



Newsletter

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everything that is done in the world: all the connections, ideas, hopes and memories, all the rejections and resistances, all our reactions.

In meditation there are may be momentary glimpses of seeing that concentration is feasible, but it can't be sustained. It constantly slips again and the mind goes right back to where it came from. In order to counteract that, one has to have determination to make one's life a meditative one; it doesn't mean one has to meditate from morning to night. I don't know anyone who does. And it doesn't mean we cannot fulfill our duties and obligations, because they are necessary and primary as long as we have them. But it means that we watch ourselves carefully in all our actions and reactions to make sure that everything happens in the light of the Dhamma -- the truth.

This applies to the smallest detail such as our food, what we listen to or talk about. Only then can the mind be ready with a meditative quality when we sit down on the pillow. It means that no matter where we find ourselves, we remain introspective. That doesn't mean we can't talk to others, but we watch the content of the discussion.

That is not easy to do and the mind often slips off. But we can become aware of the slip. If we aren't even aware that we have digressed from mindfulness and inner watchfulness, we aren't on the meditative path yet. If our mind has the Dhamma quality established within, then meditation has a good chance.

The more we know of the Dhamma, the more we can watch whether we comply with its guidelines. There is no blame attached to our inability to do so. But the least we can do is to know the guidelines and know where we're making mistakes. Then we

The Meditative Mind

by Ayya Khema

People are often surprised to find it is difficult to meditate. Outwardly it seems to be such a simple matter, to just sit down on a little pillow and watch one's breath. What could be hard about that? The difficulty lies in the fact that one's whole being is totally unprepared. Our mind, senses, and feelings are used to trade in the market place, namely the world we live in. But meditation cannot be done in a market place. That's impossible. There's nothing to buy or trade or arrange in meditation, but most people's attitude remains the same as usual and that just doesn't work.

We need patience with ourselves. It takes time to change to the point where meditation is actually a state of mind, available at any time because the market place is no longer important. The market place doesn't just mean going shopping. It means

practice to get nearer and nearer to absolute reality, until one day we will actually *be* the Dhamma.

There is this difference between one who know and one who practices. The one who knows may understand the words and concepts but the one who practices knows only one thing, namely, to become that truth. Words are an utilitarian means not only for communication, but also to solidify ideas. That's why words can never reveal the truth, only personal experience can. We attain our experiences through realizing what's happening within and why it is as it is. This means that we combine watchfulness with inquiry as to why we're thinking, saying and reacting the way we do. Unless we use our mind in this way, meditation will be an on-again, off-again affair and will remain difficult. When meditation doesn't bring joy, most people are quite happy to forget about it.

Without the meditative mind and experience, the Dhamma cannot arise in the heart, because the Dhamma is not in words. The Buddha was able to verbalize his inner experience for our benefit, to give us a guideline. That means we can find a direction, but we have to do the traveling ourselves.

To have a meditative mind, we need to develop some important inner qualities. We already have the seeds within us, otherwise we couldn't cultivate them. If we want flowers in our garden and there are no seeds, we can water and fertilize, yet nothing will grow. The watering and fertilizing

of the mind is done in meditation. Weeding has to be done in daily living. Weeds always seem to grow better in any garden than the flowers do. It takes a lot of strength to uproot those weeds, but it is not so difficult to cut them down. As they get cut down again and again, they eventually become feeble and their uprooting is made easy. Cutting down and uprooting the weeds needs sufficient introspection into ourselves to know what is a weed and what is a flower. We have to be very sure, because we don't want to pull out all the flowers and leave all the weeds. A garden with many weeds isn't much of an ornament.

We're born with the three roots of evil: greed, hate and delusion, and the three roots of good: generosity, loving-kindness and wisdom.

People's hearts and minds usually contain equal amounts of flowers and weeds. We're born with the three roots of evil: greed, hate and delusion, and the three roots of good: generosity, loving-kindness and wisdom. Doesn't it make sense to try and get rid of those three roots that are the generators of all problems, all our unpleasant experiences and reactions?

If we want to eliminate those three roots, we have to look at their outcrops. They're the roots underneath the surface, but obviously a root sprouts and shows itself above the surface. We can see that within ourselves. Caused by delusion, we manifest

greed and hate. There are different facets of greed and hate, and the simplest and most common one is "I like," "I want," "I don't like," and "I don't want". Most people think such reactions are perfectly justified, and yet that is greed and hate. Our roots have sprouted in so many different ways that we have all sorts of weeds growing. If we look at a garden we will find possibly thirty or forty different types of weeds. We might have that many or more unwholesome thoughts and emotions. They have different appearances and power but they're all coming from the same roots. As we can't get at the roots yet, we have to deal with what is above the surface. When we cultivate the good roots, they become so mighty and strong that the weeds do not find enough nourishment any more. As long as we allow room for the weeds in our garden, we take the nutriment away from the beautiful plants, instead of cultivating those more and more. This takes place as a development in daily living, which then makes it possible to meditate as a natural outcome of our state of mind.

At this point in time we are trying to change our mind from an ordinary one to a meditative one, which is difficult if one hasn't practiced very much yet. We only have one mind and carry that around with us to every activity and also to the meditation. If we have an inkling that meditation can bring us peace and happiness, then we need to make sure we have a meditative mind already when we sit down. To change it from busy-ness to quiet at that moment is too difficult.

The state of mind, which we need to develop for meditation, is well described by the Buddha. Two aspects of importance are mindfulness and the calming of the senses. Internal mindfulness may sometimes be exchanged for external mindfulness because under some circumstances that is an essential part of practice. The world impinges upon us, which we cannot deny.

External mindfulness also means to see a tree, for instance, in a completely new way. Not with the usual thoughts of "that's pretty," or "I like this one in my garden," but rather noticing that there are live and dead leaves, that there are growing plants, mature ones and dying ones. We can witness the growth, birth and decay all around us. We can understand craving very clearly by watching ants, mosquitoes, or dogs. We need not look at them as a nuisance, but as teachers. Ants, mosquitoes and barking dogs are the kind of teachers who don't leave us alone until the lessons are fully learned. When we see all in the light of birth, decay, death, greed, hate and delusion, we are looking in a mirror of all life around us, then we have Dhamma on show. All of us are proclaiming the truth of Dhamma constantly, only we don't pay enough attention.

We can use mindfulness to observe that everything in existence consists of the four elements, earth, fire, water, air; and then check out what is the difference between ourselves and all else. When we take practice seriously and look at all life in such a way, then we find the truth

all around as well as within us. Nothing else exists.

This gives us the ability to leave the marketplace behind where the mind flits from one thing to the next, never has a moment's peace, is either dull and indifferent or hateful and greedy. But when we look at that which really is, we're drawing nearer to what the Buddha taught, out of his compassion for all the beings that are roaming around in *samsara* from one *dukkha* to the next. He taught, so that people like us may awaken to the truth.

When we see all in the light of birth, decay, death, greed, hate and delusion, we are looking in a mirror of all life around us.

We should neither believe nor disbelieve what we hear or read, but try it out ourselves. If we give our wholehearted attention to this practice, we will find that it changes our approach to living and dying. To be whole-hearted is a necessity in anything we do. If we get married and are half-hearted about it, it cannot be very successful. Half-hearted practice of Dhamma results in chaotic misunderstanding. Whole-heartedness may have at its core devotion, and a mind that goes beyond everyday thoughts and activities.

Another facet, which goes together with mindfulness, is clear comprehension. Mindfulness is knowing only, without any discriminating faculty. Mindfulness does not evaluate or judge but pays full

attention. Clear comprehension has four aspects to it. First: "What is my purpose in thinking, talking or doing?" Thought, speech and action are our three doors. Second "Am I using the most skilful means for my purpose?" That needs wisdom and discrimination. Third: "Are these means within the Dhamma?" Knowing the distinction between wholesome and unwholesome. The thought process needs our primary attention, because speech and action will follow from it. Sometimes people think that the end justifies the means. It doesn't. Both means and end have to be within the Dhamma. The fourth step is to check whether our purpose has been accomplished, and if not, why not.

If we live with these steps in mind, we will slow down, which is helpful for our reactions. No inactivity, that is not the answer, but the meditative quality of the mind, which watches over what we are doing. When we use mindfulness and clear comprehension, we have to give time to investigate. Checking prevents mistakes.

Our wrong thinking creates the danger of making bad kamma and takes us away from the truth into nebulous mind-states. The Dhamma is straightforward, simple and pure. It needs a pure mind to stay with it. Otherwise we find ourselves outside of it again and again.

External mindfulness can also extend to other people, but here we need to be very careful. Seeing and knowing others engenders negative judgment. If we practice

external mindfulness towards other people, we have to realize that judging others is making bad kamma. We can pay attention with compassion. People-watching is one of the most popular pastimes but usually done with the intention of finding fault. Everyone who's not enlightened has faults; even the highly developed non-returner has yet five fetters to lose. What to say about ordinary worldlings? To use other people as our mirror is very helpful because they reflect our own being. We can only see in others what we already know about ourselves. The rest is lost to us.

If we add clear comprehension to our mindfulness and check our purpose and skilful means we will eliminate much grief and worry. We will develop an awareness that will make every day, every moment an adventure. Most people feel bogged down and burdened. Either they have too much or too little to do; not enough money to do what they like or they frantically move about trying to occupy themselves. Everybody wants to escape the mechanism that each one chooses, but it does not provide real inner joy. However with mindfulness and clear comprehension, just watching a tree is fascinating. It brings a new dimension to our life, a buoyancy of mind, enabling us to grasp wholeness, instead of the limitations of our family, job, hopes and dreams. That way we can expand, because we're fascinated with what we see around and within us, and want to explore further. No "my" mind, "my" body, "my" tree, but just

phenomena all around us, to provide us with the most fascinating, challenging schoolroom that anybody could ever find. Our interest in the schoolroom increases as mindfulness increases.

To develop a meditative mind, we also need to calm our senses. We don't have to deny our senses, that would be foolishness, but see them for what they are. Mara the tempter is not a fellow with a long tail and a flaming red tongue, but rather our senses. We hardly ever pay attention to what they do to us when they pull us from an interesting sight to a beautiful sound, and back to the sight, the touch, the idea. No Peace! Our constant endeavour is to catch a moment's pleasure.

**If we add clear
comprehension to our
mindfulness and check our
purpose and skilful means
we will eliminate much
grief and worry.**

A sense contact has to be very fleeting, because otherwise it becomes a great *dukkha*. Let's say we are offered a very nice meal that tastes extremely good. So we say to our host: "That's a very nice meal, I like it very much." The host replies: "I have lots of food here, please stay around and eat for another two or three hours." If we did, we would not only get sick in body but also disgusted in our mind. A meal can last twenty or at the most thirty minutes. Each taste contact can only last a second, then we have to chew and swallow. If we were

to keep it in the mouth any longer, it would become very unpleasant.

Maybe we feel very hot and go to take a cold shower. We say to our friend waiting outside: "Now I feel good, that cold water is very pleasant." Our friend says: "We have plenty of cold water, you can have a shower for the next five to six hours." Nothing but absolute misery would result. We can enjoy a cold shower for ten or twenty minutes at the most.

Anything that is prolonged will create *dukkha*. All contacts pass quickly, because that is their nature. The same goes for sight, our eyes are continually blinking. We can't even keep sight constant for the length of time we're looking at anything. We may be looking at a beautiful painting for a little while and really like it. Someone says: "You can stay here and look at the painting for the next five hours, we're not closing the museum yet." Nobody could do that. We can't look at the same thing a long time, without feeling bored, losing all awareness, or even falling asleep. Sense contacts are not only limited because of their inability to give satisfaction. They are actually waves that come and go. If we are listening to some lovely music, after a few hours the same music becomes unbearable. Our sense contacts are mirroring a reflection of satisfaction, which has no real basis in fact. That's Mara constantly leading us astray.

There's a pertinent story of a monk in the Buddha's time, which relates the ultimate in sense discipline. A married couple had a

big row and the woman decided to run away. She put on several of her best saris, one over the other, wore all her gold jewelry and left. After a while the husband was sorry that he had let her go and followed her. He ran here and there, but couldn't find her. Finally he came across a monk who was walking along the street. He asked the monk if he'd seen a woman in a red sari with long black hair and lots of jewellery around her neck and arms. The monk said: "I saw a set of teeth going by."

The monk was not paying attention to the concepts of a woman with long black hair, a red sari, and lots of jewellery, but only to the fact that there was a human being with a set of teeth. He had calmed his senses to the point where the sight object was no longer tempting him into a reaction. An ordinary person at the sight of a beautiful woman with black hair, a red sari and lots of jewellery, running excitedly along the street, might have been tempted to follow her. A set of teeth going by, is highly unlikely to create desire. That is calming the senses.

If we come upon a snake, it's not an object of dislike, or destruction, but just a sentient being that happens to be around. That's all. There's nothing to be done, nothing to react to. If we think of it as a snake that could kill us, then of course, the mind can go berserk, just as the monk's mind could have done, if he had thought "Oh, what a beautiful woman." If we watch our senses again and again, this becomes a habit, and is no longer difficult. Life will be much more peaceful. The world as we know it consists of so much proliferation. Everywhere are different colours, shapes, beings and nature's growth. Each species of tree has hundreds of subspecies. Nature proliferates. All of us look different. If we don't guard our senses, this proliferation in the world will keep us attracted life after life. There's too much to see, do, know and react to. Since there is no end to all of that we might as well stop and delve inside of ourselves.

A meditative mind is achieved through mindfulness, clear comprehension and calming the senses. These three aspects of practice need to be done in everyday life. Peace and harmony will result, and our meditation will flourish.

Ayya Khema (1923-1997) was born into a Jewish family in Berlin. After leading an active life in the world—including marriage and children—she turned seriously to spiritual practice in her forties. In 1979, she was ordained as a Theravadin Buddhist nun, receiving the name khema, meaning "safety and security" (ayya means "sister"). Ayya Khema established a forest monastery in Sydney, Australia; a training center for nuns in Colombo, Sri Lanka; and Buddha-Haus, a meditation center in Allgau, Germany. She also wrote several dhamma books and articles.

Verses on Feelings from the Itivuttaka

§ 52. *This was said by the Blessed One, said by the Arahant, so I have heard:* "There are these three feelings. Which three? A feeling of pleasure, a feeling of pain, a feeling of neither pleasure nor pain. These are the three feelings."

Centered,
mindful,
alert,
the Awakened One's disciple
discerns feelings,
how feelings come into play,
where they cease,
and the path to their ending.

With the ending of feelings, a monk
free of want
is totally unbound.

§ 53. *This was said by the Blessed One, said by the Arahant, so I have heard:* "There are these three feelings. Which three? A feeling of pleasure, a feeling of pain, a feeling of neither pleasure nor pain. A feeling of pleasure should be seen as stressful. A feeling of pain should be seen as an arrow. A feeling of neither pleasure nor pain should be seen as inconstant. When a monk has seen a feeling of pleasure as stressful, a feeling of pain as an arrow, a feeling of neither pleasure nor pain as inconstant, then he is called a monk who is noble, who has seen rightly, who has cut off craving, destroyed the fetters, and who—from the right breaking-through of conceit—has put an end to suffering and stress."

Whoever sees
 pleasure as stress,
 sees pain as arrow,
 sees peaceful neither-pleasure-nor-pain

as inconstant:

he is a monk
 who's seen rightly.
 From that he is there set free.
 A master of direct knowing,
 at peace,
 he is a sage
 gone beyond bounds.

Ajahn Viradhammo's Retreat

Thirty-three fortunate mediators participated in a weekend retreat led by Ajahn Viradhammo in early November. Galilee Centre in Arnprior served as an ideal site with spacious natural surroundings and a quiet, peaceful atmosphere. The Centre's staff was friendly and helpful while at the same time respecting the noble silence being observed throughout the retreat. Ajahn Viradhammo was very forthcoming with his kindness and penetrating wisdom in his dhamma talks. He emphasized awareness and acceptance in combination with Right Effort as a skillful strategy to live a spiritual life. Ajahn also offered guided meditations and led chanting in Pali and English to assist the participants in their inner investigations. Retreatants and supporters in Ottawa combined to contribute \$2, 240 in donations that was sent to a new monastery in Auckland, New Zealand.



We Invite Your Contributions!

This newsletter can benefit from your ideas, big or small. We invite you to send in your articles, reflections, poems, stories, quotes, graphics, artwork, photos, and comments.

If you have a question of dhamma or meditation practice, then we will forward it to Ajahn Sona, who has agreed to respond to such queries. We can all learn from each other by sharing our experiences and understanding!

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A Poem

While on retreat with Ajahn Viradhammo at Galilee Centre along the Ottawa River, Brenda wrote that "Mindfulness retreats aren't for sissies! Lots of turbulence in the body-heart-mind, but I had this moment."

Sitting still on the hill
 river wide below
 break in the clouds
 warm sun on my back
 wind in the fir trees
 waves come and go
 yellow birch leaves shimmer
 bright ladybugs criss-cross space
 a nuthatch bobs along a gnarled branch
 seeking being
 nobody going nowhere - ah present!

With gratitude to Ajahn for the teachings and good humour, to his brother monk for his gentle presence, to everyone who made it possible, and to all the lovely people sitting around me.

With Metta,

Brenda Vellino

The Lotus Leaf

by Ajahn Chah

The Buddha said that the Enlightened Ones were far from defilements. This doesn't mean that they ran away from defilements. They did not. Defilements were there. He compared it to a lotus leaf in a pond of water. The leaf and the water exist together. They are in contact but the leaf doesn't become wet. The water can be compared to defilements and the lotus leaf to the enlightened mind.

The mind of one who practices doesn't run anywhere. It stays right where it is. Good and evil, happiness and unhappiness, right and wrong, they all arise, and he knows them all. The meditator simply knows them, but does not allow them to *wet* his mind. In other words, he does not cling to any of them.

The Mind

Whatever an enemy might do
to an enemy,
or a foe to a foe,
the ill-directed mind
can do to you
even worse.

Whatever a mother, father
or other kinsman
might do for you,
the well-directed mind
can do for you
even better.

Dhammapada, 42-43



A Call for Nominees to the Executive

Are you interested in a rewarding volunteer opportunity that helps to make known the Buddha's teachings? Experience the satisfaction that comes from a commitment to serve a Buddhist community. All of the Society's Executive positions are now open for nominations. Elections will be held at the *Annual General Meeting* on *January 26, 2002*.

The Executive works as a team to make the dhamma available to Society's members and friends by organizing Days of Mindfulness, meditation retreats, talks given by monastics and lay teachers, et cetera. Current Executive members will be happy to provide orientation and guidance to the incoming officeholders.

To find out more about these positions, please contact a member of the Nominating Committee:

Dexter Sampson	
jsampson@cyberus.ca	225-6490
Chandra Stratton	
chandra_stratton@carleton.ca	828-6222

Current Executive of the Ottawa Buddhist Society

The Society's Executive was elected at the Annual General Meeting of December 2000. The members of the Executive and their contact information is as follows:

President: Nissanka Pussegoda
[npusse@magma.ca] 831-1972

Acting Secretary: Philip Jurgens
[obs_secretary@yahoo.ca] 739-9073

Treasurer: Lionel Edirisinghe
[laz@tryel.com] 591-8760

Librarian: Philip Jurgens
[philipjurgens@hotmail.com] 739-9073

Director, Children & Youth Programs: Priyani Mendis
[smendis@magma.ca] 736-9015

Ex-Officio: Anoma De Silva
[anomadesilva@yahoo.com] 226-8160



Notice of Annual General Meeting

The Society will hold its Annual General Meeting on Saturday *January 26, 2002* at the Tu-An Pagoda, 3591 Albion Road, Ottawa, Ontario. Start time is *3:30pm*.

Agenda items include: reports of the year's events, report of the Auditor, election of Executive officers and Directors, as well as business arising.

The Executive encourages all members to attend the meeting and make their contribution to the future direction of the Society.

Upcoming Day of Mindfulness

Days of Mindfulness are held at the Tu-An Pagoda (Vietnamese Buddhist Temple), 3591 Albion Road, near Bank Street. They run from 8:00am to 3:30pm and include periods of sitting and walking meditation, dhamma readings, dhamma talks, occasional discussions, as well as a pot-luck vegetarian lunch at 11:30am. Please join us for the whole, or part, day on: **Saturday January 12, 2002**



Library Announcements

The Society has a relatively large collection of books that members can borrow on the Days of Mindfulness. The library catalogue may be browsed online at the Society's website. Three recently added titles to the collection are:

Buddhism: A Very Short Introduction, Damien Keown, New York: Oxford University Press, 1996, 134p. In clear and straightforward language, and with the help of maps, diagrams and illustrations, this book explains how Buddhism began and how it evolved into its present-day form. The central teachings and practices are set out clearly, and key topics such as karma and rebirth, meditation, ethics, and Buddhism in the West, receive detailed coverage. The distinguishing features of the main schools are explained. Presents a sound basic introduction to Buddhism.(I#217)

Buddhism Without Beliefs: A Contemporary Guide to Awakening, Stephen Batchelor, New York: Riverhead Books, 1997, 127p. This concise book demystifies Buddhism by explaining, without jargon or obscure terminology, what awakening is and how to practice it. What Buddha taught, says the author, is not something to *believe in* but something to *do*...something that can be practiced every day.(I#223)

Breath by Breath: The Liberating Practice of Insight Meditation, Larry Rosenberg, Boston: Shambhala, 1998, 215p. An experienced teacher at the Insight Meditation Society presents the Buddha's basic meditation instructions on the breath using the Anapanasati Sutta as the structure. Jon Kabat-Zinn, in the Forward, states that Rosenberg's book "illuminates the sutta's essence and its practical utility in a wholly contemporary Western idiom, making it tangible, compelling, and immediately relevant for anybody who is seriously interested in developing a personal meditation practice."(M#226)



Memberships are Due for Renewal!

The Ottawa Buddhist Society is dedicated to the propagation of the Buddha's teachings through a variety of means that include: organizing monthly days of mindfulness and meditation retreats, inviting guest teachers, and offering quarterly newsletters, dhamma books and taped talks. The Society is a registered non-profit organization and is dependent on membership dues and charitable donations to fund its activities. All organizational work is done on a voluntary basis.

The Executive appreciates all those who have joined the Society. The membership year runs from January to December. Please review the Society's objectives and activities and consider supporting them by renewing today. A membership form is enclosed with this newsletter. Thank you!

OTTAWA BUDDHIST SOCIETY

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