



SAYADAW U JOTIKA

THE POWER OF  
DOUBTFULNESS  
AND VIPASSANA  
MEDITATION

Dhamma Talk

# The Power of Doubtfulness and Vipassana Meditation

**Sayadaw U Jotika**

*Transcribed by Viet Hung*

*with support of Sonix.ai tool*

# Words from the transcriber

This dhamma talk was delivered on 06/19/2004, by Sayadaw U Jotika. I got the audio from the Internet and didn't have the name of the talk. Based on the content, I named it as "The Power of Doubtfulness and Vipassana Meditation".

***Note.** Text in bold are the ones I wasn't sure (including some Pali words). Though I still can get the meanings of the whole sentences, the exact words are not caught.*

***Việt Hùng***

# Recorded Audio

Recorded audio can be found here: <https://viethungnguyen.com/2022/06/19/dhamma-talk-the-power-of-doubtfulness-and-vipassana-meditation/>

*V. 01.00*

# The Power of Doubtfulness and Vipassana Meditation

[From 00:00:54]

Before starting a discussion, let's us pay respect to the Buddha by 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

Do you have questions written and ready?

Before you ask questions, I would like to tell you one idea that I found very interesting. I have a very inquisitive mind and also a very skeptical mind. So when you are skeptical, then you are more inquisitive. When I was younger, I read many books on almost all

subjects: philosophy, science, psychology, religion, history, anthropology, culture,... I find everything very interesting. So when I read philosophy, I also read philosophy books written by Bertrand Russell. Many of you have read his books. And he wrote one book. And the title of the book is "Skeptical Essays". And I just like the title of the book, "Skeptical Essays". Because I think a person who is skeptical looks more deeply from many different angles to make sure that something is really reasonable or true.

## **The Power of Doubtfulness**

I grew up in a very mixed culture. There were many different people practicing many different religions. And I was educated in a Roman Catholic missionary school, which was called St. Patrick's High School. We don't have St Patrick's anymore. So I was exposed to many different religions. And when I read all different religions or major religions, I became very doubtful, naturally. Because when you are exposed to only one idea, you accept that idea without any question. But when you are exposed to many different ideas, you start to think which one is right? Because there are many conflicting ideas. So therefore, when I started reading religion, the more I read, the more I became doubtful.

And at one time, when I was very young, I thought, maybe these people have very good intentions. But

nobody really knows the truth. With very good intention, they told you what is right and what is wrong. They tell you what is wholesome and what is unwholesome. And in some cases they are right. But then, they are not always right. So when I read it in religion and it is that in one religion they say this is wholesome, do this. But in another religion, they say this is unwholesome, don't do that. The same action in different religions... One is classified as wholesome, beneficial, and bringing happy good results. And the same action in another religion is considered as unwholesome, and it will also bring very bad, painful results. So I thought, how can I decide that? If I keep my mind really open and unbiased, how can I decide who's right and who's wrong? So at one point I thought, it just better not to believe in any religion. Because when you believe in something, you are being controlled by that religion. You are told to do this and not to do that. If you don't do this, then you will be judged and criticized and punished and excommunicated and all kinds of terrible consequences. So when I read all the religions, I thought, all religions make you like a prisoner. I don't, I don't have a better word, but that's what I felt. That's the way I felt.

## **Freedom and Motivation**

Since I was very young, I really loved freedom. So whenever I find something that makes me not free, I

don't like that. And in many religions, they either motivate you by telling you that if you do this, you will get, you'll go to heaven. Or if you do this, you'll go to hell. So, they make you afraid. They make you fear. When I read that, I thought, well, this is not a good way to motivate a person to do something good and to avoid evil. Because one way to motivate you is to make you greedy. And another way to motivate you is to make you afraid of something. I thought both of them are negative. For example, in the teachings of the Buddha also, you see that killing is unwholesome. You shouldn't kill. Why? In many cases, they'll tell you that if you kill, then in your next life, you'll be killed. Or even in this life, you will be killed or you will have a short life, or you'll be very sickly. You will suffer from any kinds of sickness. So this is like making you afraid of this unwholesome action.

But because since I was younger, I had a very doubtful mind, I thought who can prove that there's a hell? Who can prove that you will be, you will be suffered from your bad actions? There's no proof. Nobody can prove that. And also, they say that if you are generous, then that good karma will give you good results and you become a very rich man in next life. So that's motivating your greed, making you feel greedy. And I thought, it's a good way to invest. You are thinking of investing. You offer \$100 and then you get \$1,000,000. It's a very good investment. I thought, this is very childish. That's what I thought. I'm just telling

you what I thought when I was younger. So I thought both motivations making you greedy or making you fearful, but it doesn't make you wise.

### **Don't believe**

So when I was younger, I did not believe in anything. Like some people say, I was a **deep thinker** and I'm still a **deep thinker**. I never lose my freedom. But **deep thinker** doesn't mean that you don't believe in anything. **Deep thinker** means you take a long time to find out what is really true, what is really wholesome. You don't believe just because somebody told you to believe. And this is another part I like about the teachings of the Buddha. Maybe some of you have read Kalama Sutta. Ah, many of you have read that. And that is my most favorite sutta (discourse). You know why? Because Buddha said, "Don't believe".

In every other religion you find that you have to believe. Faith is the most important factor. But in Buddha Dhamma, you are not forced to believe anything. You are not required to believe anything. And to be doubtful is not a big can't. In Kalama Sutta, the Buddha said, "Don't believe something just because it's a tradition" – mā anussavena. "Don't believe something because you hear it repeatedly" – mā param parāya. "Don't believe something, just because your father believed it, your grandfather believe it, your great great grandfather believe it".

Because it's a tradition. These days, some people say that this idea is about 5000 years old. Therefore, it must be true. Just because a belief system is 5000 years old is not a good proof that it is true.

So, mā anussavena, mā param parāya... Mā iti kirāya – Don't believe something second hand. So, most of what we believe is second hand knowledge. How many of us have firsthand knowledge of the truth? Very few. Mā takka hetu, mā naya hetu – takka means logical, reasoning. I like logics and reasoning very much. I learned logics and I learned symbolic logics also. I read a lot of philosophy books. In that philosophy books, they use logics, logical reasoning to get to a conclusion. So I read many different philosophical systems. For example, I read Bertrand Russell's philosophy, Wittgenstein's philosophy, [**name of the philosopher**] (maybe you have heard of his philosophy) and many other philosophers. And all of them claim that they think really tightly, logically. But they get to three different conclusions. If all of them think really logically, how can they get three different conclusions? So therefore, just by reasoning, you cannot get to the truth. All the reasoning is very important. You must learn to read them. The philosophical systems also cannot really get us to the truth.

Mā diṭṭhi nijjhāna kkhantiyā in Pali – Sometimes or somehow will get to a conclusion and we believe that

this is true. And when you hear another person saying the same thing, then you feel very happy. Oh, I also believe it. And he also believes that. Therefore, both of us must be true. But both of us may be wrong.

And Buddha also said “Mā piṭaka sampadānena”, which means don’t believe something just because it’s in the book, just because it is in the text. So these days, we write something and we want to show that this is true, we quote the book. This is in a book, on such certain chapter, on certain page. So, just because we can quote big text that doesn’t mean that that idea is true. So Buddha said, “Mā piṭaka sampadānena” – just because an idea agrees with piṭaka, with the book, with the text is no, not a good proof that it is true. So, piṭaka means a book actually, any book including Pali books. Just think of this idea. How shocking this idea is? You can even doubt Pali text. Who wrote Pali books? We don’t know. How many wrote it? Many, many... Not even one person. Many persons together, many monks, especially. Very reliable monks, of course. They wrote the Pali books. They wrote the commentaries. They wrote sub-commentaries. And they wrote sub-commentaries to sub-commentaries. It goes on and on.

Mā bhabba rūpatāya – Because a person is learning, he’s got a big title, a big degree like PhD or any other big degrees. Don’t believe him just because that person is seemingly-able, seemingly-accomplished.

Mā 'samaṇo no garū'ti – samaṇa means a monk and it also means the Buddha. Buddha was also called a samaṇa. Garū means a teacher. Don't believe an idea just because it's your teacher who is a samaṇa, is a monk, told you. So, don't believe your teacher.

### **Freedom requires a lot of courage**

When I read all that in Kalama Sutta, I thought, I asked myself, what if I reject all these (I have learned and known), what have I got? I don't believe any books anymore. I don't believe any teachers anymore. I don't believe any tradition anymore. I don't even believe logics and philosophy anymore. I don't believe anybody anymore. Then how do I know what is true and what is false? It's the biggest challenge in my life. It gives yourself that much freedom. Do you have that much courage to give yourself that much freedom? You can give yourself freedom. Nobody can take it away. So just think of it. Give yourself all that freedom. And you'll find that really terrifying. Freedom is really terrifying. You need a lot of courage to accept freedom. I [missing some words here] a lot to accept freedom. Because with that freedom, you have the greatest responsibility to find out what is true by yourself. When I read Kalama Sutta, I got a big shock. Although I love freedom, I was still unconsciously wanting to find somebody who can really convince me that something is true. But when I

read Kalama Sutta, I found out that even if you find somebody who will convince you, you still need to doubt that person.

## **Vipassana Meditation: The way to find out the truth**

But in Kalama Sutta it did give the answer: Practise and find out. Practise and find out. So, to believe something is quite easy. But to find out for yourself, it's not that easy. It takes a long, long time. So I started practicing the teachings of the Buddha without believing anything. Can you do that? Can you practice something without believing anything? You can. So I started meditating without believing in any results. It's very simple. The first teacher who taught me meditation practice was a musician, my music teacher. And I was very fortunate to have that kind of teacher, not a monk.

### **What a wonderful world**

I love music very much. I played violin. I played mandolin. And I played many other musical instruments, too. And I also like singing. I was a very good singer. I had a very good voice. I can even sing now. You can hear my voice. It's very good voice. I believe it. You want to hear me singing? [Yes...] Oh, I will a song. It's a very important song. And I learned it

when I was very young. And it stayed in my heart. Not only in my mind, it stayed in my heart. And I believe most of you have heard that song. Well, I won't really sing that. If I really sing it, it'll sound really funny that a monk is singing a song. But I'll just give you the idea.

I see trees of green, red roses too  
I see them bloom for me and you  
And I think to myself what a wonderful world.

Oh, a lot that you know this song. I can still sing the whole song. In the end...

I hear babies crying, I watch them grow  
They'll learn much more than I'll ever know  
And I think to myself what a wonderful world.

So this song is very meaningful. You know who wrote the song? Louis Armstrong, the black jazz singer, the trumpet player, was very famous. He was a very loving person. He loved the world. He loved people. And he expressed his love for the world and for the people. And this song, he went all around the world to sing this song, just to motivate people to love. This song is an expression of optimistic. So I like this very much. I think all students should learn to sing this song and really understand and feel it. How wonderful this world is! How wonderful people are! How wonderful children are! The more I grew older, the

more I see children as a wonder of nature. It's really wonderful to see children laughing and playing and enjoying their life and also seeing that they have great potential. You don't, you can't tell what they will become.

### **Becoming the first time meditator**

So anyway, I was a good singer and musician. And I went to my music teacher to learn music. So he played Burmese classical music on mandolin. And I like classical music. Burmese as well as European. So I played European classical music on the violin and I played Burmese classical music on the mandolin. So after music lesson, one day my teacher said, "let's meditate". Because I love a music teacher so much, I didn't want to say no. And also at that time, I was reading a lot of book on Buddha dhamma, and I was also interested in meditation. But I've never got a chance to meet with a meditator. So when he asked me to sit and meditate, I said yes. "How long?" He said 10 minutes. Well, I said, "10 minutes". It's quite a short time. There's no reason to say no.

So, I sat with my teacher and I asked him what to do. He said, just breathe and pay attention to your breathing. So, I sat there with my teacher and he was there breathing, and I was sitting near him breathing, breathing very deeply and paying attention to the breath, to sensation, near the nostril. And after 10

minutes, he said, now you can relax. So I just relaxed and my breathing became very shallow, very gentle, and it almost stopped. So I didn't know why I should meditate or what to expect. But because of my love for my music teacher, I went to his home every evening and learned music from him and after music lessons we sat together and meditated. And he did not tell me anything more about meditation. He just said, let's meditate and the instruction was "sit as comfortably as you can, breath deeply and pay attention to your breath". That's all the instructions I got from my teacher. But after doing that for maybe about a month, sometimes I felt very calm and peaceful, after meditating for even 10 minutes. And when my mind became very calm and quiet and peaceful, I like that feeling very much: calmness, quietness and peacefulness. So therefore, I got more and more interested in meditation. And even at home before I went to sleep, I sat and meditated (for) 10 minutes, 15 minutes. So I enjoyed meditation very much. Just like I enjoyed music, I enjoyed meditation. So I learned to meditate and I learned to enjoy meditation, too.

### **Early benefit of meditation**

And this is one thing that I noticed in myself. Whatever I do, I do because I am interested in doing, and I keep doing it because I love doing it. In the beginning, it was just curiosity. I just want to find out what will happen. But as I meditate longer, I found

that it made my mind very calm and peaceful. And I like that peacefulness very much. And because of that, I kept meditating. At that time, I was about 15 or 16. And I found out that after meditating for a while, and if I read or study or do anything, I can concentrate much better. And whatever I read or learn, I can remember well. I can think and reason more clearly. If I have to solve any problem, I can solve the problem very easily. So the first benefit I found from practicing meditation is a calm and peaceful mind. And also it helps me to learn. I did not know anything about nibbāna (concept of heaven in Buddhism). I did not know anything about anicca (impermanence), or dukkha (suffering, non-satisfaction) or anatta (non-self), nothing. So by just practicing simple meditation practice and becoming calm and peaceful and quiet, I benefited quite a lot. So, that was my direct experience. My teacher did not tell me what to expect. He did not tell me that I should meditate to attain nibbāna. I think if he told me to practice meditation to attain nibbāna, I might refuse it. But because he did not tell me what to expect, I found out for myself how beneficial meditation is. So, he gave me freedom to find out, to explore. So, I did not consider myself a member of any religion at that time. [missing some words here]

### **Your religion?**

And after my 10th standard examination, I went to

university to study engineering. And these are my friends... We went to the same university to study engineering. [missing some words here]. And in the university, also we had to fill forms. And one of the questions is “your religion?” And in that space, I answered that I have no religion yet. Honestly, I said that. But in Burmese it sounds very terrible. In Burmese, [Burmese words] means nothing, not have it. But my friend said, If you say not have it, it sounds very rude. So I said [Burmese words], I don’t have it. And then my friend said, even that sounds not very good. You should say something in more polite form. So I said, [Burmese words] No religion yet. I put the word “yet”, which means I kept it open. Maybe someday I may have a religion. So that’s the kind of person I am. I just want to let you know what kind of person I am. So all six years while I was in university, whenever I had to fill the form, I always put that I have no religion yet. I have no religion yet. I have no religion yet. All those six years in university.

### **Just sit, do nothing, listen to the silence**

But although I did not confirm myself as being a follower of any religion, I got more and more interested in the teachings of the Buddha and got more and more interested in meditation. Then I started reading some books on meditation. I did not go to any monastery. I do not go to any meditation center. I did not even step into any meditation center.

Although I visited some monasteries in the mountains. Just because in the mountains, the monasteries are very quiet, very simple, very peaceful.

So sometimes when I felt very tired and stressful or upset or angry or sad, I would go up the mountain, go and find a quiet place in a monastery, in a shady place. And I would just go and sit there. Sometimes I meditated. But sometimes not really meditate, just sitting in a quiet place. And that helped me quite a lot. So I want to encourage you to go to a very quiet place, a simple place, and just sit. Do nothing. Just do nothing. Can you do that? Doing nothing. Not that easy. Doing nothing is not that easy. You go there and sit there and think about your problems. But anyways, because I learned to meditate and made my mind a little calm, whenever I went to the monastery in the mountains and found a quiet, beautiful place and sat there, gradually I became very calm and peaceful. And because of that calmness and peacefulness, all the tiredness, all the worries and anxiety disappears. So I found out that just to sit in a quiet place helps you quite a lot.

It was not any religion I was practising. I did not consider that a religious practice. Just to go to a quiet and simple place and just sit there alone and do nothing. Sometimes I listen to the birds. Sometimes I hear the bells in the shrine. Sometimes I feel the wind. So I just listen to the birds. Listen to the wind.

Sometimes just listen to the silence. Can you listen to silence? If you learn, you can. And when you listen to silence, what happens to your mind? Your mind also becomes silence. Yes. The object of your mind influences your mental state. So, when you just sit still and listen to the birds, you listen to the bells and you listen to the wind, you start thinking of this and that, and you pay attention to your thought and the thought goes away. And then you become very calm and quiet and still. Then you listen to the silence outside and you listen to the silence inside. When there's silence outside, when there's silence inside, it becomes really silence. Even though when there's silence outside, if your mind is noisy, you cannot hear silence. You cannot hear quietness. Only when your mind becomes quiet, then you can really hear silence. So I did that regularly and benefited very, very much from that. So whenever I had big problems in my life, sometimes big crises in my life, I would go up into the mountains, find a very nice and quiet place and just sit there. Sometimes a few hours, sometimes the whole day, depending on the nature of the problem.

I just want to get away. Get away for a while. Sometimes I don't want to live at home. Because sometimes your home is not a very peaceful place to live. So much disagreement and arguments and quarrels and fights. And so it's so painful sometimes to be at home. So when I don't want to be at home, I'll just go out into the mountains, into the monasteries,

and find a quiet place and sit. So that is a kind of meditation. I cannot tell you what kind of meditation that is, but just sitting very quietly and paying attention to what you hear, what you feel, paying attention to what you are thinking, and gradually becoming calm and peaceful. It's a kind of meditation.

### **Moving into vipassana meditation**

And later I learn more about meditation. And after I finished studying engineering, I thought, now I have more time to meditate. Because before that I was so busy studying for the exams and also busy reading so many books on many different subjects. But after my engineering study, I went to a suitable monastery to meditate. But, this but is also a very important “but”. Although the monastery is a suitable monastery, when I ordained as a monk, not a bikkhu, but a samanera – a novice monk, and I asked the monk, the head monk, “I want to meditate, please teach me”. He said, you can find some books in the library, go and read and meditate.

So, I cannot ask him to teach me. I went and picked up a book on meditation and in that meditation practice, it was the method of meditation that in Myanmar we call [Burmese words]. It's just breathing. You breathe very hard and keep your attention from the air coming into your nostril and going out of your nostril. So you feel it very strongly.

You breath so hard that you cannot not pay attention to it. So, I practised that method of meditation. But because I was a novice at that time and had nothing else to do, I sit and meditate, paying attention to breathing. And sometimes I walk in there. The place I was given, it was a big house, about this, bigger than this one. So I had a lot of space to walk, so I walked up and down that hall. Every time I take a step, I pay attention to lifting my foot, moving it and placing it on the floor. And the floor was and still is a cement floor. So the cement floor is very hard and cold. So whenever I put down my foot, I felt that sensation: hard and cold. So I can't miss it. So every time I take a step, I pay attention to that sensation.

So I was sitting for an hour and then walking for an hour, doing that alternatively, just from reading the book without any teaching. But at that time I stayed at the novice monk for 20 days. I wanted to stay longer. But many problems came up and people came to tell me that now you have to disrobe. Because you have to take care of these problems. And very reluctantly, I disrobed and went to take care of the problems. And when I solved the problems, I decided to meditate longer. So I went away to another forest monastery, far away, and nobody knew where I went. Because if I told anybody where I went, then they would come and tell me that there's a problem you must attend to. So I went away without telling anybody where I was going. So I went to that forest monastery and learned

meditation from another teacher. And that teacher taught me quite a lot. He taught me the whole Mahasatipatthana Sutta, the text and the practice of Mahasatipatthana Sutta. So that was the first time I learned about Mahasatipatthana. Before that, I heard here and there a few things about anapana<sup>1</sup> and some other kind of meditation practice. But with that teacher, I learned the whole sutta. And some of you have read the sutta? What's the first thing the Buddha said in Mahasatipatthana Sutta?

“Ekāyano bhikkhave maggo sattānaṃ visuddhiyā” – This is the only way for beings to become purified, to overcome sorrow and lamentation, to realize nibbana. So from that first sentence, I started thinking, this is the only way for beings to become purified. So, to become purified means your mind to become purified. Your body is another matter. Meditation purifies your mind. When I read that, I started thinking, what does purification mean?

### **To know vs. to think**

So when I read and think about this sutta, I found out that most of the time, our mind is not purified. It's full

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<sup>1</sup> Anapana means observation of natural, normal respiration, as it comes in and as it goes out. It is an easy to learn, objective and scientific technique that helps develop concentration of the mind. Observation of the breath is the ideal object for meditation because it is always available and it is completely non-sectarian.

of greed or anger or envy or jealousy, or pride, conceit, dullness and doubts, so many things happening in the mind. So I practice with that teacher for a long, long time, for three years. And I ordained in that monastery as a bikkhu. And I never disrobe until now. But I keep it open. Maybe someday I disrobe. Who knows? But I'm quite happy, isn't it? So I studied Satipatthana Sutta with my teacher. And I'm still studying and also teaching Satipatthana Sutta. I went to Korea last month and spent 43 days there. And I gave a dhamma talk based on Mahasatipatthana Sutta, how to practice Satipatthana.

In Satipatthana, you know, there are four sections. Kayanupassana which is paying attention to your body, everything happening in your body. So this word "meditation" is not really a correct translation of the Pali word. If you look up this word "meditation" in the dictionary, you'll find that in some cases it means thinking deeply. There are many books with the title meditation. One book is written by a Roman emperor, Marcus Aurelius. And that book also, the title of the book also is "Meditation". So the English word "meditation" also means thinking. But in Vipassana meditation, meditation is not thinking. It's beyond thinking.

And in some other translations we see contemplation, contemplating on the body. Contemplation also means thinking. And there's even a song called

“contemplation”. Well, contemplation also is not the right word. And in Satipatthana, there are two very important words. One word is pajānāti, gacchanto vā ‘gacchāmi’ ti pajānāti. This is a very important word.

Pajānāti means to know, not to think. To think and to know are two different things. You can only think of the past. You can never think of the present. You can’t think of the future. But you can just imagine the future. It’s not really thinking. You can think of the past, but even in that case, you’re not really thinking of the past. You are reconstructing the past. You cannot really think in every detail what happened yesterday. You only remember a few things and you reconstruct your past. So, you cannot think of the present. The present is very short. You can directly experience the present, but you cannot think about it. The moment you think about it, it’s already in the past. So in the instruction, Buddha said pajānāti. So this word, pa and jā. The root is jā. Jā means to know. And jā and ñā, the Pali word ñā are the same. And ñā and paññā, they are the same. So, pajānāti is very close to paññā – you know it with wisdom.

So if you experience it directly without any thinking, you know it directly what you see. So I touch here something and I feel it’s cold and “knowing that it is cold” is pajānāti. But once we get something, normally we will think that I’m touching, what do you call this, a metal, a metallic pull. Normally that’s the way we

understand it. But when you practice meditation, we don't think about the metal. We just pay attention to the sensation. So it is not the metal that is cold. It is the coldness that is cold. So it's the direct experience. What you think of a metal or a disc or a cup or a table is all paññātti. This paññātti is also very important. Normally, our direct experience is reality – parāmaṭṭha. But the moment we experience parāmaṭṭha, immediately we change that into paññātti – concept, idea. So there are many different kinds of paññātti. The name is paññātti, the shape also is paññātti, the concept or things that we put together in our mind. The house also is a paññātti. It is called samuha paññātti. Because if you take down the walls, if you take away the roof, where's the house? There is no house anymore. So, the floor and the wall and the roof together gives you the idea of the house. So, it puts together idea, which is called samuha paññātti.

So can you touch the house? What do you think? Can you touch the house? No. What can you touch? Yes... Yes... Sensations only. For example, when you touch, what do you feel? Yes, coldness or hardness, softness, warmth. Yes. Maybe in some cases you also feel the vibration. If it is moving, you'll feel that. So, you can only touch reality. So whatever you touch is actually the reality. So, I touch here... Normally, I will say that I'm touching the tablecloth, I'm touching the tablecloth. But when I touch this and without thinking of any name or form, any name or any shape and just

pay attention directly to what I'm experiencing, what am I experiencing? I'm experiencing something that is soft and warm. That's my direct experience. So when you practice vipassana, you pay directly, you pay attention directly to what you experience without thinking about it.

So in the same way, we are breathing in and out... When we pay attention to breathing, normally we think that I am breathing. But when you don't think about anything and just pay attention to what you are experiencing directly, what will you experience? Gently touching... the air coming in and going out, it is touching very gently, the softness. And when the air comes in, it is cool. When it goes out, it is warmer. So you only see coolness and warmth. So, when you pay direct attention, there's no shape, there's no name. So, without any shape or without any name... Because any kind of shape is paññātti, any kind of name also is paññātti.

### **Vipassana meditation is to pay attention to parāmaṭṭha**

And when we practice the vipassana, we are not paying attention to paññātti. We are paying attention to parāmaṭṭha, which means what is real, what we experience directly. So once you will pay attention to what you experience directly, you will see that that experience is not a thing. It is only the process. It is

always changing. It is arising and passing away. It is arising because it has sufficient cause to arise. And it is neither a man or a woman. So what you experience directly is just pure sensation in your body.

So can you touch a man? Normally we think that we can touch a man or we can touch a woman. We cannot touch them. Because when you come and touch, what you feel is softness. You can only touch softness. And you feel it is warm. You can only touch warmth. And also in some places you can feel the movement. So you can only touch movement. You cannot touch a man. Where is it? Where's the man? The man is the idea you have from the shape also. So when you take away the shape and pay directly attention to what you feel, you feel what it really is. So when we practice vipassana, we pay attention to direct experience. And if you can keep your mind there, you know that this is not a man, this is not a woman. It is just pure sensation. It is natural. It arises and passes away.

And in the same way, when you pay attention to your feelings, any kind of feeling in your body, pleasant or unpleasant, when you pay direct attention without thinking about it, you see that it is just pure feeling. So a pleasant feeling is not a man or a woman. When you pinch yourself, it's painful. Is that pain a man? The pain is not a man. But you may think that I am feeling the pain. So, I am a man who is feeling the pain. You put the idea like that. But if you pay direct attention to

the pain only, you will see that it's pain. That's it. Not a man, not a woman. So that's what we do, when we meditate. We don't think about it. We pay direct attention.

And in our mind, also, we are thinking of many things. When you pay a close attention to your thoughts, you will see that it's just thinking. Thinking is just the same as talking without making sound. When you think, there are words going on in your mind. And the words also represent ideas. And because of the ideas, the words also makes you feel something. So when I, if I speak in Burmese and if you don't understand Burmese, you will only hear the sound. You will not understand the meaning. And therefore, it will not make you feel happy or unhappy. But if you understand the meaning, that meaning makes you feel happy or unhappy.

So if I call you a bad name in Burmese and you don't understand the meaning, will you get angry? No. But if I call you a bad name in English, then you will get angry. So what makes you angry? Is that parāmaṭṭha or paññātti? It's paññātti. It's paññātti that makes you angry, not parāmaṭṭha. The sound doesn't make you angry. But if you hear a very loud noise, then you don't like the noise, you get upset. But normally, when you hear somebody speak, the sound is not that unpleasant. And if the person say something nice to you, you'll be very happy. When you hear somebody

say, “I love you”. Ah,... you feel very happy. Uh, somebody said, “I love you”. And when somebody said, “I hate you”, then you get upset. So it’s paññāṭṭi that makes you feel happy or unhappy. And the parāmaṭṭha, it’s just neutral. It neither makes you happy or unhappy. So when you pay attention to parāmaṭṭha, your mind becomes neutral. It’s neither happy or unhappy. When you don’t think about it, your mind is calm and quiet and you can pay close attention. And you’ll see that something arises and passes away. There’s nobody there. So that’s what we do when we meditate.

### **Why do we need to pay attention to parāmaṭṭha?**

And why do we need to do that? ... Why do we need to do that? Yes. To purify the mind. So by paying attention to whatever is happening in our body or in our mind without thinking about it, we’ll see the reality. And therefore, we don’t have, the mind does not become greedy or angry or in any other way defiled. So to purify our mind, we must pay attention to the body and mind without thinking about it. Because the first thing that we are very strongly attached to is our body and mind. We are very much attached to our body and mind. And from that, we get also attached to other people’s body and mind and all the other things outside too. So, by paying attention to our body and mind, we can see that this body and

mind is just process. Body (is) also process, mind (is) also process. There's nobody there. So there's one book written by an American doctor. His name is Mark Epstein. And the title of the book is very interesting, "Thought without a thinker". The title of the book is "Thoughts without a thinker". So normally, we think that I am thinking. But if you really watch your thoughts, you will come to see that thoughts are arising in passing away. There is no thinker.

There's one very famous French philosopher who based his system of philosophy on one very important premise. Anybody know who he is, he was? [talking from the audiences] "I think, therefore I am". Oh, yes, he said that. That's a very famous thing. He said, "I think, therefore I am", which means that thinking is something that "I" is doing. There must be "I" because there's thinking. He's trying to prove that there is an "I". And to prove that there's an "I", he showed the evidence of the proof, saying that "I think". But before you prove something, you already say that there's an "I" thinking. So that is a very wrong premise. You cannot confirm something, before you get to the conclusion. So he said, "I think, therefore I am". Philosophically, this is wrong. Because before you prove I am, you already say I think. You cannot say that.

So even philosophically, what you can see is that there

is thinking. We can only say that there is thinking. We cannot say, “I think, therefore I am”. So just because there’s thinking is no proof that there’s somebody thinking. And you can see that for yourself, if you practice vipassana meditation which is called cittānupassanā. Looking very closely at the thoughts, arising and passing. So, when you watch your thinking, you’ll find that sometimes, sometimes you will see that thoughts are just arising. You don’t even know that. You’re not creating the thoughts. But sometimes you feel like you are trying to think about something. In that case, you feel like you are thinking. But even in that case, if you can step back and watch the thought, you will see that it’s a thought. Just a thought.

So whenever we watch something, we step back. We create a distance. We create a distance and we see what is happening. So, whatever you can watch is not you. This is another philosophical premise. Whatever you can watch, it’s not you. So if you can watch your body, you can see that I’m watching my body. At least, you can see that conventionally. So if you see that I am watching my body, then “I” is one thing and “my body” is another thing. Your body means you possess that body. It’s your possession. But it’s not you. So this is my book, but it’s not me. It’s my book. So whenever you say I am watching this, then you are creating a distance. So in the same way, when you watch your thoughts, you create a distance and you can see that

the thoughts are not you. But in meditation practice, sometimes you feel that I am meditating. I am watching. And you watch that mind again and you can see that this even watching-mind is just a watching mind. And that is part of our meditation practice. And when you can do that, it becomes what we call dhammānupassanā.

So we have kāyānupassanā – watching the body. We practise vedānānupassanā – watching the feeling. And we practise cittānupassanā – watching the thoughts. And we also watch this awareness. We also watch the watching. And if you can watch the watching, it becomes dhammānupassanā. So, then you can see that in the beginning you think that “I am sitting and I am meditating and I’m really working very hard”. Okay, keep going. But you will come, at one point, you’ll see that there’s only awareness which is aware of whatever is arising. Awareness is aware of something arising no matter what that may be. And you can watch that awareness again. Awareness is aware of awareness, and you can see that it’s just awareness. There’s nobody meditating anymore. So when you practice meditation, you must come to that point, when you even overcome this feeling of “I (am) meditating”. So if you cannot do that, if you don’t, have not come to that point, then you may still feel that “I am meditating and I am making the progress. And I’ve got to this stage or that stage”. And you feel very proud of your your meditation practice. And that

pride is also kind of defilement. And you may even compare your, your achievement with somebody else's and say that you are just a beginner. "I'm a long term meditator. I've achieved something". So, that is pride or conceit.

But if you can watch that watching mind and see that only the watching mind is watching, only awareness is aware of whatever is arising and passing away, then there's nothing to identify with. You feel more freedom there. So your meditation practice becomes pure. If you feel that "I am meditating", although it will give you wonderful results, still your mind is not purified. So only when you have overcome this feeling that "I am meditating", then your meditation becomes really pure. And in Pali, it is called [can't get the words in Pali...] It is sankhara observing sankhara. Even the watching mind, even the meditating mind is sankhara, which means conditioned phenomena. The meditating mind also is a conditioned phenomenon. It also arises and passes away. You can also see that awareness is also arising and passing away. It is also impermanent.

So practicing like that, you become completely detached. Even meditation practice, you don't, you are not attached to that anymore. And when you come to that point, meditation practice becomes much easier. It happens naturally.

## **Sammasati**

So, we are born with this quality which we call awareness. In Pali, we call that sati. Sati means... It has many meanings. It means not to forget also. It also means to pay attention, to remember. To remember what? To remember what is happening now. Not to forget, to pay attention. It's also sati. So, satipatthana, sati means not to forget, patthana means very firm, very strong, very well established. So when we practice satipatthana, we cultivate this quality, which in Pali we call sati, so that it becomes very strong and very firm. And when we watch something, we can watch it continuously. Depending on how you practice, how long you practice, and how well you practice, you can watch something continuously, sometimes for hours. Normally, we don't pay attention to anything for more than a few seconds. But all of us are born with this quality, which we call sati. Because without sati, we cannot function in our normal daily life.

For example, when you are driving and you come to a traffic light and you see that the light has changed to red. You're aware of that. You know that it has changed to red color. What will happen if you are not aware of that? You'll get into an accident. So, you may get injured or you may be killed, or you may also kill other people in the other car. So, even in our normal daily life, we have awareness. We cannot live without awareness. If we are not aware, if we don't have

awareness, we cannot function in our daily life. We cannot even read one sentence, without awareness and concentration. We have to concentrate our mind on what we are reading and we have to pay attention to what it means. Then only we understand the meaning of a sentence. You are now listening to me. I'm talking a lot. I'm talking very fast. But you know what I mean, because you are paying attention. You are focusing on what I'm saying. So, you are focusing means it's some kind of samadhi. And you are also aware of what I'm trying to say. You are, you understand the meaning. So there's a kind of attention, awareness too. Therefore, you understand what I mean. But this is normal, ordinary sati and samadhi. So, even in our normal daily life, we have a sati and samadhi. We only need to cultivate that to a higher level. Then, it will become sammasati and sammasamadhi. So what is the difference between sammasati and sati?

Sammasati means right awareness. So, why do we call right awareness? We call it right awareness because it leads to right understanding. In our daily lives we see, oh, the light has changed, the traffic light has changed to red. That's also awareness. But that doesn't lead to liberation. That only leads to avoiding traffic accidents. We stop our car. It's very useful. But it doesn't lead to enlighten. Because we are still functioning in paññātti world – conventional world. Paññātti or convention is also very important. We

must understand paññātti. We must understand convention. And use that wisely. But we must understand that the convention is not the ultimate truth.

### **Two levels of truth**

So, we are living and functioning in two different levels of truth. One level of truth we call sammuti-sacca (conventional truth). Another level of truth we call paramattha-sacca (ultimate truth). So, in our normal daily life, we have to live in this sammuti-sacca level – conventional truth, conventional reality. So, I'm here, a monk. A monk is a conventional truth. If I take off my robes and put on t-shirt and pants, would you still call me a monk? No. So, a monk is a monk because of the way I dress and because of my lifestyle. It's a convention. But just because it is convention doesn't mean that it is not useful or important or worthy. It is very important for me to be a monk. It's very important. I get all of my life to be a monk. I did not do anything. **I've got a monk. I've got the life of a monk.**

So what I mean is we must understand how important convention reality is. And we must also understand the ultimate reality too, paramattha-sacca. Because understanding the convention reality helps us to function in the normal world properly. But it doesn't really make our mind free and happy. Because of

conventions, we are very happy. We are caught in convention. We are caught in paññātti. My teacher told me many times that we are caught in words, he said. Meditate so that to go beyond words. He used the word paññātti. There are many different kinds of paññātti. When he said that in the beginning, I did not understand what he really meant. Because it is so deep. But whenever I watch my mind, I see that I was thinking of some idea, some concept. And whenever I feel unhappy, I notice that it's the idea that makes me unhappy. It's the idea in my mind that makes me happy or unhappy.

So, what happens if I go beyond all judgment and beyond all ideas and just pay direct attention to whatever is happening? And if you keep practicing, you'll come to that point. There, you stop forming any idea about your experience, even pain. Sometimes you'll be sitting and it's very painful in the knees or in the back. So in the beginning of your practice, you may think that, "Oh, I'm suffering, I'm in pain, my knee is in pain". And if you're very unhappy about that. But if you keep practicing, at one point, you create a distance and you see pain as pain without an "I". There's no "I", just pain. And it becomes very interesting. It becomes a very amazing, wonderful experience. Even pain can become very interesting and wonderful.

So, sometimes in our practice, I start asking myself,

what is pain? It's not so simple to answer that question. When you pay close attention to pain and you ask that question, sometimes you find that it's very difficult to answer. Although we can feel pain, if you don't react to that pain, if you don't have that feeling of not liking the pain, if you can watch pain with equanimity, the nature of pain changes. And many of my friends also told me that when they are watching pain, their mind are very calm and peaceful. They are quite happy. So naturally, normally when we feel pain, we are unhappy. It makes us unhappy. But when you practice vipassana and see pain as just pure pain without the person, then pain becomes very interesting and it doesn't make you unhappy.

And in that case, when I first experienced that, I remembered something that the Buddha taught. And in that moment only, I understood how important that teaching is. And Buddha taught this to one old man who is known as Nakulapita. Because his daughter's name is Nakula. His daughter's name was Nakula. So he was known as the father of Nakula. Sometimes, people don't call the man his name. But they will call him the father of somebody, especially if the daughter or the son is a famous person. And Buddha said, "Aturakayassa me sato cittam anaturam bhavissati" – "Although my body is in pain, my mind will not be in pain". That you should practice. So when we practice meditation and come to this point, when we stop judging or criticizing or forming any idea and just

watch it, although we feel pain in the body, the mind stays very calm and peaceful. Then I understood. This teaching is very important. We can train ourselves so that although the body may be in pain, the mind will not be in pain. So when I learned that, I felt very happy and in a way relieved. Many times, I got very sick and very close to death, too. And whenever I got to that stage, I remembered the teachings of the Buddha and practiced vipassana. And the fear of pain or death disappeared. It did not arise. So at one point, I thought I was really dying and I was ready for it. It's okay to die.

So what will you do when you are dying? If you think about anything that would make you unhappy, if you think I'm dying that will make you unhappy. If you think that, oh, I'm losing everything or my loved ones or everything I have, you will be unhappy. And if you think that what will happen if I die and what will happen in my next life, you'll be unhappy. Learning to live and also learning to die. So all our lives, we are living with fear, we are living with insecurity. Because we are so attached to so many things: our body, our youth, our appearance, our possessions, our family members. It's okay to have loving kindness and appreciation to whatever we have. I appreciate my body very much. I take good care of my body. And I appreciate all my friends and my family. Because they love me and they are doing everything they can for me. But to love and to appreciate is one thing. To be

attached to your body or somebody or your possession is another thing. So, we must learn to love and appreciate. Here, love means metta. Because even this word “love” is corrupted now. When I use this word “love” in America, many of my friends said, “No, no, no, don’t use this word. It’s a dirty word now”. I said, “Why? Why, then? Then, what shall I say?” It’s not so simple anymore. So we put another word together, loving-kindness, to make it different from ordinary kind of love.

So, we are living with a lot of insecurity. We are living with a lot of fear. Although, we may not be conscious of our fear and insecurity, all the time, still in the back of our minds, there’s a kind of insecurity, whatever you have you’re afraid of losing.

So, how to live your life without any fear, without any insecurity? How to live? You must learn to live that way. You must learn to live with serenity, with peace, with joy, with appreciation, but without fear. So, if you learn both reality, I mean sammuti-sacca and paramattha-sacca – both, then you can learn to do that. Sammuti-sacca means, you are there and I’m here. So, this is sammuti-sacca. But paramattha-sacca means there’s only mental and physical processes. Nobody. So if you can learn both ways of living, then when necessary you will live with people in the conventional, normal reality level. And also, when necessary, you switch your mind to paramattha-sacca.

And you see that there's nobody there. There's nothing to be afraid of. So, we must learn to live in both levels of reality. Buddha did not reject the conventional reality. Buddha taught us how to live a normal, healthy, wholesome life. Buddha taught us how to live a happy life. There were people who went to the Buddha and asked, "Venerable Sir, we want to live with our family. We want to have jewelry. We want to have gold, everything. We want to enjoy and we want to be happy. Is there a way to do that?" Buddha said, "Yes". You want to know the answer? Live a good life. Then, although you have all your family and possessions, you can still live happily. And if your wife, when you have to let go, you'll be able to let go.

### **Understand the universal law, the truth to liberate the mind and become freedom**

Here is one thing that I want to mention. We are in the presence of universal law. We must understand universal law. The teachings of the Buddha is universal law. We call that Buddhism. So, sometimes I ask a very unusual question. And the question is, "What is the religion of the Buddha?" When you ask somebody, "What's your religion". You say, oh, Buddhism. But if you ask the question, "What is the religion of the Buddha?" How will you answer? ...

Did Buddha has a religion? Well, there's a very interesting incident. Just after Buddha became

enlightened, he can reflect on many things. But one thing he was reflecting on it. Just after he became enlightened, he asked himself, "Is there anybody to whom I can be respectful and leave (for)?" And you can see, you can find that in Samyutta Nikaya. But anyway, when I read that, I felt very surprised. Buddha, a fully enlightened Buddha, looking for somebody he could be a disciple. Why? But, Buddha look for that person, that kind of person to whom he can be respectful and didn't find anybody. Because he couldn't find anybody who was more developed in sila (moralities), samadhi (concentration) and panna (wisdom) than himself. And then Buddha said, "Well, there's nobody who is more developed in sila, samadhi and panna. Therefore, I must live my life respectful of dhamma".

So, that story, that gave me a lot to think about. And it also changed me totally. Because I had a very..., how to explain... terrible kind of pride? To say, I don't know how to say this. It was very difficult for me to be respectful of anybody. I appreciated my parents. I appreciated my teacher too. But I've never trusted them. I appreciated people for what they had done for me. They had done a lot of good things for me. But I never trusted anybody, not my parents, not my teachers. Because since very young, I noticed that they didn't know the truth. Sometimes, they told me many things that were not true. So I thought, well, they may have very good intentions, but they don't know the

truth. And sometimes I thought I knew better than they do. They don't know as much as I do. So, I had a kind of pride also, and also a kind of distrust, a suspicion. People are kind to each other. But nobody knows the truth. That's... that was what I felt very deeply for a long, long time. Until I was about 25 I think, I lived with that kind of attitude. I cannot trust anybody. "I cannot trust" means people are kind to me and they are not cheating me. It's okay. But they don't know the truth. Therefore, in that sense I cannot respect them. And when I read about the Buddha who became enlightened and he was looking for somebody to whom he can be respectful. It gave me a big shock. And it really, it really showed how conceited I was. So I thought it is very important to have somebody to whom you can trust and respect. It is very important. But Buddha said that in (the) story, to live your life without anybody you can trust and respect is very painful. That's what Buddha said. Then, I really felt that. Well, Buddha said that in the text... then I thought this is true, this is true. I live, I've been living my life without respectful to anybody, without trusting anybody.

And I know that I was not at peace. But how can I find anybody with whom I can trust? How can I know that somebody really knows the truth? It is not that easy. But anyway, I became more humble after reading that. And then Buddha, Buddha said that "I think I cannot find anybody to whom I can be

respectful, I must live my life respectful of the dhamma". So I thought, oh, you need somebody you can be, you can trust and respect. And also you need some law of nature, some truth, law of nature by which you can live your life. So what? How am I living my life? What's my principles? What's my values? What am I living for? So I started asking myself these questions. Then gradually, by practicing meditation also, I found some things, some truths, very simple truths that I feel that, I feel sure this is true. And to know that something is true gives me a lot of relief.

So, (the) truth makes you free. Somebody said that maybe it was Plato or Aristotle or somebody like that, one of the two said that. Truth shall make you free. So, when I found the truth about the dhamma by practicing meditation, I felt great relief. I told myself that now I knew something which is true. And also, when I watched my mind, I saw wholesome states of mind and unwholesome states of mind. When I was younger, I did not believe in wholesome or unwholesome. I thought, all these are arbitrarily conventions. You can say something is good or bad. It depends on you. It depends on who says that. But when you meditate and watch your mind and when your mind becomes really calm and pure and quiet, whatever thoughts appears in your mind, you see it very clearly. You see the nature of it. You see that whenever your mind is not pure, whenever there's

unwholesome mind, it is very painful. And you can also feel that it is impure, impurity. And whenever the mind is pure, you can feel that purity, too. It's not something you imagine. You can really feel it.

So, when I see wholesome and unwholesome mental states in my mind, by watching my mind and see the difference and knowing that this is not what I'm imagining, this is real, this is true, then it also gave me a kind of relief. Now, I know what is wholesome and unwholesome. So, you must find out from your own experience what is wholesome and what is unwholesome. We don't need to believe anybody. And just believing somebody doesn't really make you feel how important it is not to do unwholesome. Even though conventionally, even though you read in the books that this is unwholesome, you still go on doing unwholesome things. Why? Because you don't really feel it.

When you really feel it, then you don't want to do it anymore. You don't, you know that it's not worth doing it. And once you have done something unwholesome, whenever you remember that again, it gives you pain. It never makes you happy. And that pain and that unhappiness is also a kind of prison. So, any unwholesome deeds makes you feel unfree. Any wholesome deed, it helps you become free. So the teachings of the Buddha, the purpose, the real purpose, the ultimate purpose of the teachings of the

Buddha is to make you free, to let you free. So, if you really want to become free, you must really see in your own mind directly what is wholesome and what is unwholesome. So, even in practicing sila, like I mentioned before, you know that it is not wholesome to kill, so you don't kill. And sometimes people don't kill because they are afraid that if you kill, then you will be killed. And because you are afraid of being killed, you don't want to kill. And your motivation of not killing is fear. But when you see that I have fear, if somebody come and kill me, I don't want that, I don't like that. It's painful. And that other person or the other beings, maybe an animal, also is the same as me. There's not much difference. So you have compassion for the other beings. And because of compassion, we don't kill. So, if you don't kill because of compassion, then your motivation is positive. It's not fear. It's compassion.

So, when I do something, I watch my mind and ask myself, why am I doing this? What is my motivation? Is my motivation negative or positive? And normally, it's negative. Before you become positive, you're negative. But even when I help somebody, I give something to somebody, I watch my mind and I ask myself, "Why am I helping this person?" Why am I giving this to him or to her? In many cases, I was hoping that, well, if I do this for this person, he or she will like me. At least I wonder, at least I expect that he or she will like me. He or she will be friendly towards

me. Or maybe someday when I need help, he or she will help me again. So, we are expecting something. Expectation. That is a kind of greed. So, how can we give something to somebody or help somebody without even expecting that this person will say "thank you"? Without even expecting "thank you". Can we do that? If you do something for another person, and if that person even didn't say thank you, what will happen to you? What do you feel? Oh, he or she is not appreciated. Not appreciated. He didn't even say thank you. You get upset. But if your motivation is really pure, you will not get upset.

So, here I will go on reading the book. We are in the presence of universal law. We must learn about this universal law. Buddha live according to the universal law. Buddha had no religions, only universal law. So the teachings of the Buddha is universal law. But because we respect the Buddha, we call his teachings "Buddhism". It's a new name. They did not call the teachings of the Buddha "Buddhism", when Buddha was alive, when Buddha was living. Only after Buddha passed away, to nibbana, many hundreds of years later, people started calling the teachings of the Buddha "Buddhism". So Buddha did not teach Buddhism. Buddha taught universal law.

So, we are in the presence of universal law. You must understand that. Wholesome and unwholesome actions are universal. It's not arbitrary convention.

And (we) should bow our heads in silence. So, we must bow our heads to that universal law in silence. So when we pay respect to the dhamma, that's what we are doing. We are respecting the universal law. Dhammam saranam gacchami – we are respecting, we are taking homage in the universal law. But only if we understand the universal law and live according to the universal law, then only we are really respecting universal law.

### **Obey the judge within**

(Or) be the judge within. This is something I'm very interested in. I really feel that there's a judge inside. You can cheat other people. You can deceive other people. They may believe you. But you cannot cheat yourself. When you've done something, you know that. I want to go more into detail. Because I really feel it very deeply. But I don't think we have that much time now. I've been talking for a long... time. It's almost seven. Well, let me finish this one. So obey the judge within. You don't have to obey anybody. I don't need to obey anybody. I don't obey anybody. I'm very disobedient. Really, I mean it. My friends were very upset because I was very disobedient. And my teachers in the school, the principal of the school, the schoolmaster, the headmaster, he caned me every week. My class teacher, almost every week, he or she sent me to the office, "Go to the office". And I had to go and wait in the office. And when the headmaster

came, “What happened?”. And I had to give him the letter from the teacher. “Oh, very disobedient. Okay. You bend.” And I have to bend. And he caned me, and then he said, “Say thank you”. Really... I had to go to the office and get myself hit by a cane and then I had to say thank you. Anyway... I do not blame. I was very disobedient, very naughty. But later, when I learn dhamma, then I obey the judgment. I can do something and get away with it, because they’re not knowing. But my mind punishes me. I know that my mind punishes. You are punishing yourself. It’s your mind that will judge you.

So, even in one book that I wrote in Burmese language. I wrote altogether 18 books. So in one book I wrote that when you are dying, it’s your mind that will judge you. But even when you are living, it’s your mind that is always judging you. And that judge is fair, not biased. You may think that you can deceive yourself and get away with it. No, you will never be able to do that. The judge inside you knows the truth. And that judge is not biased. You cannot bribe the judge.

### **Asking nothing**

And another one is asking nothing. This is also very important for me. I don’t know exactly, but as much as I remember when I was just about ten or 12 years old, I stopped asking for anything from anybody, including

from my parents. When they gave me money, I received the money. But I never asked for anything. Because to ask for something, it hurts your pride, certainly that way. So you may notice that I was, I had a very big pride. And I have many friends and I appreciate all my friends very much. But I never asked for anything from anybody, even now. So, asking nothing here not only means that. When I do something good, I just do it because I love doing it. Even if I don't get any results, any benefit from doing that I will still do it. Because it's something good to do.

So most of us are product oriented. We want the product. Most of us are not process oriented. We don't like the process. We only want the product. So, do something just because you know that it is good to do that. So, asking nothing means when we do dana (giving to monks/nuns), of course we know that dana will bring good results and we expect too much from the results. But we can train ourselves to give something just because it is good to do that. And just because we know that what we are doing helps that person. It makes that person happier and easier.

Fearing nothing. This is another one that I like very much. I don't want to live with fear. Just doing our duty right along, seeking no reward here or here after. If you have that attitude, then you can feel how free you feel. You will know how free you feel. But you know the law of nature. So, if you do with your pure

heart, pure mind, it will bring suitable results to you, even though you don't expect anything. So, I expect one thing at least. Whatever I do, I expect freedom. But nothing is more. Nothing else.

Do we have any more questions? I was waiting for your question and talking too much.

# Q&A

## **Non-Buddhist practice meditation?**

I'll tell you one story. I like that very much. Because your question is very important for me. I started practicing meditation without calling myself a Buddhist. Because I run my own practice. I was very curious about many things. And I practice meditation in the beginning just because I love my music teacher who told me to meditate. And also I was interested in. And I want to find out what will happen if I meditate. And the first thing I noticed was, was that after I practiced meditation for about a month, my mind became much calmer, more peaceful. And I don't react to situations so much anymore. Because my temperament is kind of ... in Pali it is called dosa – temperaments. I get upset very quickly. I have a very short temper, get angry very quickly. But not so much anymore. Even now, I sometimes I get upset. But I'm not that bad anymore. And I can see all the bad things happening in the world. Even since I was very young. I can see what's wrong more than what's right. So that made me very unhappy. If you go around and see all the bad things happening in the world, what do you feel? You feel very unhappy most of the time. But after meditating, my mind became more calm and

peaceful and happy, and I started seeing good things in myself and other people. So that made me happier.

And after practicing meditation for eight years, one day, my mind became very calm and peaceful. And that peace was really extraordinary. And after feeling that deep peace, spontaneously, I felt great gratitude for the Buddha. Until that time, I did not consider myself even somebody who is practicing the teachings of the Buddha. But after I felt this very deep peace and spontaneously I felt gratitude for the Buddha. And without even knowing, I started reciting “Buddham saranam gacchami”. And that gave me a lot of joy also. Just now I mentioned that I did not trust anyone. I did not trust that anybody knows the truth. Although they may be very, they may have goodwill and good intentions, and they teach us many things. What they teach us may be true or maybe not. Nobody can tell. Or partly true and partly false. So, I have a very doubtful, skeptical nature. So, although I appreciate people’s kindness, I don’t trust that they knew the truth. And after practicing meditation and felt very deep peace, and with that peace also, I felt freedom, a kind of freedom, then spontaneously, I felt gratitude to the Buddha. And without even knowing, I started reciting.

*Buddham saranam gacchami*  
*Dhamma saranam gacchami*  
*Sangham saranam gacchami*

So before I became a Buddhist, I started practicing meditation. And there's another story, an example of the Buddha. Buddha was travelling and he was a very handsome, good looking monk, so to speak. And nobody really knows, sometimes people did not know that he was the Buddha. He didn't say that he was a Buddha. He was just traveling. And one day he came to a brahmans (a rich person) house. And in those days, the culture was such that whenever wandering monk comes to your house, you invite that monk. You give him a place to stay, you give him a meal. So this brahmin invited the Buddha and gave him the best place in the house. The Buddha was staying at that house. And then another monk came and he heard about the Buddha from somebody. So, he wanted to meet the Buddha. Fortunately, he came to the same house and asked for a shelter and the householder, who was a very rich brahmans, gave gave him a place to stay in the same room where the Buddha was. So, Buddha was a very friendly teacher. Buddha greeted that young monk, "How are you doing? Where have you come from? Was your journey pleasant? Was there any difficulty?" So, the younger monk said, "There was no problem. It was nice. And I'm quite doing well, doing quite well". "And where are you going?", Buddha asked him. He said, "I heard that there was a Buddha. There was a Buddha, an enlightened person. And I want, I want to meet him". And Buddha didn't say that, "I'm the one you're

looking for”. He didn’t say that. He said, oh, yes. Then he started talking about law of nature, how the mind and body works, how things are related. So gradually, Buddha taught him all the things about the way the mind and body works. And because this person was earnest and very humble, very receptive, he listened very attentively. And every word, every instruction, every explanation he understood very deeply. And in the end of the discussion, he became enlightened. But he didn’t know that it was the Buddha who was teaching him. So, it is not necessary for you to know that it is the teachings of the Buddha. You just need to practice it.

So, many people ask me many questions, but I think I shouldn’t tell you it is very outrageous. So anyway, when you call yourself a Buddhist, what does that mean? It doesn’t mean much. Many people ask me, “Shall I convert Buddhism?” Many people came and asked me. And I said, “Why do you want to convert to Buddhism?” You just need to practice it. Just practice it. You don’t need to convert to Buddhism. What do you mean, when you say you convert to Buddhism? You change the name. You call yourself a Buddhist. But just to call yourself a Buddhist doesn’t change anything. But if you really understand the teachings of the Buddha and if you practice it, then that’s something. That will make a difference in your life. So, you don’t have to be a Buddhist to practice.

## Logics behind dana (giving to monks and nuns)?

So, naturally, when we know that a monk is a good monk and he's practicing and because we appreciate his practice and teachings, when you give him something, you feel a lot of joy. So that state of mind is important. Because what gives effect is your mental state. It's your mind that is giving effect. So karma or good karma is actually the mental state. It's not the thing. It's the attitude. It's the mental state. So, when you are giving something to a monk who you believe is a good monk and practicing, then you feel more joy in giving him. And that joy, that mental state with joy has a lot of power. So, what get resolved is that mind. And when you see a dog that is starving, and I have many dogs, and so when you see a dog that is starving and you have food, will you give the dog something to eat or not? Yes. So, you give the dog something to eat and you see that the dog is eating it, you feel happy too. So that is also good kamma.

But in many cases people feel more joy when they do something for somebody they love and respect. So, you are giving it because of your love and respect and appreciation. But to the dog you are giving it because of compassion or pity. So, there's only a slight difference. But just now I read this here "asking nothing". When you give something without expecting anything that will really help you become free. So, doing something good without expecting anything is a

more powerful way of giving, which will lead to freedom much quicker. Doing something good with expectations will also give you very, very good results. But because of your expectation and depending on what you expect, it will take longer for you to become free.

So when you are giving dana to a monk, and you expect that by doing that you will become rich in the next life, that will keep you in this round of rebirth longer. But if you give this dana to the monk and say that “I’m doing this just to become free”, then your intention, that really pure intention will help you become free. So it depends on your intention. It depends on your mental state.

[“still have intention?”]

Your intention is to be free, not to have anything. To be free means to overcome all intentions or expectations. So it’s a very difficult question to.

**Is the want to attain Nibbana a form of craving?**

[... *There’s one last question for tonight. “Is it wrong to say I want to attain Nibbana to become a Buddha. Is that also a form craving?”*]

That’s also a very important question. So in Pali words, we use the word lobha or tanha. They mean

the same. So, when we desire something which is worldly, sense pleasure, then we use the word tanha or lobha. But when we want something, when we desire something which is not worldly, which is not sensual, but liberation or freedom or wisdom, then we use the word chanda. So, with that kind of strong chanda, we call chanda adhipati, we work very hard, until we attain liberation. So we do not say that that is greed. We say that this is strong will. Chanda is actually will, strong will. We do not call that strong crave. We use the word craving only for sensual pleasure. And the two intentions are quite different. For example, when we want to eat chocolate, we can say that I have a craving for this chocolate. But when we are sick and we have to take medicine and we want to take medicine. I take medicine every day, because of diabetes. And I don't like taking medicine, but I want to take medicine. It's quite different. I don't like to take medicine. It's not because I like to take medication, I take medicine. But I want to take medicine. Because if I don't take the medicine, it makes me feel terrible, sick. So my wanting to take medicine is not craving. It is based on wisdom and knowledge. I must do this for my health. So depending on the situation, we must understand that just wanting to do something doesn't mean craving. Why you do (it), and what motivation and what results you want is more important.

# References

- [Kalama Sutta \(Pali-English\)](#)
- [Mahāsatipatthāna Sutta \(Pali-English\)](#)