

The Perfect Respect

A talk given

By **Kalyanamithra Upul Nishantha
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Sharing of Merit

The merit accumulated by this Dhamma Dhana is shared with **Chaminda Passan Pathirage** my son-in-law (who has become my own son by now) as he celebrates his birthday on the 29th February.

May he be healthy, happy and peaceful, to lead a successful and a prosperous life with many more leap years to come

The Perfect Respect

Rev. Sir, Dear Friends, you have come to Nillambe Mediation centre to observe the eight precepts and to train yourself in meditation, today on the Vesak full moon day, in 2016. It is a not an easy task to get involved in meditation. But even with difficulty, if you start to meditate, you will be able to experience a great consolation; a boundless freedom that does not vanish or decrease.

Meditation is the path of freedom; the path of consolation. There are so many roads in the world, lanes, by-lanes, wide roads, foot paths, main roads, high ways, air routes and sea-ways. Among all these roads, only meditation can be considered as a path of consolation. All the other roads take us from restlessness to restlessness; discontent to discontent; suffering to suffering; anger to anger; tension to tension. There isn't a single road in this world that takes us from suffering to comfort; unhappiness to happiness; discontent to content; tension to consolation. Whatever the road we take, it ends up in exhaustion. The same person continues to be from the beginning to the end; whatever road is taken, however much travelled, how many days, weeks or months taken. None of the worldly roads can change the traveller. If there is a road that changes the traveller from the inception, as soon as you step on to the road, and with each step you take, it is the path of Dhamma. When one emerges on to the path of Dhamma, with each step, commences the change. The traveller who enters with unrest walks out of the path with contentment. We who have filled our minds with

foolish ideas; when step on to the path of Dhamma, with every step turns out to be intelligent and wise. There is not a single path similar to this; which transforms a foolish person to a wise one; the only path that does is this Middle path.

The Middle path, this Spiritual path, the path of Consolation, the path of Wisdom is not created by anybody; the path was discovered. The path travelled by previous Enlightened ones; a path that was overgrown and was hidden. It was discovered and cleared by Gauthama Buddha. He was searching for a path, a road; what for? For the benefit of those who are searching consolation; a path for people to experience consolation by travelling along that path; the path that leads to the town of consolation. It was a very tiresome search; where there was no road, where no road was to be seen; in a huge jungle of mental and emotional pressure, he was searching for a path; all alone. He was not searching it for his own benefit, but for the benefit of all of us. On a day as of today He encountered the path. On a day as of today He travelled along that path. On a day as of today He reached the destination of the path. Commenced as a Seeker, and ended as the Enlightened one. That is the miracle of this path. There is no other path which can perform such a miracle. On this day, such is being commemorated as a token, and devoting with scarification, it is essential and valuable to contemplate on the past incidences related, over and over again; as a meditative contemplation.

Prince Sidharatha was enjoying a luxurious life; one and only reason for that is not because he was a prince, but because of the fear his king father had. The king Suddodana was suffering from a great fear. Usually all the kings are in fear; all the fathers are in

fear. Kings are in fear due to number of reasons; fathers are frightened about the wellbeing of their sons. Therefore when both those fears emerge, it creates an enormous fear. King Suddodana was drowned with an added fear because of the predictions of the astrologers. The king invited the best astrologers in town according to the tradition; a seven of them, on the seventh day from Prince Sidhartha's birth. They started calculating with birth time and went on doing so for ages. Usually to draw a horoscope chart does not take that long. But in this case, the King is impatiently waiting in the assembly hall of the palace, for hours. Finally, after a long time they returned to the hall looking similar to the jury who brings the judgment of a murder case. Everybody had a very serious face. The task entrusted to them was not easy as envisaged. Everybody had a question mark on their faces, except one of them. The king was eagerly waiting for a very favourable message. The only son he got after a long time, maybe he was waiting for a son all this time to hand over the kingdom after him. What a lot of expectation he would have had? The king impatiently inquired from the astrologers "what is your prediction? What is your prediction about my son?" The astrologers without answering his questions, raised two fingers, that itself shows what a dilemma it would have been. The king said "I do not understand your language; please tell me in our language". They told "one of the two will happen". What are the two? "Your son may conquer the entire world peacefully and become the Universal Monarch who would rule the world righteously and peacefully; the entire world". The king Suddodana was a king only for a small state in India, not even whole of India. Maybe as a king he had a dream to conquer the adjoining states, but now,

instead of that, the astrologers are predicting an enormous dream. He will be the Universal Monarch. They haven't even heard of such a king existed. It is a very novel concept. Then the king asked "what is the next possibility?" "Alternatively, he will renounce all and be on the road; would become a recluse begging food from house to house".

Dear Friends, that prediction made the king shivered and pulsated. The second prediction is something that any mother or father would not like to hear; any normal parent would not like to see such a thing happening, let alone a king. The astrologers gave a choice to the king. The future of the son is in your hands. Then youngest astrologer among them raised one finger. Then the king impatiently asked "please tell me your verdict". He said "Definitely your son will neither become the Universal Monarch nor would stay in the palace for a long time. He would not become a normal king either; he will descend to the road. Thereafter, with a clay pot in the hand, wearing a rag made of cloth that has been used to cover corpse, would lead a recluse life". The king would have become very angry with him. He may not have received anything from the palace, for his prediction, while others were entertained. In history, there is no mention about him after that; nowhere it is said that the astrologer Kondanna was called for predictions thereafter.

Now the king is contemplating how to make his son the Universal Monarch. What a shame if he descends onto road and goes begging from house to house. What is benefit of this truth? What is this truth? If one can be happy with eating and drinking and helping others, is there any truth beyond that? Nobody in this ancestry has become a king for the

entire India. For a person who can become the king of the entire world, what a foolish idea that would strike in his head to descend to the road? Therefore, the king using his political intelligence, tried to incorporate every tactic, to hold prince Sidhartha in the palace. The king thought, one would leave the place where he is, if he encounter problems in that place; when he does not find what he wants there. Therefore, if he can be given everything that he wants, no sooner he wants or even before that; if there is no problem whatsoever, the son will not renounce everything and get to the road. The king supplied everything that is necessary to the son's age inside the palace; made a heaven in the palace; where he would not feel the hot sun; where the cold wind does not come to him; the hunger and thirst is never experienced; loneliness never felt. Prince Sidhartha grew up amidst a heavenly carnival. No sooner there is a requirement, it was available. Therefore he never had to wait for anything he wanted. Everything Prince Sidhartha wanted was made available before the requirement dawned. King Suddodana believed, when the son is treated in this manner, he will be able to solve the problem. This is the way any politician would think. Though he had the political intelligence, he did not have the spiritual inner psychological knowledge.

When somebody gets everything, whenever the requirement crops-up, when there is everything in a second whenever you want, you can presume, that there is no problem and can be very happy. There is no effort to get anything you want, no need of requesting, no waiting time; even before the requirement comes, it reaches your hand. Most of the people think then there is no suffering. That is the best way to eradicate suffering; the best method to keep someone happy.

Prince Sidhartha experienced that comfort; the more he experienced the comfort, he was bored.

That is the truth. That is the spiritual inner psychology, not the political psychology. When everything is at arm's length, you become bored. When you get everything without any effort on your part, you feel a tremendous emptiness; as if you are not living. A person who toils for his needs, only experiences the life; experiences the taste of life; when one has to toil and be waiting for days and months to receive what he needs, only then he feels the life is rotating. Alternatively, when he gets everything in a second, his life began to go towards a standstill little by little; a crisis cropped up within him, which could not be understood. That crisis could not be put in to words, and express, his feeling. A problem where there is no problem; a problem nobody can understand. Prince Sidhartha encountered a problem, which no one has ever encountered.

When this crisis was to burst, he wanted to go out of the palace to see the world. He was fed up of the world he had seen so far. That is the truth. When you have everything you become totally bored. The king decorated all the roads. Made the outside world look like heaven; banned outside people coming in. The son is now travelling in the horse carriage magnificently. Ordered everybody to come and cheer saying "May you prosper"; come in your best clothes; who did not have good dresses were given clothes to wear. Everybody was singing and dancing happily cheering Prince Sidhartha for his well-being.

In the midst of all these he saw a seriously sick person. He was very thoughtful, wondering whether this is life, he could not understand what he saw. This is something quite different to what he had seen

throughout his life. This cannot be a person who had caught a simple illness like a cold or a cough. It must have been an incurable person who has been suffering for a long time and ready to leave the world; a person who was dying due to the sickness. When the question cropped up in his mind was put in to words, the answer he got was “it is a sick person”. Usually when we see such a sick person we would look elsewhere. Especially when we are in a joyful mood of this nature; even if we see we would look the other side. That would be our immediate reaction, or else, we would feel sorry for the sick person and wonder whether there is a way that we can help him out.

But the Prince Sidhartha did not take those to extremes; he neither looked elsewhere nor tried to help the sick person with sympathy. He looked at the life at large through that incident; not only his life, but of everybody. Then he asked two questions – “Does everybody get sick? Can this happen to anybody?” reply was “Yes”. Then “Can this happen to me too?” Channa could not lie, he could not tell the truth either, but with greatest difficulty he murmured “Yes your majesty, you too can become sick”. Then the Prince ordered the carriage to be turned back and return to the palace. It was not the same Prince who returned; a changed person. Everybody expected him to return as a cheerful and happy person rejoicing, having witnessed the happiness of the fellow countrymen. But that is not what happened. The prince that left the palace light heartedly returned in a pensive mood. For the first time the people in the palace saw the contemplative face of Prince Sidhartha.

Second day he saw an old man; a frail old person. There would have been old people in the palace too, but they were all covered with artificial make-up,

like in the present. Therefore he did not see any old person in the palace. He saw a truly old person; a person who has become quite feeble; whose feet are incapable of carrying him where he wants to go. The familiar question arose in his mind, so inquired and received the same answer. "Yes your majesty, you would also become old, in fact you are in the process of getting old. Not that you will be old one day, but you are becoming old every moment". Again he ordered the carriage to turn back and returned to the palace with an even more contemplative face.

Third day he witnessed the death. Talking about the death was barred inside the palace. It was a forbidden word. For the first time he heard that word. For the first time he saw that word through somebody else. It was a dead body; a real dead body; not a false dead body; not an embalmed corpse. Unfortunately today we cannot see real dead bodies; they are all covered with false glamour; death is covered to maximum with false deco. Today there is nothing decorated than a death; funeral houses are decorated more than wedding houses. Therefore most of time we hear people saying that the corpse looks pretty than while living. This is really true. The dead bodies are made pretty with make-up than the living person; turns it to be so natural and lively. This is done to almost every dead body. That deception; forgery is done even to the death.

Therefore the message that Prince Sidhartha received that day cannot be achieved easily today. If someone looks prettier and alive than when living, nobody would be traumatized to see such a dead body. While the corpse inside the coffin looks alive and enthused, the living people around behave like dead; without any enthusiasm, inspiration or happiness.

This is what we experience in today's society, most of the time, they are dead well before the real death comes; with faces darken with anticipated death; with no strength to continue the drive of life; thinking that they have lived enough. Such people will never be shocked with a death of another person, since they are dead well ahead of their death.

What was the imagination or the contemplation Prince Sidhartha had? If this is the life; being sick is part of life; being old is a part of life; dying is a part of life; and if I am in the process of becoming sick, old and then one day dying, what is the purpose of this life? What is the meaning of life? Can the palace stop being sick, being old; or dying? Is it for that I was born? He was contemplating. Is it why I came to this world? To be sick, old and die? For most of the people the answer would be "yes" to that question. Most of the people having come to this world, after forgetting the reason for coming here, becoming sick, old and then one day die; there is no other meaning to their lives; no other vision; no other objective.

But He had a target. He had a vision. He had an ambition; should search for the meaning of life. Not only for Himself, but for everybody; because He knew most of the people did not have that strength or the courage. He came here to find the path of consolation to the entire mankind, who thinks that having found something to eat for that meal to satisfy the present hunger and go to sleep is enough.

The fourth day he saw a strange figure; an unprecedented figure; a figure being away from all the trauma, problems, difficulties, complications that are found in this world and the society, without considering them as problems, a person who is walking on the mother earth; without getting attached

to the earth. We cannot walk like that, since we walk with all the problems hoarded on our heads; they are very heavy for us; both our weight and the weight of the problems have to be borne by the earth. This is lay life. Prince Sidhartha saw such people inside the palace throughout. For the first time he is seeing a person who is walking without being a weight to the earth. Then the Prince assumed this should be the path; that is the door.

With that realisation the Prince did not stay in the palace for long. He left the palace while the parents were crying, and trying to stop him with tear stained eyes. He left the palace while the parents were crying with dismay. He renounced openly, having informed the parents, of course with their utter disappointment, but publically.

Thereafter he searched for a technique. He knew that there should be a way out. I am not the only one who is suffering from this complication, there are so many; there are so many who are searching for a solution. He became a Yogi. A Yogi is not a strange person; a person who does not expect anything, who is satisfied with whatever he gets; whose life does not depend on anybody else. He became such an independent person. There is no anticipation of tomorrow; whether it comes or not; whether it will rain; whether there will be a place for him to stay; whether he will get any food; whether he will become sick; whether he will get medicine; no such thoughts, this is what a Yogi life means. There is no hope even for the next meal. When he will become hungry next, for the lunch, no such thought. One cannot be a Yogi or an ascetic with such thoughts. These thoughts are for a sybarite, the opposite of an ascetic. These two are two different personalities. Having become a Yogi he

studied the Yogi methodology under the best teachers as a very obedient student. He studied how to control the desire. He had given enough opportunity for desire when he was in the palace, indulging in every desire that cropped up within him, he must have enjoyed from every desire he had. When he gets to drink whatever, no sooner he wants to drink something. He would have been happy to get everything he needs whenever he needed. But there is no end, no sooner one desire is fulfilled, another desire starts shouting, when that is fulfilled another desire asks for some other thing, there is no end.

This is the nature of the desire, there is no end to it; similar to a fire. Have you ever seen a fire extinguishing by itself saying that burning is enough, so much was charred and must stop now? No, there is no satisfaction for a fire; it does not understand the word “enough”. As you put more fire wood it will burn all that. The fire will burn whatever is available for burning. It burns according to the fuel that is supplied. The fire would never be tired. As long as there are things to be burnt it will just go on burning. That is the nature of the fire, never be satisfied, no stoppage, no tiredness. Similarly desire too never gets tired; only we become tired because of the desire; we, the servants of desire. We, who have been supplying everything demanded by the desire, became very tired, not the desire. Desire being the boss, we become the servant. The servants get tired, not the boss, since there is no end to this Boss’s demands. We have never met any other such boss in our whole life; neither in our homes nor in work places; endless commands, endless demands; endless orders, there is no end to any of those. Number of orders, lot of demands and so

many commands at the same time, how can one attend to all these at the same time?

We do not have the energy; the time; the money; the knowledge. All these are limited. Our knowledge is limited, money is limited; time is limited; energy is limited, but the desire is unlimited. This is the conflict with the desire. Every human being had to face this conflict; has to face this today, then and now. We too face this today. This is the only conflict. We do not have any other conflict. When we have a conflict with somebody or with weather, the conflict is with our desire. That is the one and only conflict. We fight with our own desires. The conflict between what we want to happen and what actually happens; what we get and what we think we should have got. The variance between what we get and what desire says what we should get. Every being is a devotee of desire; find refuge in desire. For every being desire is the religion. Though we say our religion is Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism or Islam, the real religion of everybody is desire. We are faithful to desire like no other. Even if we reject whatever anybody says, we never reject what desire tells us. We are not scared and obliging to anything else, like how we are to desire. Not only people who have faith in a religion, but even those who think that they are more knowledgeable and wise are servants of desire. Their science is desire. We are all servants who treat desire as our religion or the science.

We have to toil a lot to acquire and achieve what desire asks us to achieve. It is not easy to purchase. We have to exhaust ourselves. The exhaustion we undergo and the payment we gain are far apart. The payment we get is not enough to fulfil our desires; nobody feels it is enough. Therefore you have to work more and then you become indebted to the future as

well. Every servant of desire is indebted to the future; today we re-pay for the happiness we enjoyed in the past. Therefore we do not have a space to enjoy the present joy. We have not completed the payment of the past. Without having an opportunity to enjoy the present and without completely paying off for the past happiness, most of us have to die; this life ends one day, without experiencing any happiness. We have not even started to experience the happiness. Our life ends while we are still repaying for the past happiness, but there is no end to the repayment either. Though the life ends, paying off the debt is not over, at that moment the desire again tells us let us go to another place for a job. Desire takes us to another place; desire is the vehicle. Desire combines this life and the next life. At the death, there is nothing else to cling to, only the desire is there to cling to; we have to let go all the other things that we were clinging to in this life at the death; everything has to be relinquished including ourselves. At that moment, when there is nothing else to hang onto, only the desire is there for you to depend upon. By clinging to desire, we swing to another place. After going there too we have to continue to work for the desire; day and night; every day in the week, even including full moon days, we toil for the desire. But the desire never pays us a compensative salary.

Yogi Sidhartha went in search of a solution for the entire mankind who was in such a dilemma. This desire has to be controlled. The freedom given to the desire is enough. According to the instructions he received, he tried to control the desire. Desire is not to be seen, what you see are the needs; what is seen is the hunger not the craving. What is evident is hunger, thirst, extortion; he controlled all these. Controlled the hunger, controlled the thirst, controlled the meals;

controlled the relaxation. With controlling all these he assumed that he would be able to control desire. He wanted make desire to be under his control; therefore he became a tough administrator. There was not a single administrator as tough as the ascetic Sidhartha in the entire history. There were controllers, tough administrators, but none of them were as tough as Him. He was such a strong controller; a tough administrator; but He did not try to control anybody else, not even an ant; He controlled all His wants, desires; there was no person who controlled them as Him.

He searched for the medicine. What is the medicine for the un-satisfactoriness? What is the medicine for the sickness called un-satisfactoriness that the entire mankind is suffering from? That is the investigation He did; the experiment He performed; He was searching for a medicine; the drug that would cure this samsaric ailment completely. He searched for the medicine for samsaric ailment that makes one sick, old and die. These are the characteristics of the samsaric ailment. He searched for a medicine which would not make one old, sick or one day die. He received so many different medicines. He experimented each and every drug, He got. What is the speciality? Even today there are experiments carried on to find medicines for different sicknesses. Once some drug is found it is experimented, most of the time these are administered on sick people, mostly poor to ascertain the correctness of the medicine. These medicines are firstly given to patients in poor countries. They are not real medicines; still in the stage of verification whether they are correct drugs or not. It is a common known fact that most of the time those experiments do not become successful in their initial attempts; they fail; they

might create some other side effects; observing them, the drugs are changed. None of the researchers, doctors or scientists, ever administered the drug they found on themselves. None of them dared to experiment on them. They always gave to someone else to check, is it correct or not; does it have any side effects. Most of the time new medicines have lot of side effects and usually the first attempt is not successful. Then the medicine is altered and given again to the patient to test. That is way most the medicines that we use today has been found by testing for years administering on either humans or animals. In the past it was mostly the animals but today humans are used mostly.

However, the Yogi Sidhartha did not give any medicine to anybody else. He Himself tried. He faced all the mishaps Himself. The only researcher who faced that challenge is Him. With every medicine He took, the sickness aggravated, did not reduce. He took the last medicine with which He totally fell; as if He died; not really the death, but similar to that; it was a deadly medicine that He administered last. He controlled even the breath, and assumed that is the correct medicine; He checked whether He could control the desire to breathe as well.

See, what a great personality? He did not use anyone else for this dangerous experiment. This experiment was done for all of us, not for Him; but He did not hand over the gravity of it to us. He did not allow us to face the danger of that experiment, He, Himself bore the entire danger of that. There He realised this is not the correct medicine, because He almost died. He discarded all those prescriptions which tried to control the desire. When He discarded all those, the people who were looking after him,

discarded Him too. There were some attendants; they left Him alone, including the astrologer Kondanna, rejecting his astrological knowledge. The human beings were such foolish and were in such a fictitious belief. He became alone; without a teacher; without attendants; all alone.

But His spirituality did not weaken; He did not become helpless. That investigating mind, the Buddha nature told Him again and again, that there should be a way out; there should be a key to open the door; go in search of that key. When He was with such an open mind, He acquired the key; key that is called the awareness. He opened the door with that key; opened the gate; middle path was dawned; middle path was emerged. Once the road was open, He walked on the road. By walking on that road, He became an awakened person. Then only He started using the name "Buddha", until then He never used that name. It is not a title. It is a name given to an inner transition; not an ancestral name; not a surname; not a name for a person. What a joy He would have experienced? He almost died one day prior, the previous day He was lost all alone, without any help or a teacher, everybody has left Him, He, Himself did not know what to do. Then the next day, He became an awakened person. What a joy? How did He celebrate that achievement? So peacefully, very silently; did not dance or sing, did not send messengers; no tom-tom beating; did not call everybody to come. He silently experienced the joy, understood the joy, from top to bottom and bottom to top; in the natural order and its reverse order.

He did not realise the time flying. He became liberated of time. Now time is not a problem anymore. He stood up from where He was seated; walked a few

steps and turned 180 degrees, then what did He see? He saw where He was seated; the tree that gave Him shelter and shade. What did He do? He was looking at that tree without blinking His eyes. What was this for? It is to pay gratitude to the tree that gave Him shelter and shade to become awakened, throughout the night. Have you ever heard of such gratitude in the entire history of mankind? When somebody achieves something, without indulging in that and enjoying it to the fullest, keeping all that aside, a person trying to pay gratitude? But that was Buddha's nature. The first task was to pay gratitude to the tree, He started His journey there. The tree did not do anything special; it was with His effort that He achieved. But He stood looking at that tree, which gave Him shelter, for just one whole night, without blinking, His rays of gratitude were offered to the tree. That is why we assume even today that the Bo (Banyan) tree is superficial, and that it has a great force. That is the Bodhi Pooja/Homage. That first Bodhi Pooja was performed by The Buddha. This is a very appropriate moment to visualise how far we have gone away from His directions in respecting the tree. That was His first teaching. His first teaching was to pay gratitude. He taught it very silently, by example. See how great is our Master? The first lesson was introduced by example so silently. But it is not a simple lesson, the lesson of paying gratitude, if somebody trains himself on gratitude; he is a true follower of Lord Buddha. It is not a very easy task and it is not an easy quality to develop.

The second lesson was also about gratitude. He remembered the teachers that tried to help Him, even though their teachings were not correct, and wanted to help them with the correct path which He found. But alas, they were all dead by then and were in worlds

where there is no Awareness; being totally caught in the samsara, without any hope of even listening to Dhamma. Then He remembered the five ascetics who attended to Him and left Him when He came out of controlling His desires; they left Him accusing that He will never become a Buddha; again started to eat and drink, and again became greedy, again became drowned by desire, thereby going back to indulging in sensual pleasures. But The Buddha went in search of them, who abandoned Him in the jungle accusing that He will never gain the status of Buddha. Who is the teacher who has ever done that? He did not send a message for them to come and see him, saying “you said that I will be unable to attain freedom, now that I have succeeded, come & see”; did not ask them to send Him a vehicle. Very humbly He walked all the way to Baranasa in Isipathana from Gaya; hundreds of kilo meters. When He reached there, the five ascetics were not ready to accept Him as a teacher; they thought He came back to them having been defeated; He was looking very attractive not like those days when He was practising self mortification; they were passing such sarcastic remarks. They offered The Buddha initial hospitality, but they were not prepared to listen to Him; they did not accept Him as a teacher. Therefore The Buddha had to swear all round; He had to swear for the first and the last time. This is very clearly stated in Dhammachakkana Sutta, the first discourse of the Buddha. “Without understanding the four noble truths in all forms, I have never declared that I gained Buddhahood. I have never lied before. Now that I have gained the total understanding I declare very positively that I know everything that I have to know, there is nothing else for me to understand. Therefore, listen to me. I am an awakened

person now. The desire cannot lead me to dreams again.” In this manner He was able to conquer the five ascetics. They were all older than The Buddha; therefore it was not easy to make them students, to make them listen to Him. But with his swearing, He was able to make them listen to Him. There again He showed the gratitude. He remembered them as the group who helped Him when He was practicing severe austerities, not as the group who left Him when He was at a loss. He did not utter a single word about it; did not say that they abandoned Him; He was only interested in helping them as they helped Him in some way in the past.

Dear Friends, the journey of service began from that moment, He continued for 45 years. He relaxed only for 2 hours most of the days, the other 22 hours were spent for the betterment of others, without expecting anything in return. He never expected even an appreciation from others; He did not get any occupational benefits such as official residence, a vehicle or a payment or even any award. A person without expecting anything from anyone, who served the entire mankind, and even the gods and deities; is there anybody like that? He sacrificed His entire life to serve the world. Today we are commemorating such a great personality, which is very rare; no two such persons would be born to the world at the same time, only one and only. Today is the symbolic day for Birth, Enlightenment and the passing off of such a great character.

We are indebted to all these. We are indebted to The Buddha, though He never accounted for the service He rendered. If we try to make accounts, we will realise, how much we are in debt to Him. How much do we spend for a very simple drug? Every drug

has a price, the price depends on the complication of the sickness, but none of these drugs would give an assurance that the patient will be cured 100% from that sickness and there are no side effects from that drug; and for each and every sickness we have to get different medicines at a huge cost. There is no medicine to stop a person from getting old, or to avoid death. There are so many sicknesses without proper medicines. From where can you find a medicine for the sickness of pain that one experience when an expectation fails? In which pharmacy can you buy such a medicine? When somebody accuses us for something we get hurt, where is the medicine to cure that mind which was hurt? There are no such medicines, even if available they are very expensive. The Buddha found the medicine for all these ailments, where there are no medicines in the world. Therefore how expensive should it be? The medicine to avoid becoming old, sick and ultimately from the death was found by The Buddha. If a scientist found such a medicine how much will it cost? How much do we have to pay for even a simple medicine to convert grey hair back to black? If one wants to delay the death by just one day how much does it cost? But this medicine found by The Buddha which could cure one from ever becoming old and sick; and from all the deaths; from all the suffering, shock and un-satisfactoriness, how much could it cost? But The Buddha did not claim anything from us, neither did He accepted what was offered. We are in debt to Him. We all are in debt to Him. We have to pay back that debt. Pooja means the way of paying it off. Homage to The Buddha is for that.

There are several ways of offering Pooja. If He was alive we could have offered what He needs, such as food, drinks, can arrange comfortable furniture for

sleeping and to sit; can build shelter to protect Him from rain and sun; those are the direct ways of making Pooja. Now we can do all those assuming He is alive, to a statue of Him. That is the secondary way of making Pooja. We are unable to do the first one now; maybe we would have done when He was alive. We can do the second way.

The third one is to look after our parents. We have heard that parents are the Buddhas at home, Domestic Buddhas. By looking after them, feeding them, attending to all their needs, worshiping them and making them happy are the ways of the Third Pooja.

Forth way of Pooja is to attend to sick people. The Buddha showed with example that when you attend to a sick person it is similar to attending to Him. The Buddha Himself attended to a monk; it was not just giving a tablet or some medicine; He bathed the sick monk, washed all his soiled clothes and also prepared and gave medicines. Such attending to a sick person is similar to a Pooja for The Buddha. That is the fourth way of re-paying The Buddha.

The way to fully payoff is to lead a life according to The Buddha's teachings. That is to take to medicine found by The Buddha completely. That is the price to be paid for the medicine. By taking the medicine, having cured the sickness, become a healthy person. That was the expectation of The Buddha. Take this medicine. This medicine is neither found every day nor available in abundance. Though the medicine is there, people do not think of taking it. That thought does not come easily to most of the people. Most of the people do not think of meditating. They do not have enough free time for that. There would not be Dear Friends who would be encouraging others, all the time. May be

we do not have enough strength to take this medicine. Little by little our eye sight is deteriorating; it does not become more and more clear, one day you would lose your eye sight completely. Similarly the hearing of the ear is deteriorating and one day it would stop hearing totally. We may not be able to sit in a posture of this nature; it becomes difficult day by day. More than anything we may not be able to understand when we listen to a sermon; the awareness is deteriorating day by day so that we cannot comprehend and understand what we hear. All these are in the process of dying; becoming old and ultimately dying. The entire body from head to toe is deteriorating including our awareness. When that happens this medicine cannot be absorbed, even though it is available, what a misfortune?

On a fortunate day like today, let us all make a firm determination from the bottom of our hearts, Dear Friends, without just worshiping The Buddha with external actions, but to inculcate a true respect towards him. There is no such person who sacrificed for the wellbeing of others. It was not to build a temple; it was not to create another religion; it was not to inaugurate another sector, but to cure the entire beings, who were sick with impure elements. He did not consider the religion, nationality, his religion was health. Become a group who takes at least a drop from that medicine. That is a great opportunity we have, by being born as a human. Among thousands of people who live as the same person that was born and most of the time gradually deteriorate even to a lesser level and die, if we can bid farewell to this life as a person who does not cry having lived as a healthy person, how great is that? What a beauty? Meditation is for that. The medicine maybe bitter, it may be difficult; one may

think that it is better to be at home than sitting here for a long time and meditating. The medicine is difficult, it is hard, it is true, but to live without this medicine is worse. To live without a cultivated mind is an enormous suffering. We have experienced that right through our life. If we accumulate the total suffering we experienced due to uncleansed mind of ours, it could be higher than any great mountain; we have to add today's and tomorrow's suffering as well to that.

Dear Friends, use the time that we waste for suffering, to eradicate suffering. From the time that we waste by crying and howling as a sick person, use just one second to take this medicine. A Buddhist is not limited to just a beautiful word, that is a person who becomes hale and hearty spiritually and physically; a person who becomes healthy and supports others to become healthy too.

We have two choices. Whether we being sick make others sick as well or we becoming healthy and then support others to become healthy too? We have only those two selections. What is the path we select? We becoming agitated do we want to make others same too? We becoming frightened and make others frightened too? With our suffering make other suffer too? Do we want to go on that path? Is that the one and only way? No, here is another way; The Buddha opened a brand new path, once we are cured, we can help others to become healthy. A person who travels on the path is called a Buddhist.

Dear Friends, on this Vesak full moon day, let us make a firm determination. To travel along the path opened by Lord Buddha our great teacher, prior to 2600 years; to be a Buddhist who is progressing step by step along that path.

Discussion in the afternoon with answers to relevant questions

Dear Friends, on this Vesak poya day, we are taking an effort to make our lives more meaningful and illuminate it. There is no difference of today from the other 364 days of the year; nothing new or of any novelty; it dawned naturally as any other day; noon arrived like any other day; the sun will set in the evening as usual; night will come lighted with the moon; we will be able to see the moon if the sky is clear without clouds; in this manner the day will fade off naturally; without any significant difference whatsoever. This day has to be made meaningful by us. None of the days or any day cannot make our lives meaningful. We can make a day meaningful; or a half a day. Meaning to a day has to be given by us, it not something that we can get; it is something we have to achieve, otherwise there is no meaning to our life. If we do not live meaningfully, there is no meaning to our life. There are so many meanings that can be given to a life; out of all that, the most valuable meaning is to understand life; life is something that has to be understood; a puzzle to be solved. Without solving this puzzle, we have created our life a mess. There are confusions internally and externally. Life has to be understood by ourselves, it cannot be explained by an outsider. We discussed some of the exercises of understanding life. By observing five precepts, meditating in a seated posture and other postures; listening to Dhamma; understanding Dhamma, offering homage to The Buddha; being silent with awareness we tried to understand life. For which

listening, silently listening is essential; comprehending is essential; adherence to what we understood is required. Listening, understanding and observing are essential.

To these few steps, Dhamma discussions give a tremendous support. Discussion makes it easy to comprehend what was heard, and to live accordingly. Discussion is to share our experiences; it is an insight meditation. To probe into our experiences in different angles, and to visualise our problems encountered in meditation in a wider perspective. This exercise gives different interpretations to our problems and experiences which could bring out the accurate direction for us to deepen our practice. This is the time for that, if you have any problems pertaining to the practice please bring forth. If you have any experiences in practise that you wish to share with others, for their benefit, please share with us.

Sir, you explained the glorious path cleared by The Buddha and how the foundation was laid for that, beautifully for us to accumulate confidence to travel in this path, May you be blessed for that. I would like to discuss one aspect arose from that; the word desire has become so simple by hearing always. Though it is explained in four Noble truths, without our knowledge it arises in us always. If you can explain the inspiring way and the bad effects and also how it can bring forth suffering and fear, I think it will be great on a day like today.

Answer : The point you brought up is very valuable. Not only for today, for every day, but especially for

today. One reason is the way think is so different. Usually we do not think in those terms, that you mentioned. We look at desire very positively. Who do not like desire? Nobody likes anger, fear or jealousy. But everybody likes desire; most of us like craving; also we like the things that we crave for. We like things since we crave for them. We like people since we crave for them; we love them; we adore them; we admire them. Similarly, we like places since we crave, get attached to those places. We enjoy a lot by the people we desire; we become happy by tasting food that we like. We become cheerful by the people, places, food that we like. Sometimes it may be the only joy we experience in life; no other joy. If we can live only with people we like, and be sharing the food we like, watching and listening to our hearts' desires that would be the greatest joy one could experience. We do not know whether there is any other kind of joy. Therefore we like the desire. Everybody knows that anger is not good, nobody likes anger. Who enjoys anger? Everybody suffer due to anger; suffer due to fear. But the fact that you really suffer due to craving is not at all evident. Everybody thinks that we enjoy because of the desire.

On a day like today, "the reason for suffering is desire" was revealed to the world. Until then world was under the impression that happiness is brought by desire. For the first time, it was revealed that the desire is the cause for suffering. Therefore if you want to be free of suffering; let go the desire. If you do not want to become angry, there is no point in trying to do away with anger, you should let go the desire. Similarly, if you do not want to be frightened, let go the desire. We all wish to be fearless, we want to let go the fear; we do not want to be angry, we strive to be

without anger, we struggle to overcome anger; we fight against anger; we try to escape from anger, but wherever we go, anger comes behind, since we are carrying our desire. They are the followers of desire. Anger is another face of desire, so is the fear, they are similar to an octopus. The word "Desire" is so much heard, that it has become so disgusting, horrible and horrifying. The root of this word is "thirst" it is from this word, 'thirsty' has evolved. This is the preliminary aspect of the desire; it creates a thirst in us. We know what thirsty means, it makes us so thirsty, the throat gets dry as if we are about to lose the tongue; we just cannot resist; somehow or other we have to fulfil the thirst. Like a person lost in the middle of the sea, though there is ample water all round you, you cannot drink, since it is salty, but the thirst makes us drink even the sea water. But by drinking sea water you become more and more thirsty.

Just see when a desire arises for something, say for a dress, a journey, a speech, a food, we feel as if we are in thirst. We feel as if we cannot live without that. We would even be without the breath, but we cannot be without the thing that we desire. See within a day how many desires arise? For how many things; how many people, we wake up in the morning with a desire for something. During the whole day we are with that thirst. Then we go to sleep like that too, in thirst. All the problems that we encounter today are due to past desires. It may not be the past births, even this birth, or even this year. We are suffering due to the desires we have had, true we enjoy the things we get with desire, when you get water for the thirst, you can be satisfied for that moment and be happy. Desire is similar to a match-stick, which gives the flame once and extinguishes. The happiness granted by the desire

is similar to that. The happiness you gain is just once. But for the happiness experienced just in a moment, we may have to suffer for a long time, with the side effects, even throughout the life. Sometimes the great desire for some food, make one suffer the entire life. With desire you experience limited happiness and unlimited suffering.

The interpretation we have of a wealthy person is: a person who has accumulated a fair amount of wealth, vehicles, house & property, businesses and so on; in other words, who has been in a massive thirst; a person who has tried to fulfil his thirst. The wealth and desire go hand in hand. The desire makes a person wealthy. A person accumulates wealth with the feeling of 'not-enough'. With this feeling a person can accumulate wealth even without consuming, in various ill-legal ways, being fair or unfair. The wealth a person so accumulates makes him suffer. However much the desire is, he suffers to that extent. There are no wealthy people who are not suffering. Therefore while the desire creates wealthy people, it creates suffering people. Both these are created by the same desire. Desire can perform that miracle. While dressing a person as wealthy, the same person is dressed as suffering too. Both face masks are put on at the same time, but the sufferer's mask is not publicised. Wealthy face can be seen, but the other mask is hidden under that automatically. Therefore according to the deepness of desire, a person can become a wealthy person, but whether he becomes wealthy or not, the suffering due to the desire is the same. Suffering comes in so many forms, trying to safe-guard the wealth, the fear of losing, and also to make plans to accumulate wealth are some of them. Desire makes

people sick. Especially the germ or the virus of a sick mind is the desire.

Contentment is never known to desire. The contented mind never suffers. A suffering mind can never be contented. The desire will never talk about contentment. Desire talks, only about being wealthy and poor. Desire does not know the joy of sharing; it knows only how to be stingy and cling to everything. Desire never talks of sharing, giving, they are considered as a misery; try to claim as much as possible.

Sharing is a norm or a statute of the nature; transacting. We see this clearly in Mindfulness in breathing meditation. Breathing is a transaction with the nature. While the nature gives us the in-breath, we give the out-breath to the nature. Our out-breath is necessary to the nature; for its trees; in return the trees give us our in-breath. The next in-breath will be given by the nature only if we give our out-breath to the nature. We cannot have two in-breaths without an out-breath in between. This is the norm of the nature. Desire breaks this preliminary norm of the nature; it breaks the preliminary rule of the nature. It says do not give, keep everything to yourself, accumulate as much as possible. Desire create a person that goes against nature. We cannot enjoy the natural happiness; though we have accumulated. We are deprived of the natural joy. Therefore little by little we become disabled. A disabled mind; a deactivated mind; a mind that does not receive messages of give and share. There are no such thoughts in the mind. Such thoughts become alien to such a mind. But they are so natural thoughts. Since the mind has closed doors for such thoughts, that mind becomes inoperative; sick and paralysed. Desire creates such minds. That person

now cannot walk properly. We cannot lead our lives. We will be bed-ridden mentally. Such a mind is not in par with the nature. Nature will isolate and paralyse such a mind. We become unpopular among others. Others dislike us. It is very difficult to live with such a person. It is very difficult to live with a person who has an unlimited desire for everything; it is difficult to talk with such a person; even very difficult to have any transactions with such a person; automatically they get cornered in the society. They get cornered internally and externally. Then they have to lead a very remorse life though they have wealth. They cannot enjoy happiness from any of their belongings; the wealth brings them only distress.

You get something to give. This is the norm of nature. You receive to give. May be you gained due to your donations; but it is always better to think the other way. If we get something we should be able to share that with someone else. The thought of sharing itself makes you a contented person. Only a contented mind would be able to think that way. The sorrowful minds can never think like that; however much you gain, for them it is insufficient; that is the nature of a sorrowful mind. When it is insufficient to ourselves how can we give others? How can we share with others? Can there be any suffering more than that? We suffer from this discontentment everyday due to desire. The way to be contented is to let go the desire. Never think that you gained because you gave. Whether it is the truth or not, who thinks in that way becomes more and more greedy; magnifies the desire; they give only to gain more and more. They give to balloon the desire. Come to the attitude that you got to give away; to share. Try to experience the joy of contentment. If you can think in that way, even the thought is so beautiful.

There is so much of comfort within that thought it self. That thought makes one a brave person; there is no fear thereafter, thinking whether I will lose what I gained, will someone rob me; will insects attack it; no such fears anymore, when you think of sharing. One can live peacefully. Whatever he gains, however wealth he has there is no fear and there is no suffering. The contented mind is free from fear and sorrow. A contented mind is satisfied with what it has; what it gained and what it gives. This happiness could be experienced through these three aspects only for a contented mind. That sorrowful mind does not experience happiness from any of these. It does not experience happiness from what it gains since it feels insufficient however much it gains; no happiness from what it has since it is always in fear of losing what it has; no happiness from what it gives since it thinks that by giving it is deprived of wealth and gives unwilling just because it has to give.

Dear Friends, what we have collected in life to date is not really ours; they belong to the world. There is nothing that we can claim as ours. Everything that we have accumulated belongs to the world; they are with us only due to our desire. They came to us from the world. The things we have borrowed from the world due to our desire will be taken back from the world. Desire cannot resist that; when the owner claims back, we have to give. Though the desire does not like to give back, the world will drag from us forcibly. When we have the desire of owning them for the entire life, and expect to own them throughout the life, they vanish, they cease to be ours; they are snatched off from us. Then the desire sighs, mourns and makes the person sick, could even damage your heart. We never accumulated wealth from the world to get a heart

attack, the requirement was totally different. But we end up there. We end up in a hospital or in a prison. Everything was there in the world when we were born, and when we die too we would leave everything back in the world; we cannot take anything with us.

While we are living we can use them universally; similar to the breath. We did not bring the breath when we came and we are not taking the breath with us when we go. We took the first in-breath after coming to this world, and before we leave we have to let go the last out-breath; in between those two events we share the breath with everybody. We came to share, neither to cling nor to hoard. Please remember that everything that we have collected with desire, will last only a short period. We are short-term owners; never long-term. This is true for everything. Starting from this dress that we are wearing or the hair in our head, we are short-term owners of everything; owner does not know the duration of the ownership. No owner is aware of the period of ownership of anything he owns. Because of this ignorance, the owners believe in eternal ownership. That is a fallacy. Nobody is an eternal owner of anything. Everybody has a right to consume for a temporary period. There is a temporary ownership to consume. Let us live with that understanding; then the desire decreases; can reduce the desire. Desire is not necessary to live happily. You can lead a very comfortable happy life; an innocent happiness which could be shared among others. If the desire is less, the waste is reduced. Desire makes one waste. Though we think a person with desire does not waste since we are stingy, it is not the truth. We accumulate more than our requirement, which is a waste. Further, it is wrong for a person to accumulate more than what we need, since we deprive another

person who needs it. It is an injustice to a larger crowd. Therefore, Dhamma always emphasises for us to be mindful of the portion required by us. Consume knowingly of our measurement. Know our own dosage. Desire does not have any restriction; it only knows about the insufficiency. Wasting is a great sin. It is an unwholesome act. Desire makes us do it. Today most of the environment problems are due to the desire, though it is discussed as a separate subject; ultimately it is created by desire. The common resources which existed for ages, has been destroyed by the desire of one person. Is there a bigger sin than that? When we talk about wholesome acts, always protecting environment is emphasised. What can we contribute to the environment? How can we support the nature? Not what we can get from the nature, but what we can give to nature.

Isn't it essential to understand the Perception of Non-attachment to be free of Desire?

Answer: To become free of desire one has to understand the nature of the desire. What desire gives us and what it does not, what is given hidden and what is not given after making a promise. We have to understand all these quite clearly; otherwise we are mesmerized of desire. We are being captivated by the desire and being misled, with a blind faith towards desire. We should let go the blind faith. We should open our eyes and look at the desire; not the world decorated and beautifully created by the desire. We were all this time looking at the screen where desire show case all the beautified frames; we were shouting, screaming, laughing and clapping our hands. It was the same with the next film too. Only when the film

was over we realise that it was just a film. But again when we start to watch the next film, we entirely forget about that and act in the same way. Only when the lights are put on and the darkness vanishes we again realize that we were watching a film shown by the desire.

We have two options. Desire always takes us to a dark world to show its frames; it never allows us to think. Desire takes over our thinking. Desire thinks on our behalf and we have only to act upon the decisions taken by the desire; an act of a servant. Instead of that become a person who thinks. Whenever a thought comes saying you need something, contemplate whether you really need that? Up to now it was not there, so what was the problem? Was there any setback? There are so many people without this, are they suffering? Are they in problems? Look at people who already have it, are they really happy? Don't they have any problems? What are the problems encountered by them due to this thing that I am trying to buy. Evaluate all the conditions pertaining to it. Do not allow the desire to take you to a dark cell and show us the film that was created secretly. Make it illuminated; open up all the doors and windows. Then the screen becomes lighted, and whatever was on the screen becomes disclosed. This is what is called "Viragha", if there was any lust towards that film that vanishes. That is first thing to do. Look at the desire from different, different angles; things that the desire claims. When it says it is essential and cannot be without, do not be hasty, remember we were without those all our lives up to now without any problem. Therefore, another week without that should not be a problem. But the desire would not let us rest; it creates such a tension in us; today and now. Do not get

charged by those; you can leisurely breath. Do not lose the freedom, just because of a negligible desire. Look at it. Investigate, what was I missing all this time without it? Desire will show you so many things that you do not have just listen to them as well, but impartially and freely evaluate. Then look at the people without that; are they suffering because of that? Is there a problem for them? Are they not well? Then you will realise that there are so many existing without even knowing about that; and they are living quite happily, they may be having other problems, but there is no problem because this is not there. On the other hand investigate about the people who have already acquired what we think is essential for us; look at the suffering they are undergoing because of that. We should learn these lessons, and then we can explain to the desire, otherwise we always learn from the desire see how ignorant we are. Therefore be knowledgeable; gather facts, when you become aware and be lightened, desire will not be able to show its illusions in the dark. When the screen gets lighted from different angles, the film generated by the desire, beautifully and using all the capabilities of an art director and using all the possible make-up, gets totally discoloured. If you had any passion for that, that gets diluted totally. This is the first method.

The second method: Looking at the screen should be stopped; now see who is showing this to us. Who is showing us this enchanting film? Look at the projection. Turn back to the screen, all this time we had turned our backs to the projector. Therefore we didn't know that what is on the screen was projected by somebody from back. We used to think that they are actually on the screen, everything is happening in front of us. Nothing happens there. Someone is editing

and showing us, therefore turn back at least once; turn back totally and then you will see the projector not the screen. There is no film then, we see the jugglery that misled us. Look at the desire, not the things shown by the desire. Desire always points a finger to something for us to see, do not look at what is shown; look at the finger. Then the desire would not be able to make us dance according to its rhythm. When you try to look at the desire, you have only one thing to be watchful, otherwise if you try to look at things shown by the desire, there may be a lot and there is no end to that, there is no satisfaction however much you look at.

Can one live without desire?

Answer : A good question. Rev. Sir, what is your experience? Let us keep aside the lay people, let us understand the life of a monk. You are leading a very modest lifestyle, living in a cave; do you think desire is necessary to live?

Rev. Sir: "When the desire is less, you can be more relaxed. Lesser the desire, you become more peaceful. Then only you really experience life, otherwise you get really imprisoned with desire."

That point is really important; the fact that, to experience that one is living, the desire should be decreased. Desire, first and foremost, makes a person unaware. Awareness and desire cannot go hand in hand. Desire cannot control a person who is mindful. Therefore desire makes a person unaware first; makes us insane and misleads. With every desire this happens to us. Then we do not know who we are, what

is our target? How much money we have in hand? When you become insane you forget everything and buy what you really do not need; you watch what you should not watch; you eat what you should not eat. That is not because of desire, but because of unawareness. Desire makes one unaware, removes mindfulness completely, then you do not know why you came.

When you go to super market, most of the people forget the reason for coming; when they see the things there. Or go to a designer dress store, you can see all most all the people there behave insanely. Where are we? Why did we come here? Who are we? All those are forgotten for that moment. They behave as if they have unlimited money in the pocket and unlimited time to spare. But no one leaves that place happily. You can live without desire, but not without awareness. No sooner you lose awareness; there is no life there; that is the end of living. Thereafter, it is a struggle. We do not have unlimited wealth, time or energy, but we got unlimited yearning. We get there no sooner we lose our awareness. Thereafter it is battle between limited wealth and unlimited craving; limited time and unlimited tasks. We always get defeated in these battles; we never win. Always a person is defeated to desire. We think that we cannot live without desire, but we have become failures due to desire. Desire will never let us win; and there is no one who has won over desire.

Therefore the two words, 'wants' and 'needs' are very important to be differentiated. There are 'needs' to a life, awareness shows us what they are, we do not need desire for that; awareness is enough. Awareness will teach us what we need to live and their quantities.

'Wants' are made by the desire, they are personal. It goes as "what do I want?" Not that, what does the life need? We have to come to that; to that primary point. What one needs to live? Not what I want. There is no end to a list of "what I want?" but to live you need only a few things. If we are not aware of those we are not living. As the Rev, Sir, mentioned, we are not living if we are governed by the desire. We go on collecting all our wants, and in the event we really do not fulfil life's needs. Therefore, we become frustrated. There is no time to live. No space to live. We have not yet started to live. Therefore before even starting to live, one day we will die.

Can I explain an experience and to get a clarification. I have been practicing mindfulness on breathing according to your instructions. You have explained that one has to be aware of the time, speed, and the weight of the breath; and a short breath means all these three factors should be low. Conventionally we assume that if the speed is low, the time taken would be more. But in practice I experienced otherwise, when the weight is less and the speed is slower the time taken is also less and I was feeling very relaxed. Did I see it correctly?

Answer : Every experience is correct, if you are aware of it. When the mind is heavy with desire, see how is your breath. When you are greedy and craving for something, the breath is very heavy. There is so much of desire in that breath. If you investigate carefully you will realise it easily, you do not need a scale to measure. The in and out breaths are very heavy not light, and also with a great speed. You are in haste to

inhale and exhale. Before finishing the inhalation you start to exhale. This is the way with the desire. Desire always makes us tensed. It does not allow us to relax and be light- hearted. When the desire reduces, the weight of breathing too decreases. This is the most important factor of mindfulness on breathing practice. Through this meditation, by being attentive to your own breath you can understand your inner nature; your mind can be comprehended. Though you cannot see your mind directly, you can see it through the breath. If your mind is in anger; that can be recognised by the breath, the way the breathing is happening. You can see the rhythm of anger; the rhythm of desire; how does the breath work when you are frightened? When you sigh deeply? The mind which is not visible to our naked eye can be observed through mindfulness of breathing practice and let go.

Can it be incorporated to all five aggregates?

Answer : Breath is all five aggregates. When you take any aggregate rest of the four are also found there. With the latest fashion trend to achieve a slim body, one could say, impression (Rupa) aggregate is less now. But their minds are so fat, which is difficult to carry. Always the mind was heavy, but now it has become unbearable. One reason for this is the greed for information. There has never been such a greed for information in the history, like today. However much information you gather, it is not sufficient. Sometimes people are greedy for information more than for food. You need information to some extent, but today there is no limit, the head is overloaded with mostly unwanted and unproductive information. Thus the man is unable to think clearly, as the mind is clogged

with garbage. Whatever the experience you gain, it is insufficient.

Take food for example. The simple food pattern of yester year has become so complicated. The variety is immense, but still people are not satisfied. Not only food, look at clothes. The experiences have become so complicated, but none are satisfied with the experiences. The next thing is the targets. There have never been so many targets in the past. Starting from a small child to an old person, everybody still have targets unattained. It is very rare to find a person who is not studying for an examination. Everybody is under the stress of some examination, the mother, the father, the son and the daughter. They claim that studying is life-long. It is true learning is life-long, but it does not mean you have to take up examinations till you die. What it says is: "you should learn from your everyday experiences and use that knowledge to live in the future peacefully, without doing the same mistake over and over again". But now everybody is so busy, they do not have time even to live, no end to the targets. When we consider in this manner, we see that all the five aggregates are so busy, not one all the five are busy and hectic.

We see that most of the people are spiritually in vacuums. Without understanding this, people are continuing to collect physical things and trying to fill the vacuum. They are just wasting time in testing various aspects in this exercise thinking they might give them the happiness they are looking for. Finally even the spirituality is valued as an achievement to his personality and trying to show off as a spiritual person. But whatever they do the vacuum is still there.

Answer : None of those will fill up the vacuum. If life is something that can be filled, it should be full by now and even be overflowing. When you count the things that we have already acquired, all our lives should be overflowing. But still we experience the same emptiness. That emptiness is screaming for one other additional thing. One is still crying in the same manner as in the past. Who cried for a doll in the past, is crying today for something else; but the crying person is the same; one has not become a non-crying person. Though one has achieved everything by crying, still one is crying. That crying person is still the same; one day s/he will die in the same manner. Therefore it is important to be cautious. Without supplying whatever, that person is crying for every time s/he is crying; it is better to recognise this crying person and understand why s/he is crying and make him/her a matured person who does not cry.

As you mentioned we act as various characters in life. Even those characters are not created by us. We just assume the characters, given by the desire. Among those, sometimes we act as spiritual persons, meditators, not that we are meditating, but due to the desire. Because we like to show off like that; sometimes for our own satisfaction; or for the acceptance in society. When we try to impose as somebody, there is no meditation. We have been acting in characters, which are really not us. We always acted in someone else's character; created by someone else; wearing all the masks and dresses relevant to that character. We cannot act in some other person's character every day. Even though we like, at the end of that act we have get down from the stage. This is what

happened to us always; we had to get off the stage half-way. We wanted to continue to stay on the stage, but as that performance is over we have to get off the stage. For the next performance, our character is not wanted; we were facing this crisis every day. We cannot remember who we were since we were performing as somebody else; since we were acting as roll of characters, we have forgotten who really we are; actually we do not know who really we are.

The world icon, Charlie Chaplin who was among the most successful miming actors, became famous as a comedian. He did not talk a word, but he could act in such a manner the spectators could identify the character he was miming. Most of his films were silent. He could mimic anybody so naturally. He mimicked most of the famous personalities in most of his films. One day when he was walking on a road, he met one of his friends with the son. The friend introduced him to the son and told him to name anybody, so that Chaplin could perform. The son thought for a while and said, "I would like to see the real Charlie Chaplin". Then Chaplin said, "I just cannot do that, I have been imitating others all my life, I really do not know, who I am, therefore whatever I do, may not imitate me, so please do not ask me to do that".

Not only to him, this is what has happened to all of us. We have been acting in characters which do not belong to us, and have been accumulating unnecessary suffering due to those. Now in meditation too, we should not try to act in a new character. But this could happen very easily and suffer.

Try to recognise the characters that you have been performing. That is what meditation does. If you do not consider any of those as "I", just let go. If you have

been wearing other's masks, clothes with their characters, identify them and let go. Try to be yourself. It is not easy. Let go being others, let go the things that do not belong to you; let go the emotions that do not belong to you. If you were angry because of somebody else, just let it go. You do not have to impose as somebody else and act as an angry person. Let it go, be natural. Try to be natural as much as possible. The desire never allowed us to be natural; it always made us artificial.

We are tangled with the difficulty in identifying the needs and wants. When we have taken a decision to follow a spiritual life making it our main aim, and when we are consciously leading a personal life which could contribute to the spiritual life, don't we get a better understanding of the demarcation between the need and wants?

Answer : We usually do not even know that there are two such aspects called needs and desires. We have combined these two and consider both under needs and we think everything is necessary. No it is not true, there are some essentials. If someone says that he does not need anything that is one extreme, nobody can say so. There are some needs for a life. We have to supply those life requirements; that is our responsibility. We cannot just say that we do not need anything. That becomes negligence on our part. What are the basic requirements of a life? Those are the preliminary requirements, what are the secondary and tertiary? What are the desires we have created on top of those requirements? Desires are complicated. Requirements are simple. When you cannot fulfil the life requirements, you feel physical suffering. But if

you could not fulfil a desire, you suffer psychologically; a great mental suffering. These two can be differentiated, if there is a requirement. Life essentials are always in the present; but psychological requirements may not be in the present; mostly connected to the future. Desire is connected to the future. Needs are for the present. These are the differences. There is a limit to the needs, but there is no limit to the desires. Need does not compete, whereas desire always in competition. If we are in a competition with someone else, then that is because we are with a desire. There is no competition when it is a need, only a sharing. Because the one who is in need of something knows that it is a need of the other as well. If you are with desire, you are imprisoned in that desire, and it is only you in your world, there is no room for anybody else. It is enough that I am there or only my people are there, rest are the enemies; competitors; opponents; rivals; therefore I should fulfil my desire before others. The person who is in desire sees the world as enemies, but for the person who has a need sees everybody as friends. Everybody feels the same hunger, there is no difference, and may be a minute difference in quantity; no difference in the coldness; no difference in the sickness; when there is rain everybody gets wet, no difference. The one, who is in need, is in a common phenomenon. The one, who is with desire, is in a personal prison.

I experience an improvement in me, without becoming hasty when a problem crops up, like in the past, I can now think leisurely and I have a better vision of the problem so that there are many solutions. There seems to be a flow of thoughts that comes to the mind to help in finding a

solution. Sometimes this too becomes a stress as I get more tired of trying to find the solution. Is there a way to reduce this stress?

Answer : First of all, be happy that you could come out of your own beliefs and look at the problem in different angles. That is a great achievement. There is no limit to the different angles that you can look at a problem. Nobody can tell that there are only one or two angles to look at a particular problem; only three sides for the problem and there cannot be a fourth way. If someone tries to investigate there is no end. You can look at it this way, that way and in so many ways, and you will be able to arrive at so many solutions too, there is no end. It is the truth. That is why it is said that the natural phenomenon is infinite.

We cannot think of the nature and complete. What you said is true, we do not have time to go on thinking, therefore, according to the available time; we must find the best solution that we have found and act upon that. We know that if we go on thinking more, we may find a better solution, but do not be greedy for those either. Do not be greedy even for the doctrine. Even that can be a suffering, and stress. The simile of the raft is given to highlight this fact. This raft may be enough to get over this problem, therefore use it and let go the raft, after achieving the results; otherwise there is no end. What has happened to us is: we collect all the rafts, boats, ships and even submarines and build up a yard of vehicles, and continue to be on this side of the stream without crossing it. When you start seeing the Dhamma, you may begin to get attached to it more and more, but even that you must take adequate for the moment and let go. Treat Dhamma

also similar to food, you should eat what you need for the hunger that you experience at this moment, not more, not less, and let go the rest. In this manner you may find a reasonably good solution to your problem, be happy, next time you may be able to find something even better. Be satisfied with what you have. This should be the norm for everything. Then you do not build up an unnecessary tension or stress.

Fact that there is a path, and we should take that path is always stressed. Does the belief and the way we think about the great teacher who found all these for us, depend on each person's perception? Meaning, is the urge to begin the journey, depends on one's right view?

Answer : Everything is relative. Nothing is absolute. Relative to me; relative to my characteristics; relative to my culture; relative to my ancestral customs; relative to my job; we cannot lead an absolute life. Even the food is relative to all these. Though the hunger is the same, what an individual eats is relative to each person. So are the clothes that each one wears. Nothing can be absolute.

The fact that we are indebted to the teacher should be felt to the heart, he has neither said so nor did he claim anything from us. He did not ask us to pay even the interest or the first instalment. Nothing of the sort was mentioned by him any day, anywhere. But when we contemplate, especially when we see people of other religions which do not have a proper doctrine; and how those followers are living and their beliefs, and what they do in the name of religions, to overcome their difficulties, we feel so grateful to our great teacher. If not for him we too would be doing such silly nonsense

such as kneeling and praying, scarifies animals to fire or get hung by needles, get drunk and dance. What don't they do in the name of the religion? We do not do such things because our teacher showed us the theory of cause and effect. There is a cause and effect for everything. If there is a problem there is a reason for that. Find the reason and try to eradicate the reason. There is a disease and a cause for the disease. Search for the cause and there should be a medicine to treat for that cause. There is no point in doing anything else.

Today we are consuming medicine to some extent because of this only. To have such a teacher is not a negligible fortune, and it is not by coincidence. We have not been born in this planet by a chance. The solution of The Buddha is so simple, but it aims at the target perfectly. Therefore if you take the medicine, you will definitely be cured, without any side effects. If we contemplate about the sacrifices The Buddha had to undergo to find this medicine, only, we realise how indebted we are for Him and otherwise we do not even bother. You need not be thinking about it, but if you take the medicine, that is enough. But to motivate you to take that medicine, contemplating the sacrifices He had to undergo is beneficial. He had only one meal in the morning only, even for that he did not take much time; he tried to help human beings as much as possible. There was no rule to say that a Buddha should have only one meal, but he made it a policy for himself. There was no time limit for his sleep, but he made it a policy to sleep only for two hours a day. There was no rule to say that he should always walk, but he made it a point to always walk, so that, he could meet so many people on the way and can help more and tell about this medicine. He had mobile

medical consultations on the road. May be people on the road were not waiting for the medicine; they were on their way to various other requirements. But they got a chance to meet The Buddha.

We cannot pay back however many lanterns we light or how many flowers we offer to him. The Buddha has recommended that if you can build the confidence in Dhamma in your parents, you can pay back the debt to them. It is so simple. This cannot be achieved in a physical way, even if you hold your parents on your shoulders and take care for the entire life time, you cannot pay back what you owe for them. But if you can build the confidence in Dhamma, then you can. Similarly if you can propagate the confidence in Dhamma within you, you can pay back what you owe to The Buddha little by little.

A person who has the faith of The Buddha may not have the confidence of the path. How to inculcate a confidence in such a person?

What do you mean by the faith of The Buddha?

This is about my mother, she is heavily involved in rituals but there is no way to get her to meditate. Is there any mechanism to use?

Answer : We should find a mechanism. First of all appreciate what she does, get involved in them and help her. If you need to turn a river, you have to go with the flow to some distance before turning; we cannot just turn from where we want, we have to go till we find a good location to turn. Similarly if we want to

turn someone, we have to go with that person along her path to some extent, not just to follow her till the end. In the meantime we can invite some priests who practice meditation for an alms giving; then can have a small discussion about meditation, to get the idea across to her. There should be such motivations or stimulations, without which it is very difficult to incline someone towards Dhamma. Or else, that person should be struck by a great blow. Something like what happened to Patachara.

Do not try to teach her Dhamma directly. They will never appreciate. When you want someone to eat some bitter food, you first give it mixed with something that person likes. That is how you should introduce Dhamma too. True Dhamma does not need any other flavouring to make it tasty, but one should experience Dhamma to enjoy the taste. You have to be very cautious and must use the best mechanism to bend her towards Dhamma step by step.

Do the emotions result due to desire, usually?

Answer : Desire itself is an emotion. All the other emotions are secondary, desire is primary. Anger results due to desire; so is fear; jealousy; even the suffering is due to desire. Therefore all the emotions rise due to the preliminary emotion – the desire. Therefore, you cannot eradicate them individually, can be reduced and controlled. Without touching desire you can control your anger; suffering; jealousy; but cannot eradicate totally. For that you have to get rid of desire. If you can eliminate desire, all the rest can be reduced, no need to handle them individually. We become angry, when we are hurt. Always, before anger there is some suffering. If there is no sorrow, there

cannot be anger. We suffer due to some incident and that makes us angry. We suffer because of desire. We were expecting something with desire, that did not happen, therefore we suffer; we did not expect that. We were expecting happiness, but we are suffering now, then we become angry. When there is disappointment due to an expectation not materialising, we become angry, when we see somebody else getting what we were expecting to get, we become jealous. Therefore, all the other emotions are secondary, desire is preliminary.

Dear Friends, this is the Full moon day in May 2016, we all being in Nillambe Meditation Centre, tried to experience Dhamma the way we have understood and the best way we can. Some were resident here for some days. We all try to inculcate Dhamma into our lives; which is a must and could bring forth an immense calamity to our lives, if we do not. By adding Dhamma to our lives it brings a great blessing. Dhamma is found in ourselves, not in books. We try to investigate Dhamma within us. By a program as this, we try to investigate as a group. The individual investigation is done as a group. We all need the energy of the group. This is not a journey that one can go alone, neither can we go arm in arm, but the group energy, the motivation and encouragement is necessary. We all amply received it all these days. We all feel very happy at this moment. Let us make a determination to go forward in this journey cleared and opened by our great teacher, with each and every small step we take. May we be blessed to have good physical and mental energy, the correct effort, health and association of Dhamma Friends, in this journey to freedom!

May the Triple Gem bless you all!

Previous Publications of Light of Nilambe

1. What is Human Life?
2. Be an Outsider if you want to change the Inside
3. Seeing Emptiness
4. Suffering is a Dream
5. In between Happiness and Unhappiness
6. Buddhism = Heartfulness + Mindfulness
7. No Colour No Shape
8. Living with Awareness & Watching Thoughts and Emotions
9. Sit on Your Own Seat
10. Illusion of Painful Painkillers
11. Disentangling Tangles
12. Rain of Thoughts
13. No Burning
14. Springs from the Heart
15. Multiple Characters Multiple Suffering
16. Save Time by Investing in Time
17. Hatred, Love & Mettā
18. Acquiring a Mind like Pure Gold
19. Seeing the Nature of the World
20. Living Inside a World of Stories
21. The Beauty of the Silent Mind
22. The Happiness of Letting Go
23. The Path of Coming Alive
24. Acquiring the Light of Insight
25. Working with Emotions
26. Craving, The Deceiver
27. Trust is the Door
28. Myth of Security
29. Conversations with Godwin

30. Noble Meeting
31. Mind – Never Mind
32. Multiplying Thoughts & Cultivating Mindfulness
33. Inner Shower
34. Out of the Circle
35. Are you Yourself?
36. Empty Eyes