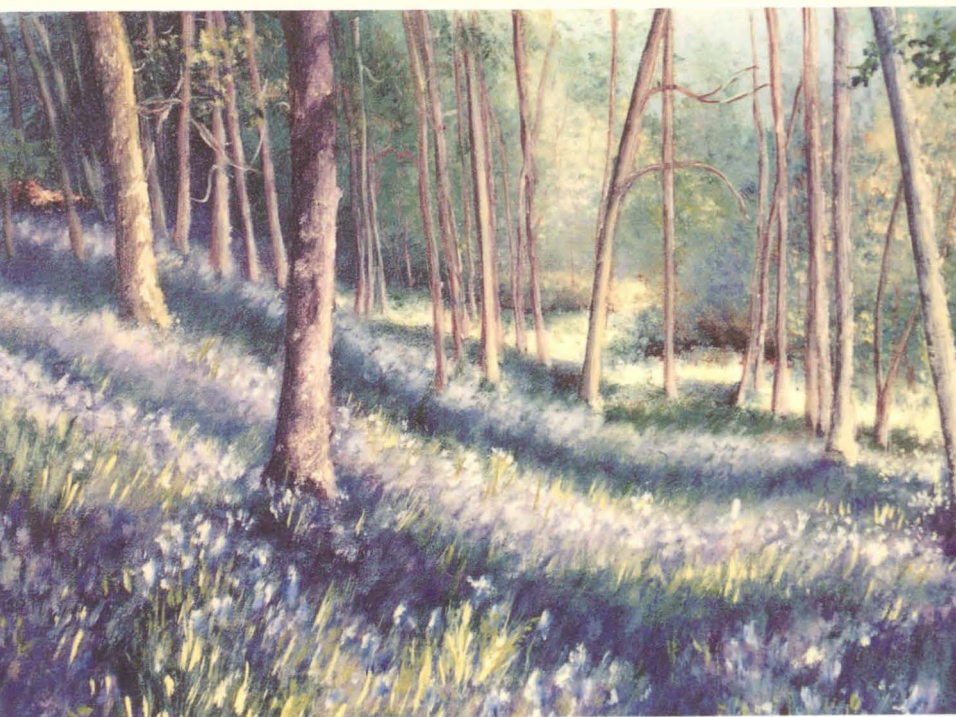


Obstacles To Dhamma Practicing

อุบาสิกา Khun Ranjuan Intrakhamhaeng



Translated from the Thai by Weena Sornchai Kohler

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For

Dhamma Friends

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On the occasion of the 80th birthday of our mother, Vong Sornchai, we would like to offer her a deeply meaningful present. Since she has made it clear to us that she has all the material possessions she needs, we therefore decided to print this booklet in her honor. We have translated it into English and are interested in practicing Dhamma.

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Many thanks to a friend, Professor Fred Wolf for his help in editing this translation.

With your perseverance, we sincerely hope that you can eventually overcome the obstacles to Dhamma practicing. This special present to our beloved mother would then become as meaningful as we have intended it to be.

Yane Greenwood & family
Wanna Sornchai Kohler & family
Naphai Sornchai
Peerapong Sornchai & family

Obstacles to Dhamma Practicing

อุปสรรคในการปฏิบัติธรรม

Obstacles to Dhamma Practicing

Edited by Dr. Prof. Dr. T. Ball

***“ The Dhamma practice is inner practicing,
inner training, training and polishing
what is called ‘mind’ .”***

Printed by : Theepee Printer 31/91-2 Charoitrung Rd.,

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Our deepest gratitude to Ubasika Khun Ranjuan Intrakamhaeng for her kind permission to let us translate her talk, *Obstacles to Dhamma Practicing*.

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Obstacles to Dhamma Practicing

People who turn to Dhamma hope to make progress in Dhamma practicing. Impatiently, they want to advance quickly. They want to attain Nirvana and to arrive quickly at the goal. Nevertheless, one must realize that **the faster one wants to accomplish the slower it becomes.**

Making no headway or even moving backward, we get so upset and uptight with ourselves and wonder why we can't practice it, why we are not able to do it. Despite our great effort and diligence it still does not work. Such obstacles must be disturbing for every Dhamma practitioner.

First of all, let's understand **what Dhamma practicing is.** We may consider ourselves Dhamma practitioners, but when we are asked questions like "What is Dhamma practice?" or "How is the Dhamma practitioner?", can we answer them right away?

How is the Dhamma practitioner? Not "Who is the Dhamma practitioner?". This refers to the Dhamma practitioner's character or nature; the manners both inward and outward should be such that other people who meet him/her can feel that this person is a Dhamma practitioner.

The guideline to be followed is that **the Dhamma practice is inner practicing, inner training, training and polishing what is called "mind"**. Even though we may not know what the mind is or where it is, we can work within us where uncomfortable feelings, agitation, confusion, and anxiousness originate, where it is not happy, neither void nor cool. We therefore have to work on this particular spot where such feelings arise. The easiest answer is Dhamma practice is inner practicing.

Inner practice is inner donation

You all must be familiar with alms giving and uncountable external offerings. The most recent was held this morning at the 'Lan hin kong'. Alms giving is good and useful and considered as supporting a religion. Thanks to the donations offered by Buddhist followers the religion can continue.

However, are the external donors contented? Do they always feel carefree, joyful, beaming with satisfaction, serene and cheerful at all times? Even during the time we are receiving a blessing with both hands pressed together, we are not having such feelings, are we? Sometimes right after receiving a blessing or while receiving it our mind is still restless, anxious, thinking of the children, wishing they were

here to receive a blessing too, wishing one's husband or wife would come with us. Is our mind peaceful at that moment?

Therefore external donating is good and should be done to the limit of what you can afford. But what is much more important and so very necessary to our life is inner donating.

What is inner donating

In brief, inner donating is **donating defilement** (*Kilesa*), **lust** (*Raga*), and **greed** (*Lobha*); these are in the same category because they partake of pulling in, taking, grasping; snatching, holding back to us. **Donating anger** (*Dosa*) because it is something furious and unpleasant, so push it away. **Donating delusion** (*Moha*) the feeling of endless confusion, always twisted with thoughts, with feelings or with a certain frame of mind all the time.

Because of these three defilements, we are restless and unhappy; there is no serenity but we take them in without realizing it.

Let's be greedy; it gives life some flavor, like what is done in the stock market. Is it going up or dropping today? It is quite exciting, isn't it? It gives appetite to life. The blood circulates well throughout the body. We overlook that it is in

fact not useful for our body because the heart has to work harder and gets exhausted..

Getting angry makes other people afraid of us. If we had not been angry, they would not have known what we wanted, that we had authority. We get carried away and it snickers at us.

The more intricate a person is in his thinking, the more imagination he has. He's an intelligent person, isn't he?

We are infatuated by the defilements of lust, anger and delusion without realizing it. We think that they are good things so we hold them tight all the time. Let's be a bit greedy, get angry sometimes. Let's get enraptured just a little bit; let's take a little bit, not much. Tell yourself that and then accumulate it little by little until it has become a big growing pile.

It's not different from what a grandmother or a grandfather says...well, our daughter has had a baby; let's help bringing up the child. After all, he's her child and our own grandchild. Let's help bringing him up just for a while. Once he can walk then we'll let him go. When he can walk...well, let's help until he goes to school so that his parents will not have to worry. Then the time comes when he starts going to school...let's keep him a bit more otherwise there will be nobody to look after him when he comes home. The

attachment has been developed little by little and it has eventually become a very tough string that can no longer be untied. Therefore you don't ever let yourself go.

As I say, Dhamma practicing is an inner donation. **The most needed donation is renouncing defilement.** You don't have to invest a cent. We need to have money and wealth for external donations, while the inner donation doesn't cost a thing. It's the brilliance of the Buddhist religion. Therefore, don't feel bad or have an inferiority complex when you can't come to a temple and can't afford to make a donation to charity because you don't have money like others. Every Buddhist is equally rich when it comes to inner donation.

Inner donating is a very hard thing to do, but it is the marvelous donation that the Lord Buddha praises. He extols it and indeed wishes to see all Buddhists know more and more this kind of donation. What is it for? It's for one's own happiness and peace.

What the Lord Buddha has been always teaching is about suffering and eradicating suffering. **Being unable to eradicate suffering is due to attachment to defilements.** If you know how to donate the defilement, the suffering will fade away. Therefore, hurry up and let's give away the defilement. Dig it

out and see how much it is; let's donate it right away. It has been collected for a long, long time, as long as one has been alive. If we still procrastinate we may die before liberating ourselves from defilements.

How does one make an inner donation? How does one donate defilements?

One must scrape and scratch it hard, knock it all off until nothing is left, without remainder. **One ought to scrape, to scratch and to knock it off by means of the power of mindfulness, concentration and wisdom that one possesses.** Knock them all off completely. Knock off this defilement garbage from our mind.

Our mind has been mixed and piled up with such garbage all the time. We only see the garbage in our outside world. It's dirty, smelly. It's filthy and foul. But we have forgotten to introspect the inner garbage. This garbage within our mind has deprived the mind of real delightfulness, serenity, contentment, pureness and beauty. Hence we ought to scratch, scrape and knock off as much greed, hatred, anger and delusion as we can.

That's not enough. We must beat it down, don't praise it, don't admire this form, this physique, this body, fame, glory and this name. Don't flatter them. The more you flatter them,

the more deluded you become. Be it beauty, richness, goodness or anything wonderful, **it's just like that.** The more it incites, the more it induces and stimulates a delusion. Therefore beat it and knock it down.

What is being knocked and beaten down is what is called *Assamimana* (one's self), a term I believe many of you have already heard.

What is *Assamimana*? It is getting hold of self-entirety. Considering this is I, that is me, whatever is I. It comes down to me, to this self (*atta*) all the time. Knock it down instead of pampering, flattering, holding it high and always giving it your consent. Take whatever this *Assamimana* says is good, whether it's right or wrong, whether it's appropriate or not, and knock and beat it down. Keep watch over yourself, reprimand and criticize yourself. Fully remind yourself and try to uproot it. Because of this *Assamimana*, the defilement can't be drowned. It's a catalyst for the continual growth-of the garbage pile. So try to uproot it.

The same effort and perseverance that's needed to burn away the external garbage is needed to burn away the inner garbage. From there we can gradually nurture the mind, purify and beautify it so that it remains pure, void, light and constantly at ease. One must do it this way.

Once you know that this is the way, many of you may say that it is unlikely to be done, to scrape, to scratch, to knock down and eradicate my *assamimana* (self-identity). It seems unlikely. **However, it depends on the level of one's objective to practice Dhamma, for what purpose and to what extent.**

The point of all that has been said is that **we have to try to completely uproot this assamimana to arrive at the state of lightness, peace, coolness and contentment. This is the objective of practicing Dhamma.** We first set an objective. How far one can go will depend upon each individual's belief, ability and determination.

Nevertheless, when somebody has turned to Dhamma, at least it indicates that that person has come from so-called "hot water", hasn't he? If there is heat arising in the mind, or if one swallows hot water, one will know that it is burning inside, the stomach is getting badly burned. It is deeply hurt, writhing in pain. Then one flees in panic from the heat. Most of them would grasp ice water to drink. What happens when you gulp ice water or hurriedly drink freezing soda water? We get suffocated, run out of breath, the throat gets stuck. It is indeed cold but it is not a cool pleasure.

Once we know hot water and ice water are, we then turn to cool water. Cool water is better. But if we are in such a hurry and careless, sometimes in cool water there are larvae, deposits, dust or dirt. Therefore even when you drink cool water, do not drink it in a hurry. It is indeed soothing, but only temporarily. It may have bacteria that could agitate and blaze hot in the mind. The mind is thus not in peace. It is, however, better than hot water and better than ice water.

Those who drink cool water with mindfulness will drink it slowly, carefully. They don't forget to remind themselves how to filter out dust, larvae, or dirt so that it will become pure, clear and clean water.

Hence, there are different levels of objective in practicing Dhamma. Some may say that they will do it casually, that they don't expect too much coming here to practice. Just take it easy and be at ease. How can one be at ease? Being well and at ease is just like eating well, sleeping well, feeling at ease at home and taking it easy at work. It doesn't matter if one has to cry or laugh from time to time; it is rather exciting. At least it is quite appetizing, not flat. One continues crying and laughing alternately until one day one comes to the realization that crying is rather tiring. And how about laughing? Sometimes when we listen to funny things, they are so very funny that we laugh so

much we almost run out of breath. This is also tiring. So we feel that **crying is tiring; laughing is tiring**. They are equally tiring. Even though laughing is better than crying, they both are at two different extremes.

As long as they are at two different extremes, there are exhaustion, suffering and restlessness within them. Once we realize this fact, we will gradually stop laughing, stop crying. There will be only a slight smile and a joyful feeling resembling the facial expression of the Buddha image. Observe well the facial expression of any Buddha image, being big or small; there is always a slight smile, radiant with complacency.

Whenever anyone prostrates himself in front of the image, crying, sobbing, pouring out that he is so very unhappy, so miserable, does He comfort that person by telling him not to be unhappy, it's just like that? Does He say that? Or we prostrate ourselves in front of Him, overwhelmed with joy and cheerfulness. I have just had unexpected luck; I unintentionally bought a lottery ticket with the last bill left in my pocket and I was lucky to win the third prize. I couldn't imagine that! And then that person goes on describing what he will do with that money that he was not able to do it before. Has He ever said, "Well, I'm happy for you"? He does not say this, nor anything at all. His face remains **thusness (just like that) at all time**. Both laugh-

ing and crying are merely thus. Once we stop we would feel at ease.

Why not just simply smile with a neutral mind: void, light, at ease? This is what we ought to train ourselves to do. It's unnecessary either to cry or to laugh out loud; let's just have a slight smile, delight and complacency. **This state of mind can see the thusness (it's just like that) of phenomena.**

It doesn't sound difficult at all. **Why then we are not able to put it in practice?** Why is that?

First of all, due to **insufficient will (*chanda*)**. Just ask yourself whether it's true or not. Even though people say they love Dhamma or are pleased with Dhamma, or even leave the house to live in a monastery, they still confront the obstacles to Dhamma practice. Really look into it, we'll see that it's nothing else but the will (*chanda*). There is not enough love and pleasure in Dhamma. We cannot help taking defilement as preference even though we may deny that we don't want the defilement garbage; it stinks very badly. But despite the terrible odor we are still clinging to it every day, clinging to greed, anger and delusion.

When there is not enough will, not enough love, **exertion (*viriya*)**, an effort invested to overcome whatever

obstacles, one is bound to fail or the objective cannot completely be achieved.

Active thought (*citta*) the mind contemplating the Dhamma discipline at every in-breathing and out-breathing. For example, we see and understand that what is happening around us at every moment, every day, is just like that or thusness. When we cannot see it, it is because we are instead busy looking at other things, clinging on only to pleasure.

Investigation or examination (*vimamsa*) pondering deeply over Dhammato to see if there is anything to be corrected, to be developed, to be improved, or how to reduce or minimize obstacles so that the mind will not become weak. It may not be attainable.

The will is the very first step to any success. It implies likewise to Dhamma. It must begin with satisfaction.

Why then doesn't the Dhamma practitioner have enough will (*chanda*)? It is due to the fact that there is not enough conviction, neither faith in the Dhamma teaching. When talking about the Teaching, we talk with a very high regard. We speak about it in great esteem but it only stays at the level of the tongue and the lips. It doesn't deeply touch in the heart because **the faith developed within that individual is not Buddhism**

but is still occultism. It is a faith that is still governed by ignorance, hoping to count on other people, on objects or on places, thinking that all these things may help them. When one wants to practice Dhamma it has to be a certain place, with that particular master (archan) or to have such and such objects close to oneself because one expects to be assured by those things.

Let's think it over and consider from how many temples did we have the sprinkles of the blissing water? How many times did we try to avert a catastrophe by magic means? How many Buddha images or magical artifacts have we been wearing with the belief that they are sacred and can protect us? After all do any of them help us to be happy, to have peace, to be free from worry and to forever be free from what is assumed to be sorrow or whatever? Not at all. It may help just a short while; during the moment when we are receiving we feel assured, but only during that moment. And those persons who sprinkle us with the blessing water, who gives us amulets and other magical artifacts or sacred objects are not eternal either; when the time comes they also have to submit to ill fate. All because the consequences of any thing arise out of causes and supporting factors that have been committed. Whatever cause done will determine such result.

The Lord Buddha teaches us what the cause of suffering is. When we deeply investigate it, it is **attachment**. How can we deal with it? We have to deal with our mind to loosen attachment. **Train the mind to really stay free forever.** See the harm of the Wheel of Rebirth, which is the cycle of birth, existence, and rebirth of *atta* (“self” or “I”) giving rise to suffering in the mind. Such suffering arises out of the notion of self, all on account of the power of ignorance, defilement and attachment. Realize how it perturbs the mind, throws the mind up and down, and swings and tosses the mind; the mind is not at peace; how it could harm our life and mind!

If we do not see this danger we will stay lazy, getting used to the comfort. Meditating becomes tiring, taking a nap preferable. When it comes to examining the breath, we’d rather put it off, on the pretext that we can do it anytime even though it doesn’t take much time at all. We prefer eating, playing, chatting, going out. Everything else becomes a priority but Dhamma or Dhamma practicing is put off for later. How could we thus make progress?

Over the years, we have been covering up suffering all along. We have not solved it by means of digging to the root of suffering. Instead we simply conceal it in order to forget about it for awhile by going to see a movie, going out, eating good

things or traveling abroad if one can afford it.

While you are going anywhere else are you carrying suffering with you? Are you happy, calm and fresh at all times? When you are alone the same mind will come back, being occupied with the root cause of suffering which is self conceit (*assamimana*), attached to the self or self pride, including the beliefs that "It's mine.", "I can't have what I want.", "I want him/her to be just what I wish.", etc. We have been suffering from these things every day and night.

Concealing suffering is not the nature of Buddhists. It is the nature of casual fellows who are unmindful, take life lightly and not brave enough to confront reality. Since we know very well that what is menacing the mind at the present is defilement arising from ignorance (*avijja*), craving (*tanha*), attachment or clinging (*upadana*), why don't we then face it and fight against it? If we keep running away from it by concealing suffering we only stay weak, hesitant and terrified. This life goes on without any evolution.

First, stop this upsetting, confusing, disturbing and struggling mind by means of meditating. Contemplate the breath with mindfulness (*sati*) using any method. Once the mind is calm, examine the state of mind to see how it is at that

moment: is it at ease, cool and void? Keep on observing feelings and any sensation arising in the mind. Keep watching over the mind at every moment even though you are still involved with your family, your job or with any emotion coming in contact with your mind, be it love, anger, hatred, fear or whatever. Make use of this invasion that disturbs the mind at all times as an exercise to practice Dhamma.

Follow and observe well what its symptom is, how it influences the mind, from where it arises and how it can be corrected. Once you manage to control it until it is calmed down, use your wisdom to solve it by training yourself to look at the Three Characteristics (*Tilakkhana*): impermanence (*aniccata*), state of suffering (*dukkhata*) and not-self (*anattata*). Look at it carefully, little by little until you realize suchness (they are simply just like that). After that the feeling of attachment or clinging on will gradually fade out.

Second, build up discipline in practicing Dhamma. Don't think that it can be done any time, so you can put it off for the moment. Get rid of such thinking right away and right now. It's a must to have discipline in practicing Dhamma. When at home how can we do it? At least we say to ourselves: "I will keep watching over the breath at every moment". Not difficult! **If you decline by saying: "I can't make it", you are**

then not determined to be a Dhamma practitioner. One just can't decline it as long as we are still breathing. Discipline yourself to keep watching over your breath at all times. It doesn't matter if we are unable to accomplish it every instant due to insufficient practice. Try to be more acquainted with breathing in and out; try to do it regularly and progressively. Training yourself like that is developing yourself little by little until one day it becomes a habit. After all, the purpose is to be mindful of the breath.

Next, **one must have honesty (*sacca*).** Once you have an aspiration to practice Dhamma, you must respect the Teaching and be honest in practicing it. One must scrape, polish, scold, criticize, correct and cultivate oneself. Don't fool yourself by believing that you are good and lovely, always forgiving your faults and defending yourself all the time. If you go on in that way you will never make progress in practicing. Instead, you will become stagnant and get bogged down without realizing it.

The most important point is that **one must have the core of the Buddhist religion in one's heart as a foundation of Dhamma practice.** "*sabbe dhamma nalang abhinivesaya*" This is a phrase the chief abbot of Suan Mok always mentioned: **You should not be attached to or cling on any things. (*sabbe***

dhamma nalang abhinivesava) Learn it by heart first although you are not yet quite convinced and don't fully understand it. Whenever suffering or displeasure arises or when confronting unbearable feelings, just think of this sentence. Your mind will gradually be bound to attain consciousness; you will hence gain the force to scrape, polish, and eradicate the attachment (*upadana*). The attachment exists in every form, be it concrete or abstract (e.g., reputation, honor, merit, love, competency or sense of superiority). Uproot them all. Soon self-conceit (*assamimana*) will be reduced and fade away while the Four Sublime States of Mind (*Brahmavihara*) will gradually arise in the mind: *metta*: loving-kindness; *karuna*: compassion; *mudita*: sympathetic joy; and *upekkha*: neutrality.

Loving-kindness (*metta*): to wish others to be well and happy. **Compassion (*karuna*):** to wish others to rid of suffering. **Sympathetic joy (*mudita*):** to be delighted in the well being of others. **Neutrality (*upekkha*):** to stay neutral, not restless, agitated or swaying. Most Buddhists habitually have loving-kindness and compassion (*metta-karuna*). But when it comes to sympathetic joy (*mudita*) do you have it wholeheartedly? Does it bog down somehow even it's a dear friend or between wife and husband in the same profession? If one progresses far ahead, the other may feel blocked!

It is very difficult to practice sympathetic joy (*mudita*) because of this self-conceit (*assamimana*), which is a real obstacle. Why not me? Why not our child who should have that position? It cannot be genuine sympathetic joy (*mudita*) if one is expressing his congratulations to another but the mind is feeling differently. Genuine *mudita* can gradually arise only when self-conceit is reduced. When selfishness is reduced, consideration for others is augmented, along with the correct neutrality (*upekkha*). This neutrality is filled with goodwill and compassion (*metta-karuna*), serenity and freshness, ready to help whenever an occasion arises. Consequently, your practicing will bring you faster to the objective.

The most useful **secret of Dhamma practices** is that we ought to remind ourselves “**stop taking**”. When the mind has become restless and heated up by means of greed (*lobha*), hatred (*dosa*) and delusion (*moha*), stop taking it. Likewise, even with Dhamma, stop taking it. Order yourself firmly with strong determination “stop taking”. It will then stop confusion, struggling, and restlessness, the feeling of burning heat, hesitation, and going forward and backward. The dark and dull will die out. It will be replaced instead by the void, calm, carefree and coolness at least during that moment. Try to do it.

Once you have experienced such serenity you will come to the understanding that the more frequent we can “stop taking, taking, taking...” the more life is bound to be cool and care free. Dhamma practicing will avoid obstacles and come closer and closer to the goal.

Questions and Answers

What is the secret to extinguishing defilements?

If we want to stop one quickly, for example when we are trembling from greed or anger, it is not different from driving a car. When we want to stop suddenly, we just apply the brakes by saying “stop taking”. Just that.

Archan suggests to cut, to trim, to sever, and to discard but then where can we dump them (the defilements)?

Don't you worry! Just let them go. Whoever wants to sweep them or keep them, just give them away. Don't hold them back. A person who wants to pick them up is a foolish one. An intelligent just wants to stay away from them; he will not take them.

While meditating and watching over the breath, what if one happens to fall asleep? Should we let go or how should we correct it ?

We should not let go of ourselves because it will become a habit. When we are sitting in meditation and start following the breathing, it's so comfortable that we fall asleep every time. We therefore use meditation or following the breathing as a

sleeping pill. It is not harmful, better than the sleeping pill, but **we will lose an opportunity to develop the mind.**

Therefore, when we come to the point that we are falling asleep, we must try to contemplate mindfulness (*sati*), keep the mind more on that particular point, open the eyes, and alternate long, hard and deep breathing in order to wake us up until we no longer feel sleepy. We then regulate the breathing to a normal rhythm and continue following the breath.

In every day life, when should we meditate and for how long?

It depends on the person's readiness and circumstances. Some may do it at 5 o'clock in the morning. It is a quiet time. One feels fresh because of having enough rest. Another may choose the night time before going to bed when he or she is finished with daily responsibilities. Hence we must choose the most convenient time, free from disturbance and worry. We should do it regularly at the same time. As for how long, it's up to your availability and convenience.

If I watch over the breath while working, will I lose concentration on the work?

It depends on the experience of a practitioner. If a person

has a habit of watching over his breath despite whatever he is doing, his concentration will be aimed on his job and the breathing is always in the background. When he pauses from thinking about work, he will then be aware of his breathing right away. It's a very good mental and brain exercise. Whenever there is any problem that disturbs the mind, any unpleasant feeling, we will be able to turn to the breath. It will awaken the mind to have the force to work joyfully. It will not therefore disturb concentration at work. It will in fact help us to develop work efficiency.

If we practice *anapanasati* (mindfulness of in-and-out-breathing) until we can see and understand *anatta* (not-self), why then when we are out of meditation do we still feel being a "self"? Knowing not to be greedy, we are still greedy; knowing not to be angry, we still get angry. We know everything which is not good, not to be done, but we still do it

The thing that I would like to point out is that when we come to learn and practice Dhamma, most of us first of all instinctively use intellect, brain or an intelligence that are already naturally there. We understand everything: how to practice *anapanasati* and what the content is, each and every step; what *anicca* (impermanence), *dukkha* (dissatisfaction or displeasure) and *anatta* (not a self) are, being able to explain or

write explicitly about it. Why then is the mind still clinging to and unable to throw off attachment to the defilements and adherence to the force of the defilements. **This is due to the fact that we understand it through external studying, meaning learning by thinking; we therefore see it superficially and understand it intellectually.**

Effective practicing is clearly seen when, as soon as something happens suddenly, we right away feel *anicca*, that nothing is permanent, and *anatta*, that there is no “self”. It’s a clear and bright insight arising in the mind right at that moment without having to think it over, to be said, to be told, to rationalize by intellect. This is seeing through the “inner eye”; it is seen by insight (*panna*). Foresight arises little by little accordingly. In order to be able to see it this way, we must practice by “seeing”, not thinking; we must keep contemplating it until the mind has touched that natural truth.

Therefore it is necessary to practice it at all time, the same as continuously watching over the breathing has been suggested. Meanwhile observe the changes that happen to everything around us, especially the inconsistency in our mind. For example, when we have a negative feeling toward a person very dear to us, we consequently dislike that person; but when they

come back to please us, we once again love them. Love, then hatred, alternatively, isn't it? Even when we order our favorite dish, we take a spoonful and we may not like it anymore. If we knew this we should have ordered another dish!

Do you see changes in the mind, the transient (*anicca*) state of mind that happens at any moment? In fact we normally don't observe and take note of it because we are used to it and see that it's normal and therefore look at it superficially without really digging down to see that this is the law of nature, showing no self-entity or non-selfhood of the mind which we think is there. We fervently cling on and attach to our mind while it illustrates continuous changing all the time.

Try to train ourselves to take note of what happens: feeling love, liking, anger, hatred, the feeling of pleasure and displeasure, or anything that comes in pairs. Note what the positive and negative things are; our life is under the influence of these dual things all the time, isn't it? It is constantly spinning around, the arising and diminishing, but we have never noticed it. This is feeling or sensation (*vedana*) that has been conditioning the mind.

The second tetrad of *anapanasati* is **Vedananupassana**, the contemplation of feeling. It is therefore very important to

study it well in order to understand that life has been filled with struggling, filled with exultation, being swung left and right or deflated, all on account of this *vedana* (feeling or sensation). **If we learn to see the transience (aniccata) of feeling or sensation (vedana) every time when it arises in the mind, you will be learning at the same time the Three Characteristics (Tilakkhana: *aiccata*: impermanence, transience; *dukkhata*: state of suffering; *anattata*: not-self) from the real thing.** We don't need to be told by others. It is something you can prove to yourself. When you go on studying it with endeavor you will thus see by way of the inner eye that this is the ultimate reality (*paramattha-dhamma*); it is the truth, unchangeable, different from the conventional truth (*sammati-sacca*) that says good or bad, right or wrong, lovely or ugly, which is changeable all the time

When practicing *Anapanasati*, see it like this every time when you sit in meditation. It doesn't matter even if you only can see it superficially at the beginning. When you finish meditating, contemplate the mind to see this thing, to study, introspect and investigate it all the time. When you return to mediation, you repeatedly see it a bit deeper and deeper. Then one day the attachment (*upadana*) or clinging to hypotheses will gradually be loosened and uprooted by itself. There will

thus be space for the absolute truth (paramattha-sacca) which is the enlightenment in impermanence (aniccata), suffering (*dukkhata*) and not self (*anattata*). This enlightenment will take a root deep down in the mind. When something happens, the concept of “**thusness**” (things are just simply like that) will be clear to us. All things that arise as a result of causes are simply natural phenomena. We must regularly look for the cause. Nothing happens by itself alone. When it changes, it changes as a result of a cause. Therefore once we have seen the cause, we have to correct the cause. The hardship, the weariness and feeling uneasy will diminish little by little. It is seeing it yourself without having to be told. The more you see it the less you will talk about it.

How does one break free from the attachment to good?

It is said that a person who is attached to good is not different from one being attached to jewelry. It has value, thus it is difficult to let go of it. However, evil is like a stone or grain of sand; it is easy to throw away.

The way to stay aloof from it is **to watch over the mind**. Whenever pride renders the mind agitating, contemplate deep into the mind to see clearly **whether or not we are still clinging to ‘assamimana’ (self conceit), to feeling that we are good**

and being proud to such goodness. We compare this good from whatever happens with other's and draw the conclusion that we are better. Clinging to goodness is very delicate and complicated. One must watch over it a lot, every time it happens in the mind. Then it has to be corrected, scratched, polished and remolded. The mind will become more gentle and joyful.

How does one quench the attachment to 'being a self'?

One must thoroughly study and clearly understand *Paticcasamuppada* (the Law of Dependent Origination or conditioned arising). He will then see that **suffering is just the process of arising, maintaining and extinguishing by nature** due to the fact that this mind does not cling to form, sound, odor, taste or touching. Upon contact, characteristic feeling (*vedana*) arises, the feeling of pleasure or displeasure. When we cannot refrain from the feeling, craving (*tanha*) arises, a desire related to the feeling. We tend to cling to a pleasant feeling and that becomes greed (*lobha*). The attachment (*upadana*) arises and pursues that desire which gives rise to another desire and to suffering or any unrestrained feelings. But with an unpleasant feeling *tanha* arises as well. The feeling is undesirable and there is a desire to push it away with anger (*dosa*). Clinging to the thought of pushing out such undesirable

feeling also leads to suffering.

If we have reflective awareness and insight, we'll see that an eye is just an eye, an ear is just an ear, and **it does not make any difference whether or not any part of the body is there because it is only there when it does its duty.** That is, an eye sees forms, an ear hears a sound and it passes away afterwards. Moreover, it is important to train yourself to have quick right-mindfulness upon any contact: if the eye sees any form, consider it just a form; if the ear hears any sound, consider it just a sound, etc. Continue to practice in this manner all the time, continuously contemplating the mind by means of mindfulness, arising-diminishing, arising-diminishing to perceive it this manner. In the end we are bound to see that it is only the current of arising-diminishing, hence we perceive finally *anicca* (impermanence), *dukkha* (dissatisfaction) and *anatta* (not a self)

Please give more explanation about “know it yourself, see it your self” in Dhamma language.

Knowing it and seeing it yourself in Dhamma means that there is no object or no one as a witness but only the practitioner himself who perceives it by means of his own mind. It is said that the Buddhist religion is scientific because it

makes [testable] hypotheses about abstract concepts. The theory states that if you train yourself or practice this way, it will bring this result because there is somebody else who already did it and proved it for himself. If one wants to prove it, one has to do it himself, as nobody else could know or see it in his place.

In reality, man has been gathering experience in learning about Dhamma all the time. But nobody really pays attention to it. A person who has a lot of life experience would have experienced more, and more specifically on the subjects of *anicca* (impermanence), *dukkha* (dissatisfaction) and *anatta* (non self). Even though that person has never studied Dhamma before, he has learned from the different situations that have occurred in his life. When he has heard about *anicca*, *dukkha*, and *anatta*, he could then understand and feel it even though it may not be completely clear for him. However, by means of training, practicing and polishing one's mind, one will eventually know it and see it by himself without having to question anyone. Young people do not yet have enough experience in life. Nevertheless, if they receive correct teaching to drive away attachment or clinging (*upadana*) and if they can really do it, they will be able to take a straight shortcut to attain the objective and they will not have to waste time learning from their mistakes. Life will be completed and worthwhile. They will attain a peaceful and restrained life.

Do we need to have a teacher to investigate our emotions during practicing?

The right teaching is very necessary and I have come to realize it myself all along. Teaching the right practice, detailed, clear and thorough, in line with the teaching of the Lord Buddha, is essential for practitioners so that there will be no hesitation in practicing.

Since this is the case, testing emotions is not necessary because a practitioner ought to watch over and know his state of mind at every instant while practicing. He is examining his own emotions, which is clearer, more direct, and better than having somebody else examine it. It is we who know and see it ourselves. As long as we always have the Law of Tilakkhana (the Three Characteristics: *Anicca, Dukkha, Anatta*) or the Law of *Idappaccayata* (the Law of Conditionality: Cause and Effect) as a base there will no longer be any question because any problem will not be beyond these laws.

If a practitioner happens to ignorantly make a mistake in practicing, how can he know and correct it?

Having the right objective in studying and practicing Dhamma is very important. The objective of studying and

practicing Dhamma for the follower of the Lord Bhudda is the interest in knowing: **What is suffering? How does it arise? And by what means can one quench suffering?** The practitioner can use this objective as a criterion in judging whether or not the practice is right or wrong. **If after practicing it the mind becomes peaceful, cool and clear and it is faded away from attachment, suffering is diminished and the practitioner will therefore realize by himself that it is a right way.**

But when after having practiced it, the mind has become confused, runs wild and is not peaceful at all; one will know that it is not right. It is not the right way since we come to practice in order to diminish suffering and reduce attachment.

Once you know it you ought to correct yourself right away by means of controlling the mind to stay still, concentrating on the breath constantly, watching over and following inhalation and exhalation. Look at anything that comes in your daily life as impermanent (anicca); it is just thus like that. Learn this by heart even before you see it. It is a magic spell to remind oneself which can help to correct it too.

Please explain sleeping with mindfulness or awakened mind while sleeping.

Sleeping with mindfulness is a profound and restful

sleeping. Both body and mind can rest. Not half sleep and half awake. “sleeping in awakening, awakening in sleeping” means that even while we are still wild awake **when we are in contact with anything whatsoever, any contact by means of eye, ear, nose, tongue or body, the mind is spontaneously shut down in due time by way of mindfulness, steadfast concentration and thorough insight.** Hence the mind will not be neither affected nor agitated, unrestrained and suffering. **When sleeping, it’s a sound sleep but the mind is awake by means of mindfulness.** The mind knows in due time whatever the circumstances. When it is time to wake up he won’t feel drowsy but clear-minded, bright and ready to work.

Anyone who regularly practices Dhamma until it becomes a habit is a person who possesses mindfulness, concentration and insight while awaking and sleeping. When we are able to do it until it becomes habitual, it is really worthwhile for one’s life, worth being a human being

Practicing by contemplating nimitta (image), could one become obsessed with the image?

If one conditions an image to be such and such, then one has to be careful not to be attached to that image. Those who cannot condition an image may feel that they can’t make it. But

if one practices in line with *Anapanasati* (mindfulness of in-and out-breathing), contemplating of the breath, even though it is rather difficult to do it, one must control and discipline the mind to be honest. Nevertheless he'll have more freedom because he doesn't need any symbol or image.

It is possible that an image appears during meditation. It comes and goes. Once it appears just see it like *anicca* (impermanent) and *anatta* (not a self). Don't cling and get attached to it as being self or take it seriously. The image will eventually disappear.

Dhamma practicing is something very fine and profound. It must be practiced **continuously**. Once we let go of that practice, a gap arises and it is **extremely difficult** to bridge it.

Therefore, one must be determined that **Dhamma practicing is the work of life** and the rest is secondary or could even be abandoned, because it doesn't mean much to the life that had left.

Ranjuan Intrakhamhaeng

*" The Dhamma Practice is inner practicing,
inner training, training and polishing
what is called 'mind' ."*

