

The Advantages of Having Dhamma

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In the late 80s and early 90s, until his health deteriorated too much, Ajahn Buddhādāsa gave regular lectures during the monthly international retreats held at Suan Mokkh and then Suan Mokkh International Dharma Hermitage. Usually, Ajahn spoke in Thai and Santikaro Bhikkhu interpreted into English live. Audio recordings are now available from www.suanmokkh.org and www.bia.or.th. The following is a transcription generously made by a Dhamma volunteer. If you noticed possible improvements to the text and would like to contribute, please kindly contact the Buddhādāsa Indapañño Archives in Bangkok (suanmokkhbkk@gmail.com).

On the first day of this session, of this retreat, I'd like to speak to you about something that we call 'tham' [Thai] or 'Dhamma,' to speak about it in different aspects and from different points of view because I think that this is something that you don't understand very well.

We should begin with the question of – in coming to this retreat, in coming to this period of training what ought you to receive, what are you going to receive? The answer to that question is – Dhamma. When we speak like this, you will probably be a bit confused since you don't know what we're talking about when we use this word 'Dhamma.' So before we go any further, we're going to have to talk about the meaning of this word, 'Dhamma.' And in doing so, if we can help you to understand what Dhamma is, then you will receive Dhamma through that understanding and that ought to justify your coming here.

Some people, when they hear us talking about 'Thamma' or 'Dhamma,' they make a distinction between Dhamma and meditation. They separate Dhamma and meditation into two different things and think that these two things have nothing to do with each other. Let's get things straight from the beginning so that you have the correct understanding that Dhamma and meditation are the same thing. Meditation practice is a way of helping us to have Dhamma, to receive Dhamma. So in no way can we separate Dhamma and meditation practice into two distinct things. They are one and the same thing. Please understand this.

Another question is – at what point or at what time is our ‘humanity’ full, complete, and perfect? What does it take to be perfectly, completely ‘human?’ The answer to this question is – when we receive Dhamma, when we have Dhamma, then we are complete, full, perfect ‘human beings.’ We also need to understand what the meaning of ‘humanity,’ or what the meaning of being a ‘human being’ is. For many of us, we confuse these two things, we confuse two things into one category because we haven’t really looked at, considered, and examined what it means to be a ‘human being.’ We often think that there is no difference between being a *sentient* being and being a *human* being. When we don’t understand the distinction between the two, then it is very very difficult to be a human being. So we need to examine this and understand the difference between being a sentient being and a human being. When we realize the difference between sentient being and human being, then it will be quite easy to see that Dhamma is the thing that makes the difference, that will help a sentient being to become a human being.

When we use these words, ‘sentient being’ and ‘human being’ – which is not my native language – it may be a little bit unclear for you because in the Thai language we use two words, *khon* for ‘sentient being’ and *manut* for ‘human being.’ And in these two words, there is a very clear and distinct difference but this may not be conveyed by the English words, ‘sentient being and human being.’ Therefore we will try to help you to see this difference.

We are born as sentient beings and, through realizing and understanding Dhamma, we become human beings. We are not exactly sure what you understand the word ‘human being’ to mean, so the point we’re trying to make right now may not yet be completely clear. We know what this Thai word means – the Thai word *manut*. And as far as we can tell, in English, the closest equivalent is ‘human being.’ But we are not exactly sure what that word ‘human being’ means. So let us talk about the Thai word *manut*. The word *manut* comes from a Pāli [Sanskrit] word, *manuṣya* and this word means having a mind, having a high mind or consciousness on a high level. When we use the word *khon* or ‘sentient being’ we’re talking about a mind on ordinary levels, on common levels of consciousness. Sometimes it’s not the most common level of the instinct but when we talk about *khon* (sentient beings), we’re talking about ordinary states of mind. But when we talk about *manut* (human beings; human being), then we’re talking about high levels of mind or consciousness. So if the word ‘human being’ (*manut*) means being on a, living with a high state of mind, we need to talk about what we mean by the word ‘high.’ By ‘high,’ we mean ‘on top of’ or ‘above.’ This means the mind that is above problems, above the

pain, the suffering, the conflict, the dissatisfaction of ordinary life or of common life. When the mind is on a common level, it is caught up in all the problems, pain, suffering, conflict, and all those kinds of things of common life. So to be a 'human being' we mean to have a mind that is above all that conflict, and pain, and all those problems.

So you need to consider the difference between the commonness of being a sentient being and the higher level of a human being. You need to consider and examine this difference until you see the importance of being a human being, until you're willing to really work and do what it takes to be a human being. This involves looking at sentient beings and seeing that this level of mind, these low states of mind are constantly mixed up and intertwined with what we call *dukkha*. When the mind is on a low level, it's always being disturbed, agitated, bothered by *dukkha*. *Dukkha* is something that prevents the mind from ever being truly calm, peaceful, and clear. So when the mind is on common levels, it's always forced to struggle and fight with this problem of *dukkha*. And in this way, there can be no peace for the ordinary sentient being. But for the human being with the mind that is on a high level, it is above this problem of *dukkha*, above the strike, the agitation, and pain. This kind of mind no longer has to struggle. It's no longer forced to fight with this problem of *dukkha*. It is free and above those problems and, in this way, it finds peace. We need to see this difference in order to understand what this life is about.

It seems that there's a common problem which we need to address, and this is that many of you don't know what *dukkha* is. You don't know what *dukkha* is. In fact, we hear that there are many people who think or claim that they have no *dukkha*. Let's explain this a bit in order to be very clear on this important point. *Dukkha* is a word that is very very difficult to translate into English. So we're not going to translate it but we'll try to explain it a bit. *Dukkha*, we can say, is that which is hard to endure, difficult to stand, to bear, to put up with. *Dukkha* is whatever the very many things that happen through life that are difficult to live with. Sometimes so strong that they are unbearable. Sometimes weaker that we would say they are annoying or disturbing. They are the various things that are difficult to live with, to endure, to bear. So we struggle with them. We have to solve them in one way or another to become free of these things we call *dukkha*.

Many people have a very shallow understanding of *dukkha*. They only think in materialistic, physical kinds of *dukkha* such as a stomachache or sore knees or backache. They can only think of physical pains and aches as *dukkha*. But this *dukkha* that is so difficult to endure also affects the mind. It's not just

something that happens to the body. When we see *dukkha* is something that affects the mind, that involves the mind, then we can also talk about *dukkha* is that which is... (and I have trouble translating this Thai word [??] correctly but we can say) – *dukkha* is what is disgusting or ugly, hateful, loathsome. *Dukkha* is this thing that is happening in life, that revolts us, that disgusts us – very ugly and hateful. So we need to understand this thing, *dukkha*, and look at our lives and see if there is any *dukkha*. Is there anything in life that is difficult to endure? Is there anything that is hateful, ugly? Because if in your life you find no *dukkha*, if your life is free of *dukkha*, then you don't need to study the Dhamma. The Dhamma is what helps us to deal with *dukkha*. If you have no *dukkha*, it's a waste of your time to study the Dhamma. So take a look and identify any *dukkha* that may exist in your life.

We'd like to examine this in finer, more subtle detail in order to make sure that you understand what we mean by *dukkha*. This may be more than is necessary for some of you but we need to make this distinction in order that you truly understand. In happiness, in the pleasant situations where we're getting the things we want and we're indulging in some pleasure – this thing we call 'happiness' which we attach so much value to – in that happiness, there is *dukkha*. Can you see this point? Can you see that in happiness there is *dukkha*? In that enjoyment, in that indulgence and pleasantness, can you see that there is the problem of having to preserve that happiness? All mixed up with what we think is that great pleasure is also the necessity to struggle and fight in order to preserve that happiness, to hang on to it. This is to show that even in happiness which we attach so much importance to, that there is *dukkha*, that there's always this problem of *dukkha* even in something like happiness – if not actual physical pain then the characteristics of *dukkha*. So we want you to see this point. Many people don't, can't realize this. This is too difficult for many people to understand, but to have a full understanding of *dukkha* it is necessary to see that there is *dukkha* in happiness.

In Buddhism and in the teachings of the Buddha, you will not find much talk of 'happiness.' When the Buddha is speaking in the language of ultimate reality – in what we call the 'Dhamma language' – when he has left aside the common conventional terminology that most people use, and when he's speaking about ultimate truth, then the Buddha doesn't talk about happiness. The Buddha's speaking about the way things really are. He only speaks about *dukkha*, and the end of *dukkha* or the extinction of *dukkha*. In these cases he doesn't talk about happiness because happiness always has *dukkha* within it. There is no such real thing as happiness when we understand things on a deep

level. So the Buddha doesn't talk about it. In the West, there were the hippies who were looking for various kinds of happiness. They could never find it because for them happiness would just always be the opposite of the things they disliked. They're always looking for kinds of happinesses which were based on judgments and based on distinctions regarding what they didn't like. This kind of happiness is something that always must be struggled for. If we get a little bit of it, we have to be very careful to protect it, preserve it, care for it. So all these kinds of happiness are *dukkha*. So we don't really need to talk about happiness. We really talk about the way things work. We talk about *dukkha* and the extinction of *dukkha*.

Now we have to admit that if you read through the Buddhist scriptures, you'll see that the Buddha did talk about happiness at times. But when he was doing so, he wasn't really speaking in terms of ultimate truth. When the Buddha spoke of happiness, he was speaking on a common ordinary everyday level that common ordinary minds could understand. Most people don't have enough insight into themselves or life to understand what *dukkha* means. For these people we have to talk about happiness. So there is talk of happiness in Buddhism when the Buddha was talking to people who didn't really understand the importance of *dukkha*. So he would speak about happiness, saying things like "Nibbāna [or Nirvana] is the supreme happiness." This was just a little bit of propaganda to help people who didn't really have profound understanding to be interested in the teachings, to get them started so that they could move on to more important and more fundamental truth. So all the talks of happiness are just careless, to get people started into the practice. But once we begin to practice or we begin truly to meditate and use Dhamma in our lives; then we no longer have to speak in terms of happiness. Instead we speak about *dukkha* and the end of *dukkha* or void, the voidness of *dukkha*. So the practice of Dhamma is not for happiness. The goal of this practice is to be void of *dukkha*, to be free of *dukkha*. This is what this practice is about. If you begin to understand Dhamma and are practicing correctly; then the result of the practice will be the end of *dukkha*. For those of you who understand the way things work, understand yourselves and life, then this will be sufficient. All these talks about happiness will no longer interest you. This is why Buddhism and the Dhamma is about *dukkha* and void of *dukkha*, freedom from *dukkha*.

In order to summarize what we've said so far, let me point out that for most people, for common ordinary people, you ask them what they want. They say they want happiness. This is for people who are still thinking in ordinary common ways. They don't have much understanding of Dhamma. But for those

of us who are beginning to see Dhamma and understand it, and when we speak in the language of Dhamma instead of in ordinary everyday mixed up ways; then we no longer speak about happiness. When there's understanding of Dhamma and we use the language appropriate to that understanding, then we talk about being void of *dukkha*. So people who understand Dhamma do not say, 'I want to be happy.' They say, 'I want the state that is void of *dukkha*; I want to be free of *dukkha*.' This is the goal of people who understand Dhamma. They're no longer interested in being happy. That is no longer their goal. We wanted to summarize this clearly for you – the difference between the wants and desires of common people, and the goal of those who understand Dhamma. We wanted to point this out to you, that you will have the correct goal coming to Suan Mokkh and this retreat and practicing meditation – to be free, to be void of *dukkha*.

So now let's talk about mental training or mental development, which we often use the word 'meditation' for. The goal and the reason for meditating, for practicing mental training and mental development is to have a mind that is void of *dukkha*, for the freedom of *dukkha*. This is the reason for meditating. To practice mental development in order to be happy is to immediately be stupid. This is very foolish to have the goal of happiness because as soon as you have this goal of happiness, then you would indulge in it, you get wrapped up in it, and you struggle and fight in order to be happy. So you no longer have a meditation practice. You just have a struggle in order to be happy; and there is no peace and calm and clarity in that struggling to be happy. So it's much wiser in one's meditation, in one's practice of mental development, to have the aim of being free of *dukkha*. We no longer wish to be happy. We simply wish to be free of *dukkha*. And in this way the mental development can continue calmly and peacefully, not as a struggle, but as a development of a peaceful clear wise mind. In this way, with this simple wish – the wish to be void of *dukkha* – the mind can raise above its problems. To want to be happy is just to stay wrapped up in all the problems of common worldly life. But to have the wish to be free of *dukkha* gives us the possibility of raising the mind above all those problems, struggles, and turmoils. And that mind is the human mind, the truly human mind that is above, that is high above all problems.

We want you to see how Dhamma and the goal of Dhamma – which is to be free of *dukkha* – we want you to see how this is related to meditation practice, to mental development, so that you have the wise wish in your meditation practice – to be free of *dukkha* – so you don't confuse yourselves with foolish indulgence, and searching and struggling for mere happiness.

There's one more word that you would do very well to understand. This word is *sa-ngop* [Thai] which I will translate 'calmness, tranquility.' The Pāli word is *santi* and there's a very similar Sanskrit word, *shanti*. This word can also be translated 'peace.' Peace, calm, tranquility, quiet, that's what we're talking about – *santi*. You need to understand the proper meaning of this. So all of these words I have used so far don't quite convey the proper meaning. So you need to get beyond these words to know what we mean when we use the Pāli word, *santi*. We can put it in a context using some other Pāli words: *nirodha* which means 'cessation' or 'distinction, ending'; and *Nibbāna* which means coolness. We can use *passaddhi* which means tranquility. When we talk about *santi* (calmness, peace, tranquility), understand it in the sense that is 'cool,' also 'cool,' and is a cessation and an extinction. Try to understand this word, *santi*. *Santi* is neither happy nor *dukkha*. In *dukkha* or in happiness, there's always some agitation. In fact the more satisfied we are with happiness, the more agitated we get, the more we attach to it. The more we indulge in happiness, the less and less it is *santi*. So *santi* is neither happiness nor *dukkha*. *Santi* is when there is freedom from *dukkha*. So it's neither of these extremes, happiness or *dukkha*. *Santi* is neither positive nor negative. It's not pessimistic or optimistic. It's a kind of calmness and peace that is free of all these dualities, all these things that disturb and agitate the mind. Try to understand what we mean by *santi*. Explore what this is; then you'll understand what meditation practice is about.

[In] the world today, most of us are all wrapped up in positiveness. We are addicted to the heroin of positiveness. Whatever is positive, we're all going around positiveness, trying to be positive, looking for positive things, running away from the negative, criticizing people who are negative. We're addicted to the heroin of the positive. But this addiction is not peaceful; it's not calm; it's not *santi*. It disturbs the mind just as much as *dukkha* does. Because in this addiction to positiveness, there is still the struggle and the problems; how to get it, preserve it, maintain it. So this obsession with the positive is not the answer. We need to go beyond what is positive, to what is peaceful. Positive & negative are not peaceful. True peace and calm is beyond and above the positive. It's beyond and free from the distinctions of pessimism & optimism, of these ways of judging things that we all have. So when in this practice we're working for *santi*, which is above happiness, beyond the positive; and it's really free, really liberated; and in that it's calm and peace.

We'll summarize this in a very short way that will be easy for you to remember. The heroin of positiveness is much stronger, fiercer, and more

dangerous than the drug heroin, which is such a problem in the world today. The heroin of positiveness is fiercer and more dangerous, causing more problems than the drug heroin. If you understand this, it will help you very very much in your practice of Dhamma, and it will help you in your meditation. We can compare this to make it a little bit easier to understand. When we're addicted to heroin, to the drug, it is very very difficult to give up that addiction. This is something well-known to us all. We either know people who'd been addicted to heroin, or we've been bothered by information about it for the last fifteen-twenty years. No matter how difficult it is to give up this physical addiction or the addiction to a physical drug (the heroin); it is even more difficult, far more difficult, to give up our addiction to the heroin of positiveness. This attachment we have to positive things, pleasant things, this attachment is much more stronger and deep rooted than any addiction to heroin or other drugs. What we have to do in our practice, what we have to work on? Giving up this very powerful addiction we have, positive things, the hardest thing there is to do, most difficult thing there is to do. This is the only way there is to peace, to *santi*, calmness. To put it in short and direct terms – the hippies movement was completely unsuccessful in getting what they were after, in finding what they were looking for because they didn't know the meaning of calmness, of peace. The hippies were unsuccessful in achieving their goal because they didn't understand the meaning of peace, of calmness.

So we're talking about this thing and we're having trouble finding an English word for it. So you can find that word on your own or find it in Japanese, Hebrew, German, whatever your native language is. We're talking about, in Thai, *sa-ngob*, or *santi* in Pāli, *shanti* in Sanskrit. Maybe we can call it, in English, 'spiritual tranquility.' It has a deeper meaning than 'peace.' The word 'peace and calmness,' for many people is not at all peaceful, not at all calm. Get beyond the common understanding of these words. Find the word that truly describes what we're talking about and then use that word very skillfully. Hold on to it and use it so that you have a standard within your practice. So you have a guide in your practice. So spiritual tranquility or something like that, whatever describes it for you; you must find it and use it in order to become a 'human being,' a human being that is above and free of both *dukkha* and happiness.

So the reason that we practice meditation, the reason we practice mental development or *vipassanā* (insight practice) is in order to understand the meaning of *santi*, of spiritual tranquility, of calmness, of spiritual peace. Meditation is to understand this. Once we begin to understand it through

meditation, we realize that we're unable to bring the mind to a state of spiritual tranquility. The mind is just unable to do it. Then we use meditation to train the mind so that the mind is able to enter into and maintain itself in spiritual tranquility. So this is what meditation practice is about. Many of you have heard the word *vipassanā*. This is what *vipassanā* is for. *Vipassanā* is to understand the truth of spiritual calmness and peace, and then to train and develop the mind so that it can dwell in *santi*. This is what the meditation practice is for. Another word related to this subject that we'd like you to understand is *samathi-pawana* [Thai] or you heard it pronounced yesterday, *samādhi-bhāvanā* (one is a western pronunciation, one a Thai pronunciation). *Samādhi-bhāvanā*, *bhāvanā* means 'development.' This was explained yesterday. *Samādhi* is 'concentration.' So *samādhi-bhāvanā* is development of the mind through concentration, development of the mind using concentration – this is *samādhi-bhāvanā*. You have to understand this properly. *Samādhi* is the tool, is the method, is a means of developing the mind. It's not the goal. It's the means. Through the concentration practice, the development of concentration, the mind is developed. So *samādhi-bhāvanā* is very crucial and necessary in what we call *vipassanā* (insight) as we've just talked about. *Samādhi* provides a strength, and power, and force for the mind to develop itself. So this is a very necessary tool in the meditation practice. Please remember the words *samādhi-bhāvanā* and grow in your understanding of them.

Nowadays we use many different words for what we're talking about. Not only we use English translation but people are using all kinds of different Pāli words. But if we go back to the original scriptures to see what words the Buddha used. He only used the word *samādhi-bhāvanā* – development of the mind through the power of concentration. This is what the Buddha used but nowadays there are different teachers with their meditation centers and places using many different words such as *vipassanā*. The Buddha didn't use this word in that way, [n]or *kammaṭṭhāna* ('to make *kammaṭhan*' [Thai]). It's a way often talked about in Thailand. This isn't the way the Buddha spoke. If we want to go back to the true original meaning and understanding, then we might as well use the most correct word. Other people and other places want to use other words, that's okay. And we can listen to what they're talking about and make sense of it. But to go back to the original teaching, use the original word which was perfectly clear and fine in the first place is what we prefer to do. So we talk about *samādhi-bhāvanā* – development of the mind through the power of concentration. This is the most appropriate way to describe what we're talking about. We talk about *samādhi-bhāvanā*, it includes *vipassanā*. Development of the mind through the power of concentration has within it, insight, the

development of insight. It also includes, what we sometimes hear, *samatha* and *samādhi* – tranquility meditation or calmness practices. These are all included within the words *samādhi-bhāvanā*. So it's best to go back to the original words, understand their meaning, and use them properly because it includes all these other words that have been used in different places.

So *samādhi-bhāvanā* is a practice that through which the mind can be developed and liberated from dukkha. So we only have to use these two simple words *samādhi-bhāvanā*. And if we use them we'll see the importance of developing what we call *samādhi*. Without *samādhi* the mind has no strength, clarity, and calm, with which to really understand anything. So when we use the words *samādhi-bhāvanā*, then we can never forget the importance of *samādhi*. So the practice we do here of *ānāpānasati* (mindfulness of breathing) develops the necessary *samādhi*. So we call it *samādhi-bhāvanā* and we use the technique, the technique of mindfulness of breathing, in order to develop the *samādhi* that is absolutely necessary for mental development. Different places, different teachers can use whatever words they find appropriate. But when you come to Suan Mokkh we're going to ask you, 'why did you come here? Why are you here? What do you want?' The most appropriate answer to that question, and you can see if it's your answer, is to train in *samādhi-bhāvanā*, to practice and train in *samādhi-bhāvanā*. This is the most appropriate for coming to Suan Mokkh. In fact no matter what center or monastery you go to, in whatever part of Thailand, whatever country in Asia, Europe, or the world, wherever place you go, the most appropriate reason, the best reason for being there is to train and practice in *samādhi-bhāvanā*. So we use the words *samādhi-bhāvanā* just as the Buddha used. We use the same terms that appear in the original scriptures. So if we're going to use the term *samādhi-bhāvanā* we need to understand it.

So now we'll talk in some detail about *samādhi*. Thai pronunciation is *sa-ma-thi* and often you hear foreigners pronounce *sa-ma-dhi*. It's the same word. *Samādhi* is something that all of us have. It's a skill or ability of the mind of all sentient beings. All animals and creatures have the instinct of *samādhi*. *Samādhi* is an instinctual ability that is used throughout nature by all living creatures. In the practice of mindfulness of breathing, or in *samādhi-bhāvanā* in general, this natural instinctual *samādhi* is developed to much higher levels that it becomes a truly powerful tool to be used.

Instinctual *samādhi*, instinctual concentration, is present in all of us from birth. This is why we call it 'instinct.' It arises by itself, without having to be agitated or trained. *Samādhi* is present in all animals including *Homo sapiens*.

We can see this in many different examples. In the ability of a bird to fly, that takes concentration on the bird's part. The ability of a cat to catch a mouse takes concentration; or for children to play games, to toss stones or shoot rubber bands, this takes samādhi; or when we eat to get the spoon in our mouth instead of up our nose takes samādhi. Whatever kind of work we do takes samādhi. But all these worldly kinds of activity, we are perfectly able to do with instinctual samādhi. For most of the things we need to do for physical survival, we can do it using instinctual samādhi. But here we come to develop and train samādhi so that it is far stronger, more skillful and powerful than the instinctual level. We use various techniques especially mindfulness of breathing to do so. And as samādhi is developed and strengthened, it brings many many benefits, both spiritual and worldly. Whatever our work is, say, we are a typist and we have to type. With stronger samādhi we're much more skillful typists. Or whatever sports we like to play, we can play badminton or kick a football or swim or windsurf, whatever it is, more skillfulness when there is samādhi. Whatever our work is, whatever activities we do, whether for physical survival or play, these are done more skillfully with fewer errors through the strength and power of samādhi. But this isn't why we're practicing meditation. We continue to develop it in order to use it to do our spiritual work which is to see and realize Dhamma. So we take this original instinctual samādhi that is present in all of us, and we develop it, we train it. It brings great many benefits in our worldly lives; but primarily it reaps the most lasting and most important benefits in our spiritual lives, in the understanding of Dhamma.

So what we've said so far should make it obvious to each of you how important and valuable a tool samādhi is. So we'll be developing it here and you'll understand the importance of what we're doing, and you'll understand the reasons why we are doing these practices. As you engage in them, as you do them, as samādhi develops, then it will bring the benefits that we have been talking about. You'll understand the instinctual kind of samādhi. You'll be able to use samādhi to benefit you in your worldly duties and tasks; and then you will see the results and benefits it will bring in spiritual life.

So we're going to summarize this in a very clear way that will be easy for you to remember and use. It applies to both instinctual samādhi, samādhi that is applied to worldly duties and work, and then samādhi in our spiritual practice. These three kinds of the samādhi can be explained in the same way. Samādhi is the intention of the mind that is aiming at a final goal. It's the gathering of the mind and aiming it at one final goal. This state of being, this condition is called *samādhi*. Samādhi is the state or condition where the mind has the intention and

objective to drive forward after one single goal, after the final goal. So the definition of the state or condition of being that aims at a final goal, this definition of *samādhi* is appropriate for all levels and kinds of *samādhi*. When a bird is flying, it has the instinctual kind of *samādhi* where it's aiming at flying somewhere. When a person works in a worldly task, they have a *samādhi* as the result for which they are working, whether it's a farmer planting for the harvest or a bureaucrat filling out forms for his monthly paycheck. And then in spiritual practice, there is *samādhi* towards the final goal – the goal of *santi*, of spiritual tranquility, spiritual calm and peace. So whatever the kind of activity, for it to be any success, there must be *samādhi*. The stronger and more complete the *samādhi*, the better the odds of success.

When we talk about the third kind of *samādhi* – *samādhi* that has spiritual tranquility as its goal – we can use the highest and most complete definition of *samādhi* which the Buddha used. The Buddha said that “*Samādhi* is [the one-pointed mind,] the one-pointed mind that has Nibbāna as its object.” *Samādhi* is when the mind has only one thing in sight. The mind is completely focused on only one thing, and that thing, that object of the mind's focus is Nibbāna. Nibbāna is the final goal, the coolness, the extinction of all *dukkha*. It's complete freedom and liberation. So through spiritual *samādhi* is when the one-pointed mind takes Nibbāna as its goal. The mind sees only one thing and that thing is Nibbāna. It's all the mind is interested in. This is the highest most powerful kind of *samādhi*. So this definition which we use is the most complete and perfect definition of *samādhi* – the one-pointedness of mind which has Nibbāna as its final goal, one-pointedness of mind that has Nibbāna as its final goal. This can cover all different instances of *samādhi*. Even when we begin our meditation practice in the very very early stages, we're just sitting very quietly under the mindfulness of breathing; this is *samādhi*. The mind is just becoming one-pointed of the breathing. And in doing so there is calmness and peace. So even in this, even in this short-term goal of being mindful of the breath – of the long breathing and the short breathing and of calming the mind in this way – even in this shorter goal, there is movement for the final goal of Nibbāna.

So throughout the meditation practice, with this smaller, earlier levels of *samādhi*, and then through the developing strengthening levels of *samādhi*, there is always Nibbāna as the goal. *Samādhi* that is developing should always be aimed at Nibbāna. The one-pointedness of mind must always be aiming towards Nibbāna if there's to be spiritual development. This includes all the worldly tasks in our lives as well. If we do those tasks with the mind that has one-pointedness, if that mind uses that one-pointedness to move towards that goal,

and the goals of all these different activities are directed towards the final goal of Nibbāna, that's samādhi. The mind, the one-pointedness of mind that has Nibbāna as its goal is something used in all the activities of life, especially the meditation practice. But in all the activities – whether it's washing our teeth, carrying water, going into the toilet, or going to sleep at night – we understand this and there will definitely be movement and progress towards our final goal of *santi*, of spiritual tranquility. So please understand this definition of *samādhi*. Remember that we are practicing *samādhi-bhāvanā*. Remember this and use it in each moment of your meditation practice.

There only remains for us to explain the three characteristics of samādhi. Excuse me, there are three characteristics of the mind that has samādhi or the mind that *is* samādhi. You will do very well to remember these three characteristics. First characteristic is purity, the mind that has samādhi has the characteristic of purity. Second characteristic is stability or stableness. And the third characteristic is activeness. Please remember these three words. The three characteristics of a mind that has samādhi are purity, stability, and activeness. Please remember them.

So you can think about what use, what benefits this sort of mind would have. You can think about how a mind that has samādhi, a mind with the characteristics of purity, stability, and activeness, you can see what use this would be in all the activities of your life, whether they are worldly tasks or spiritual duties. See what benefits this kind of mind would be. How much more useful a mind is when it has the characteristics of purity, stability, and activeness than a mind that lacks them. A mind lacking in purity, stability, and activeness is not very capable of doing things well. This we can begin to see the value of a mind that has samādhi, that has these three characteristics, especially in spiritual practice, especially in practice of Dhamma, of the realization, understanding, and application of truth through the nature, the way things work. In doing so, in using samādhi in this way, using the mind that has samādhi in this way, then there is true spiritual development. This is why we're using the term *samādhi-bhāvanā* – the development of the mind through the means of samādhi, through the power of samādhi. Through this development, there is true progress for the final goal. This is the way towards being fully 'human.' Being 'human' means a being on a high level of consciousness. So through samādhi this can be developed and reached, reaching the state of mind that is above all problems, that is void of dukkha. This is the importance and benefit of samādhi. Please remember through the rest of your life the meaning of *samādhi-bhāvanā* and use it.

So *samādhi-bhāvanā* is what we've been talking about. What it means, what use it has, what its benefits are. We've been talking about this so that you will clearly understand what you are here for. So you'll understand what this is about. *Samādhi-bhāvanā* is development of the mind using *samādhi* as the means, development of the mind using the power of *samādhi*. So we are training the mind to be on a high level, to be above problems and *dukkha*, to be truly and fully human. This is what *samādhi-bhāvanā* is about. If you've been listening carefully and if you've been understanding what has been said, then you will surely be interested in practicing *samādhi-bhāvanā*. You'll definitely want to train the mind in this way in order to live a life that isn't lost in daydreams and nightmares, and blindly wandering through the world without direction. With *samādhi-bhāvanā*, there is the goal of spiritual tranquility, of spiritual peace. There is the ability to train the mind in this way, to raise it to higher levels until the level of true and complete spiritual tranquility is reached. When there is this perfection of humanity, then the mind continues in this way up until death. So there is *samādhi-bhāvanā* up until the realization of spiritual tranquility, and then the mind dwells and abides in spiritual tranquility up until death.

If you've been listening and understanding, then you'll know what you are here for. This will all make sense. There will be something, there will be a goal with which you will be most content. So we've tried to explain what *samādhi* is, what *samādhi-bhāvanā* is, and to show its importance and its relevance to you in your lives, in your daily lives, both here at Suan Mokkh and wherever you will be going after Suan Mokkh. We've tried to do this. Now it's up to you to use it, to make the understanding [??] appear in your minds.

So we wish you success in your goals. We hope that you achieve what you want to achieve here at Suan Mokkh and in life. We wish you success and at this point we close today's meeting.

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Transcribed by Pranee in Aug.-Sep. 2016

Audio file: 860999 (1) BDB_The Advantages of Dhamma [translation].mp3

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