? When you laugh, they laugh with you. But when you weep, you weep alone. That's not fair, right? What do you think? Yes, people don't like to be unhappy. So, I don't blame people for not weeping when I'm weeping. But actually, when I'm happy, I want to share my happiness with other people. But when I'm unhappy, I don't want to let people know that even. I will watch my unhappiness and learn something from it and overcome my unhappiness. So that's what meditation is about. Whatever you feel, you watch that and learn and grow and overcome that. So our teacher, the Buddha, taught us how to deal with unhappiness. So most of you must have read or heard Mahasatipatthana Sutta? Yes, some of you have read. So, in the introduction part of the Mahasatipatthana Sutta, the first line, what is the first line of the sutta?

This is the only way. Yes, that's right. In Pali, "Ekāyano ayam bhikkhave maggo sattānaṃ visuddhiyā", to purify beings, for beings to become purified. This is the only way.

So, for beings to become purified really means for the mind to become purified. This is the only way. Because of greed or anger or pride or envy or jealousy, we feel very unhappy. If we don't have greed or anger or envy or jealousy or pride, we won't be so unhappy. So it's the defilement. It's the greed, attachment, lust, selfishness, anger, frustration, pride, envy, jealousy. These defilement makes us very unhappy. So if we learn to watch these defilements and overcome these defilements, we will become very pure. Our mind will become purified. And when the mind becomes purified, it becomes very peaceful and very happy. So this is the only way for beings to become purified, for the mind to become purified.

And "soka-paridevānaṃ samatikkamāya", to overcome sorrow and lamentation. So when we feel unhappy, we also feel sorry for ourself. And when the unhappiness is too big, too great, we cry and we yell and we wail and we say, "Oh, how unfortunate I am." So, even to overcome all that sorrow and limitation, there is only one way. And that way is to be mindful, to watch our own mind and body. "Dukkha-domanassānaṃ atthaṅgamāya". Pain, mental pain and physical pain also, to overcome all that. This practice of satipatthana

is the only way. And “*nāyassa adhigamāya*” means to attain enlightenment. And “*nibbānassa sacchikiriyāya*” means to realise nibbana. This is the only way.

So when we are unhappy, naturally we want to go to a friend and talk about our unhappiness. It's quite natural. It's okay. I do that too. I used to do that even more. So, whenever I feel unhappy, I will go to a good friend and I will talk about my problem. Sometimes we sit and talk and talk the whole night. But talking only doesn't really solve the problem.

So later I learn meditation. And when I learned to meditate well, I found out that most of my problems just disappeared. Why? At least about 90% of my problems just disappeared. Do you know why? Because my mind stopped creating problems. I learned that lesson very early in my life. Mostly we are unhappy because we are ourselves creating unhappiness. We are creating problems. The mind likes to create problems. It is a factory where it produces problems, mass production every day. So, when you learn to meditate and become calm and peaceful and develop wisdom, your mind stops creating problems. And this is very hard to believe, but do it and find out for yourself. Why do people who meditate becomes more happy and peaceful and cheerful? Why? They are just human beings like us. They have parents, they have children, they have husbands, they have wives, they have friends, they

have jobs. Well, they are just human beings like us. Why should they be happier? Because they don't create more problems anymore. They solve real problems. But they don't create imaginary problems. Most of the people create imaginary problems and they try to find imaginary solutions. Can you solve imaginary problems with imaginary solutions? You cannot. Because your mind will create more imaginary problems. There is no end. But when you really learn to see what your mind is doing, when you become more and more aware of your thoughts, then you will see that you are thinking. And by thinking you are creating problems. You are making yourself unhappy. And by talking about your problems, sometimes you make your family members and your friends also very unhappy. So we must understand that the defilement. The ego creates problems. So when it cannot be happy, it will find something to be unhappy. Because in some cases, people get attention by being unhappy and sad. There are a lot of people like that. I know some people who are always telling that they will commit suicide. They will tell their parents, I'm going to kill myself. They will tell the brothers and sisters I want to die. Because mostly they want attention. They want love. They want care. But to get that, they are using negative means. If you really want attention from people, be happy. People will come to you. They will listen to you.

So, we have good ways to get friends, to get attention.

And we also have negative ways, bad ways to get attention, too. But if we use negative means, negative ways to get attention, we hurt ourselves and we hurt all the people who love us. So never use any negative means to get attention from your family members and from your friends. Because in the beginning, when you complain about something, they will believe that you really have the problem. But if you keep complaining, they will give you advice and suggestions to overcome your problems. They will help you to overcome the problem. But because you don't want to overcome your problems and just talk about your problems, after a while, your family members and your friends will become very tired of you. And they will feel also helpless. They will think that, well, I've been trying to help for a long, long time, but nothing really helps. Therefore, it's no use helping anymore. So, this is a very serious problem. Because I know many people who are going through this kind of problems. Even the parents sometimes become so tired that... One old lady told her daughter, "If you really want to kill yourself, don't talk about it anymore. Just go and do it". Because the mother was so tired of hearing the daughter saying, "I want to die. I want to die". Why? So, this is a kind of disease we are causing ourselves. So before we learn to develop negativity, we must learn to develop positive ways to feel happy.

And there are many positive ways to be happy. So, teach younger children to be happy in positive ways

and also teach very young children to meditate too. Just teach them to sit and meditate for 5 minutes a day. Or if they are older, encourage them to sit and meditate for 10 minutes, 15 minutes a day. Just to be able to sit and be quiet helps you a lot. So, do you know one scientist whose name was Pascal? They said Pascal Law and Pascal said that “Just because we cannot sit in a room quietly, we are creating a lot of problems and we are unhappy”. If you just learn to sit in a room alone and just be quiet for a few minutes a day, and if you can a few hours a day, that will help you a lot. So, we must learn to be quiet and still, just to be very quiet and enjoy that too.

So, when I was younger, I was very experimental. I tried many experiments, scientific experiments, also meditation experiment. So, I try to sit very still, not moving at all, and just breathing in and out, paying attention to the breath, not thinking anything. So, when the body and mind becomes very quiet and still, you feel very peaceful, that is very enjoyable. So, whenever I had any problems, I would go up the hill, find a very quiet and peaceful place, and just sit there for a while, let the mind become relaxed, let the body become relaxed and peaceful, and then meditate there for a few minutes. And I found out that after sitting there for ten or 15 minutes, the problems didn't seem big anymore. I was able to cope with the problem. Sometimes I got a very good way to overcome the problem. So, there are many ways to overcome the

problems. But one way to overcome the problem is to make your mind very quiet. Because when you are too agitated, you cannot find the best solution. When you are very agitated, for example when you are angry with somebody with your mother or with your father or with your husband or with your wife, if you keep the anger, if you are angry and you go and talk about the problem, you will create more problems. Because you are reacting with anger. But if you learn to meditate and become very calm and quiet and peaceful, you will see your anger getting weaker and weaker and it will disappear. And your mind will become calm and peaceful. Then, at that point, at that time, you are more objective. You are not biased. And at that time, your ego is not working. But there is mindfulness and wisdom, which is really looking at the problem and trying to find the best solutions. So in some cases, you may think that, "Oh, it's just human. He made a mistake. He said something wrong. No big deal. Not a big problem". But when you are egoistic, when you have too much pride, whenever somebody says something that hurts you, you will take that as a big insult. You will not take that as a mistake. Oh, he just made a slip. He just made a mistake. You will not think that way. You will think that he said that, deliberately to hurt me. He is a bad person. He is evil. He is doing that intentionally. But when your mind becomes calm and peaceful, you understand that people make mistakes. And even if that person, whoever that may be, who hurts you, you will see that

he is not mindful. He is not aware of what he is doing. Therefore, he said that. So, you are able to understand and sometimes forgive. And you will find a good way to negotiate about the problem, so that both of you will understand each other better. And in the future, there will be less problem. But if you react with anger, you create more problems.

So, Buddha gave us the practice of mindfulness to overcome all the problems. It's hard to believe that we can overcome all the problems. But if you really practice satipatthana, vipassana meditation and contemplate or watch the body, the feelings, the thoughts or anything that arises, you will see that it's just natural phenomenon arising and passing away. There is no being, there's no ego, there's no self. And when you get to that point, when you overcome this ego or soul, then problems become not important anymore. We take problems too seriously, because we think that there's an "I", there's the ego. So, ego makes the problem bigger. When you are not egoistic, then you can see that problems are not so big. You don't take things so seriously.

"Weep, and you weep alone."

How do you think about that? Do you want people coming and weeping with you when you are weeping? How many people do you want? Well, sometimes when our parents, one of our parents, passed away, we

feel very unhappy and we weep. And all the family members get together and weep. Well, it's okay for a few hours and get over with it in a few hours. Don't go on weeping and weeping and weeping for months and months and years and years. It's no use. It's useless. And people will think that you are not really feeling it. You are just acting it.

So, when you are really unhappy, it is necessary to go and discuss about your unhappiness with a good friend, who is wise. So, how do we call a good friend in Pali? Ah, yes, kalyāṇamitta. Yes. So, kalyāṇamitta is a good friend. And we call him a good friend, because he understands dhamma and he practices dhamma. He has some wisdom. So, when we have problems, if we go and talk about our problem with somebody who is foolish, that person will make us feel that the problem is bigger than we think. He will not help us to find the problem. He will just make us feel that the problem is really big. But, if we go and talk with another person who has learned dhamma, who meditates and who has developed wisdom, he or she will help us see that the problem is not that big. No problem is really big. So, I read another book by one American doctor psychologists. I forgot his name. But I remember the title of the book. He said, "Don't sweat the small stuff". And have you heard of that book? Yes. And what's the second part of the book, the title? Yes. Something similar like that. "Don't sweat the small stuff. And all problems are small stuff". Something like

that. It's all small stuff. That's it. So, don't sweat the small stuff and it's all small stuff. Can you agree with that? It's all small stuff. But, it's very hard to agree. Because we want to think that some problems are not small stuffs. Some problems are really big stuffs. But if you learn to meditate and develop wisdom, you will see that even dying is small stuff. Really, some people face death very calmly, very peacefully, with courage, sometimes even with cheerfulness. Some people I know die very cheerfully, very peacefully. For them, even dying is small stuff.

But for some other people, every small problem becomes so big that they cannot find any solution. So how big or how small a problem appears to you depends on how mature you are. By practicing dhamma, by practicing and seeing that everything is impermanent. And there's nothing that will really give you permanent satisfaction. And there's no ego. There's no control. Everything arises and passes away depending on conditions. So when you see these three characteristic very deeply and accept it, when you really see it, you accept it. When you think about it, it's difficult to accept. But when you really see it in your practice with wisdom automatically, because you see with wisdom, that wisdom see that this is the truth. And because you see that as a truth, you accept it without even thinking about it, which means you have no resistance to accepting the reality, the truth. Most of us have resistance, accepting truth, accepting

reality. Because we want things the way we want them to be. We just imagine. So, when we develop wisdom, we don't imagine anything anymore. We see things as they are and we accept, accepting. So, that is maturity. To accept that which is true is maturity. To accept that which is inevitable is maturity. So, how big or how small any problem appears to you depends on how mature you are in your practice.

So, therefore when you are mature and sometimes when you have problems and you feel unhappy, you don't cry anymore. There is a problem. Okay. You will find a solution. And when it cannot be solved, you'll see that okay, there's no solution. Just accept it. So, "weep, and you weep alone" doesn't become a problem anymore.

"For the sad old earth must borrow its mirth
But has trouble enough of its own."

When we have problems, we want to cry and we want other people come and cry with us. But people won't do that. They will not come and cry with you. Because they have their own problems. So, they don't want to borrow our sadness. For the sad old earth must borrow its mirth. Mirth means something that makes you happy and laugh. So, people want to come to you and share your happiness, listen to you telling jokes. But they will not come to you to listen to your problems. But has trouble enough of its own. People

have their own problems. So, don't blame people, because they don't want to listen to your problems. And don't go and talk about your problems to those who are not mature. Because it will hurt them quite a lot. If you talk about your problems, for example, if you are a parent and if you have big problems, if you talk about your problems to your children, the children will listen to your problem because they love you. They'll feel very unhappy. But they will also feel helpless. They cannot help you.

So, if you really want to talk about your problems, you must really find a person who is mature. And in the West they have psychotherapists, where you go, to whom you can go and talk about all your problems. You can cry, if you want to cry. But you have to pay \$100 an hour. Therefore, they call that paid friends. But if you have a real good friend, kalyāṇamitta, you don't have to pay. You can go and ask for advice. But that friend, because he's a good friend who is a kalyāṇamitta, because he has practiced dhamma, he will not cry with you. He will listen with you, with compassion, with calmness. And he will give you good advice.

“Sing, and the hills will answer;”

Oh, I met one lady here, in Singapore, many times, when I went to walk in Jurong, Bukit Batok Nature Park, and many times I saw her and heard her singing. And whenever I saw her and heard her singing, it

made me very happy. And just yesterday or the day before yesterday, two days ago, we met her again. And we greeted her. Because she is such a happy person. Just to see her makes us happy. So, sing, and the hills will answer. So, in the Bukit Batok Nature Park, there's a cliff. They took part of the rocks away and they made a pond there. Very beautiful pond. And there's a beautiful cliff. If you sit near the cliff and you sing, what will happen? You'll hear the echo coming back to you. So, "sing, and the hills will answer" means that you will hear the echo.

Sigh, sigh means S.I.G.H. When you feel unhappy, you take a deep breath and you just let out the breath. That's sigh. "Sigh, it is lost on the air". You will not hear an echo. It will not come back. It will not answer. It is natural. So, whenever we feel something unhappy, we must learn to look at that unhappiness. At first you will feel that "I am unhappy". But if you keep looking a long time, you will see that there is no "I". But there is unhappiness. Unhappiness is real. But there is no "I". It's the mind, thinking about a problem, thinking about something, some situation which the mind is not satisfied with, which the mind cannot accept. Therefore, the mind gets unhappy. So, unhappiness is natural. And when you can see that this is just unhappy mental state without an "I", it is easier for you to work with it. So, whenever any problem becomes attached with ego or "I", it becomes too big. But whenever you can see that there is no "I",

there's no ego, but there's just sadness, it is easier for you to work with that sadness. So, when we practice vipassana, we learn to watch everything that happens in the body and in the mind as a natural phenomenon. It is real. It is natural. But there is no ego involved.

“The echoes bound to a joyful sound,
But shrink from voicing care.”

So, the echo bounds to a joyful sound. So, when we are joyful, we laugh, we sing and we will hear the echo from the hills. But shrink from voicing care. But if we voice care, which means if we talk about unhappiness, there will be no echo coming back. So, sometimes we blame people for not being unhappy, because we are unhappy, when we are unhappy. Sometimes we will think that, “Oh, he or she doesn't care”. Look how unhappy I am and she's quite happy. She's laughing. She's happy. How can she be happy when I'm not happy? So, we feel that if I am not happy, those who love me should not be happy. There is no right. You have no right to be unhappy, because I'm unhappy. And if you love me, you must cry. You must not laugh. So if you are laughing, then you are not caring. So, unconsciously, sometimes, we blame people for not being unhappy when we are unhappy. We get very upset. Sometimes, we get really angry. Sometimes, we will not talk with that person anymore. This really happens to most people. So, just think about it. Just because we are unhappy doesn't mean that those who

love us should be unhappy. We should not demand such thing. They have the right to be happy. But we can ask for help. That is okay. If we really want to solve the problem, we can ask for help. But we should not expect that they should be unhappy.

“Rejoice, and men will seek you.”

Rejoice, be happy and people look for you. Because to be with somebody who is rejoicing is joyful. It makes you happy. So that's why, like I said, the old teacher who came to us this morning, we were so happy to see him. Everybody was so happy to see him. Even we were talking until just an hour ago about how happy we were. And that lady who invited the teacher, she was so happy today. She was very excited. She can't even sleep. So, to meet somebody who is cheerful, who is calm and peaceful, makes you very happy. And also it gives you hope. If he can be so happy and peaceful and relaxed and natural, I can also. And that's what I learned from my teachers, too. I watch my teachers. They are so calm and relaxed and natural, not imposing. They're not acting. Just very simple. And I watched them and I told myself that I want to be like them, just natural, just simply happy.

So, to be happy is very simple. We are making happiness very complicated. We think that we need something to be happy. We don't understand that we don't need anything to be happy. This is quite difficult to understand. But once you learn that, then it will be

very natural for you to be happy. You will be just sitting and doing nothing and be happy.

“Rejoice, and men will seek you.
Grieve, and they turn and go.”

So if you don't want to be lonely, you must learn to work with your own problem, to work with your own sadness, and to overcome that by practicing dhamma. There's no better way to do that.

“They want full measure of all your pleasure.”

People want full measure of all your pleasure. If you throw a party and people come and eat and drink and they will sing and dance. They'll be very happy. “But they do not need your woe”. W, O, E, woe. They do not need your woe. So, we should not blame that people don't need our sadness. You should not blame that people that they don't need our woe. This is natural. So, do you want to give happiness to people or do you want to give unhappiness to people? What do you want to do? We want to give happiness. Yes. So if we want to give happiness, we must learn to be happy. And when we are unhappy, we must learn to find the best way, a good way to cope with that unhappiness and to overcome that unhappiness. And Buddha gave us this way. The only way to overcome pain and sorrow and unhappiness.

Be glad, and your friends are many.
Be sad, and you lose them all.

Friends are terrible. And this is true in most cases, but not in all cases. I think there are friends who will be with you when you need them, when you are really sad. But you must also be responsible to do something about your own sadness. If you think that, or if you demand that your friends are responsible to make you happy, and when they cannot do that, they'll feel guilty. They'll feel upset. They'll feel helpless, hopeless. So, some people will go away when you are sad. But some good friends will be with you when you have problems, when you are sad. Uh. One condition only you need: You sincerely want to work with your problems. You sincerely want to find a way to overcome your problems. If you don't want to solve your problem and just want to talk about it, nobody will listen to you unlimited. So, I know many people who talk about their problems with other people and they came to me also and talk about their problems. And I've known them for more than ten years now. I have given up. Because I know that this person does not want to solve the problem. This person just wants to talk about the problem. Just keep talking about the problem. Whenever I give an advice, this person will say, "That doesn't work for me". And I will give another advice. And then this person will say, "That doesn't work for me". So, no matter what advice you give, that person will say, "It doesn't suit my problem.

It doesn't work for me". I told that person to meditate and this person said, "This meditation technique doesn't work for me". I told her to meditate in a different way. And then this person said, "This technique doesn't work for me". And I couldn't find any way, any kind of meditation practice that works for that person. So, I know that this person does not want to solve the problem, does not want to be responsible for the problem.

So, what can you do? You cannot go on listening the problem for years and years. You have many important things to do. So, we must understand that. When we have a problem and we don't know how to solve the problem, it is all right to go to another person who is wiser, older, more mature, or who has similar problems before and who have solved the problem and ask for advice. But when you get the advice, you must honestly apply that advice, work. So, if you really take the advice and try your best honestly to solve your problem, maybe sometimes it will solve your problem. But if that advice doesn't solve your problem, you can go and discuss the problem again. And if the person see that you are really honestly working with your own problem, he or she will find another way to help you solve the problem. But if you go on and on doing like that, that person, your friend, will find out that you don't really want to take responsibility. So, if we want to take the responsibility for our own problem, we will find many people who are willing to help us.

People like to help people, but only if their help really affects you. Which means when you ask for advice, when you ask for help and you get help and advice and you get well, you get better, then they are very happy that they have helped you. But if you don't take responsibility, they will stop helping you. And it's not their fault. Even in some cases, Buddha refused to help. Because Buddha knew that it's no use giving advice to this person.

“Be glad, and your friends are many.
Be sad, and you lose them all.
There are none to decline your nectar wine.”

Nectar means sweet like honey. So, there are none to decline your nectar wine, which means you give them something sweet to drink, they'll not refuse it. They'll drink it. They like it.

“But alone you must drink life's gall.”

Gall means something bitter. So, alone you must drink life's gall. Life's bitter taste, we must drink alone. Do not rely completely on any other human being. You must think of each word. Do not rely completely. We can rely partially. People can help us only to a certain degree, limited. So do not rely completely on any other human being. We meet all life's greatest test alone. So, life is like a test. Problems are like a test. And we meet all life's greatest test alone. And what about death?

Who can share our death with us? We die alone.

“Feast, and your halls are crowded.”

Feast means you have a big party with a lot of good things to eat and drink. Then, your hall will be crowded.

“Fast, and the world goes by”

Fast means not eating. So if you have nothing to eat and you are fasting, they will not come to you. They will go to some other place where they can find something nice to eat.

“Succeed and give, and it helps you live.”

So we must work hard and succeed and give. Even as a monk, we have to work hard to learn dhamma, to practice dhamma. And then we give the gift of dhamma. So, each of us must learn to do something well, to succeed. And in that way, we can help other people to learn and to succeed, too. So if you are a teacher, you can help your students to learn. If you are a doctor, you can help your patients to get well. And if you are a monk and you have learned dhamma and practice dhamma, you can teach other people to practice dhamma.

“Succeed and give, and it helps you live. But no man

can help you die.”

No man can help you die. We must die alone. We must learn to die. So practicing meditation is learning to live and also learning to die. It's one thing. Learning to live and learning to die are the same. So if you have learned to live well, you have already learned to die well. So, if you want to live happily, learn how to die well. And if you learn to die happily, learn how to live well. Those who have not learned to live well will not die happy, with happiness. So some people who have lived their life fully, who have developed all the good qualities, and when the time comes for them to die, they accept that. They know that it's part of life. Dying is part of life. So without any regret, they can die very peacefully. So I thought I gave a talk on that once, a long time ago. And I told them that there is a change in lifestyle. It's just a change in lifestyle. People think that that's the end of everything. It's not the end of everything. It's just another change. So we must learn to live well. And if we have learned to live well, to live fully, to make the full use of our good potentials, then we will not regret when we know that we are dying. We will feel happy that we have done our best. So many times I told myself, if I were to die today, how would I feel? And well, I don't want to die today. But if I have to die today, will I feel regret? Many times I ask this question to myself very seriously and honestly. And although I do not want to die, I feel that if I have to die today, I will feel that I have not wasted my life. I really feel I have not wasted

my life. I have learned, since very young I've learned a lot. And I've learned dhamma. I've practiced dhamma. And that is not the end of everything. So, even if I die today and because I have not finished my practice, I will go on practicing in my next life. I believe that. Because I practiced in this life. I learned to practice dhamma in this life. And in the same way, I will learn to practice dhamma in the next life. So, I will keep practicing. So, life is just a change in lifestyle. Maybe in next life, I'll live a different lifestyle. In this life, my lifestyle is the lifestyle of a monk.

“There is room in the halls of pleasure
For a long and lordly train.”

Train means a long line of people. So lordly means very grand. So there is room in the halls of pleasure for a long and lordly train. So in the room of, in the hall of pleasure, when you walk, there will be many people around you and behind you walking with you.

“But one by one we must all file on
Through the narrow aisles of pain.”

But when we are in pain, each of us must walk alone. So, that's the end of this poem. So, these are things that we must go through in our life. So, these are also lessons. Every difficulty, every pain, every loss in our life is a lesson for us to learn and grow, to accept, and also to let go. So, practicing dhamma is also learning

to accept and also learning to let go. So, if we have learned that, the sooner the better. So after we have learned to accept, after we have learned to let go, then living life becomes an easier game. Can you see life as a game? No, most of us see life as something very serious. But there's a book I've read, and the title of the book is called "The Master Game". So life is a master game. We must learn to play it well. So, that's the end of the discussion of this poem and also my advice to you to learn to meditate. So, if you have any questions, please.

Q&A

[Question: The problem of being looped in problem...]

Sometimes it's hard to get out of it. Yes. Yes. This is quite natural. I know what you mean. I have learned to work with such situation quite naturally. So when I was younger, when I was in my teens, like any other people, I had a lot of problems. Problems with my parents, problems in school. And also, my father passed away when I was about 15 or 16. I had a lot of difficulty. I had to work. I had also to go to school. And there were so many problems. Sometimes I got very unhappy and depressed. Sometimes I read a good dhamma book. Because I like reading, I have read many books. I know a lot about books. So sometimes I will... I have many books, so I'll take one book and read it. Sometimes just reading a dhamma book gives me a very clear understanding of how to see the problem and how to work with the problem, how to cope the problem. So the easiest way is to read a good dhamma book. That's my experience. And another way of getting out of that kind of problem is, like I said before, to go and talk with somebody who is mature, who has practiced dhamma and who is

practicing dhamma. Because that person can very gently guide you. And you know that this person is calm and strong. So, to be a good friend, you need to be very strong. Because if you are weak and somebody come and tell you his or her problem, you get overwhelmed with your friend's problem and you don't know how to help your friend.

So like a doctor, you know, doctors are not allowed to operate on their own family members. Why? Yes. Because you are emotionally so involved that you cannot stay calm. When you are operating, you need to be very calm. So therefore, when a person is in a position to help another person with a problem, this person must be very strong and keep his equanimity, his calmness. So when you have a problem, choose the right person with whom you can discuss about the problem, the right person. If you go and talk about your problem with the wrong person, you will get into bigger trouble. So that's one way. And Buddha also gave that advice too.

And another thing that I did was I just walked up on the mountains. I like mountains very much. I always talk about mountains. Because mountains have become such a big part of my life that I can't live without thinking mountains. So wherever I go, I'll climb mountains. I've been to Korea last month and just two weeks ago I came back from Korea. Korea is more than 70% mountains. So I climb many

mountains. Since I was very young, whenever I get some time, I'll climb mountains. And because of that habit, when I felt very unhappy or sad, I climb mountains and find a very quiet and peaceful place, especially in Myanmar. In our country, there are monasteries and pagodas, stupas in almost every mountain. So, it's not difficult to find a nice place to sit. So, when I was younger, I climb the mountain and find a place, peaceful and quiet place, and then just sat there for a long time, just sitting there alone. And mountains give you a kind of perspective. Because it's so high, from the mountain, I can look down and down there is the city. I can see houses, some houses. So, it's like you are not only physically high up, mentally also you are very high. So, it gives you a kind of perspective. So from the top of the mountain, I will look down at the city and I think, look, there are so many people living in the city with so many problems. But up on this mountain, there are no problems.

It's hard to talk about it, but I feel it very deeply. Where does the problem come from? So, just sitting there for a long time made my mind very calm. And somehow I got enough strength to go back, to face the problem. Mostly, the hardest problems are personal problems, relationships – problems in relationships. It's not difficult to get a job and to earn enough to live on. If you don't waste your money, you always have enough. But the biggest problems are problems in our relationships. Very difficult to work with. But if you

have a calm and strong mind, you know the right thing to say. You can develop the right attitude. So with the right attitude and with the right speech, it is easier to solve the problem. With wrong attitude and wrong speech, the problems get bigger and bigger. And later, when I learned to meditate, I found out that that's the best way to deal with the problems. When you meditate and your mind become really calm and quiet and peaceful. All thinking stops. Then at that moment, you have no problems. Then you know that where is the problem? It's in your mind. It's your thinking.

Yes. Yes.

Question: It's a great blessing that you are here with us tonight. Can you share with us the years of experience in looking at your mind and your body, just like fire is hot and sugar is sweet. What is the true nature of our mind?

Well, there's a verse in the Pali text. I will recite the Pali. I know most of you do not understand Pali language. But anyway, I just love to recite this Pali [gata??]. Because it means so much to me. It's very deep in meaning. Buddha said, Pabhassaramidaṃ, bhikkhave, cittaṃ. Bhikkhave means monks. Because whenever there are monks and other people, Buddha use this addressing, the word bhikkhave. So, Buddha said this mind is glowing. It's shining.

Pabhassaramidaṃ, bhikkhave, cittaṃ, āgantukehi upakkilesehi upakkiliṭṭhaṃ. Because of the visitors which are defilement, it is defiled. So, defilements are visitors. If you know that they are visitors, when they appear in your mind, you see that these are visitors. Defilement, like greed, lust, attachment, anger, frustration, and many other envy, jealousy, doubt, all that. If you can see these as just visitors, [Pali] means visitors, then it is easier for you to let go. Because we identify with greed, I, I want. When you think that “I” is you, yourself and you want that something, it is very difficult for you to overcome greed. But when you can see greed as just greed and nothing more, it is very easy to overcome greed and let go. And if you really need something, you can find a proper way to get what you want. So even greed has a limit. When you are wise and if you, when you want something, you find a proper way to get it. But when you are not wise, when you are foolish, when you want something you don’t think of whether it is proper or not. You just go and get it anyway. So, with wisdom, you can work with greed or anger or envy or jealousy and overcome all that. And after you have overcome all these defilements, at least to a certain degree, you’ll find yourself becoming happier and lighter and more peaceful. So the true nature of mind, according to this [katra??], is that [in Pali], this mind is pure and glowing and bright. We can learn to develop that kind of mind. When there are no visiting defilements, by its own nature, it is calm and peaceful and pure and

bright.

[Can't get the words]

I learned a long, long time ago. [in Pali] Dhammapada*. You can get Dhammapada and read through it and you'll find it. So this [katra??] means a lot to me. Because I believe that naturally we are good. Sometimes we do things that are bad. But that doesn't mean that we are bad. I think naturally we, human beings, are noble beings. We love goodness. We have goodness. We only need to acknowledge that and develop that goodness. And the more we develop our good qualities, the happier we will become and the more freedom we will have. So, to be free means to develop all our good potentials, to develop all our spiritual potentials. Mostly people talk about freedom. When they talk about freedom, they mean political freedom. And it is very important too. I understand that very well. But although there are people who are living in countries where you can do anything you like and you can even cheat and get away with it. That doesn't mean that they are really free. So real freedom happens when you have developed all the good qualities you have. So, there's a simile that I've found, which I like very much. When a seed becomes a tree, it becomes free. When a seed remains a seed, it is not free. So, the seed of goodness. We are born with all the seeds of goodness. Many seeds: loving kindness, compassion, truthfulness, honesty, mindfulness,

concentration, wisdom. Many good qualities we have, we are born with. But most of us have never really planted the seed and make it grow into a big tree. They remain seeds. So, if we want to be free, we must grow all the good seeds we have.

Question: So this statement that I read goes something like this: We are lonely. We have to love the person we are currently with. We won't feel lonely, if we love the person we are currently with. Can you please help me expound this statement? Do you agree with your statement?

Yes. What you mean is, even when we are with other people, we still feel lonely sometimes. Yes, sometimes we are alone and you feel lonely, too. So, even when we are with many other people in our family, sometimes, even sometimes, we feel lonely at home. And why do we feel lonely? Loneliness is a problem. This is true. I know that it is becoming bigger and bigger. And because of loneliness, people do many things to overcome that or to cover that. So, why do people feel lonely? I noticed that especially people who live in big cities are feeling more lonely. I know I've travelled to many different places and those people who are living in small towns or small villages are less lonely. I don't mean they are not lonely, they are less lonely. But people living in big cities are more lonely. And especially those who are very rich. Why? In small towns and in small villages, people depend on

each other. They work with each other. They cannot be totally independent. Life is connected and related. They are not self-sufficient in a way. They cannot ignore their neighbors. They have to learn to live with their neighbors, work with the neighbors, and share what they have with the neighbors and help the neighbors. For example, in small villages, I have noticed that when somebody is repairing his house, many people will come and help him repair his house or build his house. And or somebody passes away, the whole village will come to do whatever they can, to help the family. So, people share their life with other people. So, they are not totally independent. They don't have freedom in a way. But they are related with each other. And because people have common experience, whenever they have something or a problem, they can talk about the problem with the family or with the neighbors. So people can understand each other and understand each other's problem and help each other, too. But those people living in big cities have more freedom, and in many cases people don't, most people are not intimate with their next door neighbors. People, especially people living in big apartment houses, when they meet each other, they just say, "Hello, how are you doing?", "I'm fine". That's all they talk about. They don't really share their life with other people. And even if you talk about your problem, they will not understand. Because people are living in very different world. In small villages and small town, people are living in a small

community. They have common problem, common belief. Whatever they have is common. So, it is not difficult for people to understand each other.

But in big cities, people have very different lifestyles and different beliefs. And it is difficult for people to understand each other. And also in the big cities, people have more independence. And they don't want to talk about their problems much. They hide the problems more. They don't even tell the family sometimes. And sometimes even the family members could not understand. So this not understanding each other or not being able to talk about your feelings with other people makes you feel lonely. Even in your own family or even in your office, in your work, when you cannot communicate what you feel very deeply, you feel lonely. You may be talking the whole day about things that are not really important, just to kill time, you may be talking. But you don't talk about what really matters to you. So when you cannot talk about what really matters to you, you feel lonely.

So, what do we do when we feel that? You cannot go and live in a village. You are here. You are stuck here, in the big city. So, we must learn to understand ourselves. That's why we learn to meditate and to watch our own mind and body. So, by watching our mind and body, we learn a lot about our own mind. And we learn also to develop our good qualities. So, when we have developed our good qualities like

mindfulness, concentration, wisdom, loving kindness and compassion and all those good qualities, we feel very good about ourselves. And whenever there's a problem, with that wisdom, we can see and understand the problem very well and work with the problem. Therefore, we become our own best friend. And sometimes we need to be lonely. Whether you can agree with me or not, I don't know. I need to be lonely sometimes. I mean to be really alone with nothing, no books to read, nobody to talk to, nobody to talk with. I don't want to. So we must learn to be really alone. Most of us are not alone. Because we are thinking too much about many things. So, even if a person is living alone in a deep forest, but this person keeps thinking about what happened in the past or what will happen in the future, or all the things that he enjoyed in the past, he's not alone. But when you stop thinking about the past and about the future, when your mind becomes really quiet, then you're really alone. And if you learn to love that kind of mind, then it's not a problem for you to be alone anymore. You love it. It's very useful for you. Necessary.

Question: We cannot tell the person to meditate. How do we tell the person love himself?

Yes. Yes, I knew your question. And before answering your question, I want to mention a few things about meditation. When we use the word meditation, it seems like most people have the idea that it is

something very difficult or very unusual for people to do. But from my perspective, from my understanding, meditation is our nature. It's a natural part of being human. And there are many different forms of meditation practice. Uh, there are meditation instructions in the book. But I believe that there are many other ways to meditate which are not in the book. So when I feel anything, I can just be with that feeling, watch that feeling, watch that thought, and understand that feeling and thought. And that is also meditation. Sometimes, like I said before, when I feel very unhappy, I will just go and sit in a quiet place. And by being alone for a while, I learned to accept that, that feeling. It may not go away. It doesn't go away. It's not so easy to go away. But I learned to accept that feeling. Sometimes I did something wrong and I feel very unhappy and guilty about that. And I will go away and sit alone and think about what I did. And you need to be alone to have a very clear perspective. So when you are alone and look at what you did and why you did it, you find out that you are just human. It's human to make mistakes. So, when we see that whatever happens to us is natural and acceptable, then it is easier to live with it. So, when you reject anything, when you resist anything, it becomes a big problem. So in many cases, if you can just accept loneliness, it's not a problem anymore. So even when you feel lonely and you look at that mental state, you can see that mental state as just a child. Sometimes I see that with myself. Sometimes I look at

my mind and I see that, “Oh, look, there’s a child”. So when you see that mental state or that feeling or that emotion as a child, even if the child is naughty or did something wrong, you can forgive the child, lovingly. So, I feel that no matter how old we are, we still have a small child in us. And that child feels lonely and unhappy and sad, most of the time. It’s the child in us that feels lonely, that feels sad, that feels unhappy, that wants a lot of attention and love from people. So, when you can see that there still is a boy in you lovingly, you can, how do you say that? Comfort. Yes, you can comfort the child. It’s okay.

So there’s a psychological theory which is called transactional analysis. Have you heard about that? No. Yes. No. So somebody heard about that. So in that theory, they say that we have a parent in our mind and we also have a child in our mind. And I think that’s a very good way to see it. Very practical and natural way and very beautiful. When you can see it that way, things become easier to understand. Sometimes we have our own mind punishing us. Nagging, nagging. Oh, you have done something wrong. You are naughty. You’re bad. Watch that mind. That’s our parent. Sometimes there’s a child that is wanting attention, “look at me”. Even when you have done something good, you want people to know, “look how well I did”. So we want attention. You watch that child. The little child wants attention. Sometimes the child is crying, sad, feeling lonely. You

watch that mind. There's a child. You don't blame the child. Lovingly, you watch that mind. So, if you want to know more about how to work with this problem, try to find this book transactional analysis. Transaction analysis.

Thank you... Yes, it's very true. I think the parent and child is something I've heard the first time.

In us... I feel in me there's a very old man and there's a very young boy, too. And I love both. Without the old man, I'll make a lot of mistakes. But without the young boy, my life will be very boring. It's the young boy who enjoys everything.

[Can't get the question. Sound quality is not good enough to hear]

Many people said that. I've heard many other people said that whenever they went to Shwedagon pagoda, they felt very happy. And when I was in university, a university student at that time, I had declared that I had no religion. Since I was very young, I did not have a religion. I was only learning to find out more about religions. But many times I will get up very early in the morning at about three, sometimes four, and I walk to Shwedagon pagoda. It was a long way. I don't know how many miles, five or six miles, a long way to walk. And I like walking very much, especially early in the morning. So, I got up very early in the morning,

3:00, 4:00 and walk to Shwedagon pagoda. And I arrived there very early when there was not many people there. In those days, they did not lock the gate. There was no gate. But these days now, they have gates and they lock the gates. So, I went to Shwedagon pagoda early in the morning and then I sat and meditate for a while. Even though I did not call myself a Buddhist, I still meditated since I was 16, I started meditating. And whenever I went to Shwedagon pagoda, especially in the morning, I felt very calm and peaceful.

So, the environment affects you very much, especially a place which has meaning, spiritual meaning affects you even more. So Shwedagon pagoda is a shrine, actually, of Buddhist relics. So just because there is Buddha relics in this shrine has a very important spiritual meaning. Because we know that Buddha was very wise and pure. Even though he has passed away into great nibbana, his relics somehow has the power to influence people. So, I think that's the reason. And also, when you go to Shwedagon pagoda, those who come to the pagoda come there to meditate or to pray or to recite some Pali Sutras. So, they come there with the spiritual qualities. They do not come there like when they go to the market. So, the motivation for them to come to Shwedagon pagoda is not greed, not anger. It's devotion. It's to express their love and kindness and gratefulness to the Buddha and to meditate and to cultivate spiritual qualities. So, these

people's mental state also affects you. And even then, even when there are nobody at all in that place, because this place has been so saturated with that kind of spiritual qualities, when you go there, you feel very calm and peaceful. And you expect to be calm and peaceful too. Not only pagoda, because I like mountains, I'm going to talk about mountains again. There are some mountains. And when you climb to the top of the mountain, when you get there, you feel really calm and peaceful. I can't explain why. There are places in the world, in many places in the world. When you go there, you feel very calm and peaceful.

In Mexico, Iso, some scientists even did some research work on that. Mexico is a high plateau. It's a very high place. And Mexicans also have very profound spiritual practices. And one psychologist, a very famous psychologist, maybe you've heard of him, Carl Gustav Jung, he went there. And he felt that. In his book he wrote about that. When he went there, he felt very calm and peaceful. So, maybe the place itself has some influence on people's mind and body. And also because in all traditional Mexico, they practice some kind of meditation. They teach even young teenagers to meditate. To become a man, first, you must learn to meditate. So, they have a kind of initiation ceremony. I think we need to revive that kind of practice again. To become a man, first you must learn to meditate. If you have not learned to meditate, you are not a man yet. You are not a grown up. Yes, I really take it very

seriously. You see, many of my friends told me. I talked with many younger people and I encourage them to learn, to meditate, to pay attention, to be mindful to whatever they feel, they think. So, gradually they learn to meditate. And when they come to the point when they can see their mind very clearly and they are mindful and they know that they are mindful. So to be mindful is one thing. To know that you are mindful is another thing which is a step higher. And when they learn to know that they are mindful, they came to me and with great excitement and happiness, they say that: "Now I know when I am mindful, I know that I am mindful. And when I know that, then I feel that now I am a human being." So very young. These students are very young. They are in their late teens when they said that. So this is not my word. These are not my words. These are their words. They say that when I know that I know, when I'm mindful and I know that I'm mindful, then I feel like I've become a human being. So this is very important. Mindfulness is our unique human quality. Animals don't have that quality. Only human beings can be mindful. But most of us never develop that qualities.

So, to be mindful means you have developed spiritually very high. And to know that you are mindful is even a step higher than that. So animals cannot do that and not all human beings do that. Although they can if they try, if they practice. So, you

will feel for yourself when you become mindful and you know that you're mindful. You will feel a kind of energy, a kind of power in your mind. To know that you are mindful, to be mindful of mindfulness, gives you strength, gives you a kind of power, give you courage, give you clarity. And it really makes you a human being. So, most of us are only potential human beings, not really developed.

So, uh, excuse me. Excuse me. It's getting late. So, can we have the last question for Sayadaw, before we close the session.

Question: About mindfulness. There's such thing called habits, habits we do that we're not aware. I'm not sure about mindfulness. Can it becomes so much so a habit that we are not aware of? Mindfulness becomes nature.

I know what you mean. Yes. Yes. We have the potential to be mindful. And even though we have not developed mindfulness, we are mindful to a certain extent in a lower degree. For example, when you are driving and you see the traffic light becomes red, you stop your car. Because you know that the traffic light has turned red. If you are not mindful, you will not know. You are mindful. You are paying attention to the traffic light. Therefore you know that it is turned red. So you stop your car. So, we use mindfulness in our daily life. But just to get things done. But we can

use the same quality of mind to look at our own body and mind, just to turn around that mindfulness and look at what is happening in our body in mind. And if we develop that kind of mindfulness, which is aware of the body and mind, we will know a lot more about the body and mind, how the mind affects the body and how the body affects the mind and all the thoughts and emotions arising in our mind. So, mindfulness is not trying to control anything. It is not trying to create anything. It is not resisting. It is just paying attention, just paying pure attention. So, if we do that long enough, it becomes a habit. Sometimes we forget to be mindful. But mindfulness will come back automatically, spontaneously. And we become aware of what we are thinking or feeling. And after that, like I said, just now, we become aware of that mindfulness again, mindfulness of mindfulness. Then mindfulness become very powerful and very strong, very clear, very pure. Before that, although we are mindful of what is happening in our body and mind, we are not aware of that mindfulness itself. So, we feel that "I am mindful". But when you are aware of that mindfulness again, then you can see that mindfulness is mindful. There is no "I". And then you feel a kind of freedom too. Because whenever we feel that there's an "I", although it gives us some sort of energy too, still it doesn't give us freedom. But when we can see that it is not "I" who is mindful. It is mindfulness that is mindful. And even mindfulness is mindful of itself. Then there's no "I" anymore. There's freedom. And

that can become what you said, like a habit. So no matter what you do, there is mindfulness in the background all the time, even when talking, there is mindfulness there. I'm not trying to be mindful, but mindfulness is natural. So that's a very important and good question.

[Can't get the words]

[Thank you, Sayadaw, for giving us the dhamma talk tonight on coping our problems and to meditate to improve ourselves.

Sadhu, sadhu, sadhu!