

A HEART RELEASED

The Teachings of Phra Ajaan Mun
Bhuridatta Thera

Translated from the Thai by
Thanissaro Bhikkhu
(Geoffrey DeGraff)

Copyright 1995 Metta Forest Monastery
PO Box 1409, Valley Center, CA 92082

* * *

Transcription: Greg Smith
Proofreading: Thanissaro Bhikkhu
Formatting: John Bullitt

* * *

Introduction

Phra Ajaan Mun Bhuridatta Thera was born in 1870 in Baan Kham Bong, a farming village in Ubon Ratchathani province, northeastern Thailand. Ordained as a Buddhist monk in 1893, he spent the remainder of his life wandering through Thailand, Burma, and Laos, dwelling for the most part in the forest, engaged in the practice of meditation. He attracted an enormous following of students and, together with his teacher, Phra Ajaan Sao Kantasilo, was responsible for the establishment of the forest ascetic tradition that has now spread throughout Thailand and to several countries abroad. He passed away in 1949 at Wat Suddhavasa, Sakon Nakhorn province.

Much has been written about his life, but very little was recorded of his teachings during his lifetime. Most of his teachings he left in the form of people: the students whose lives were profoundly shaped by the experience of living and practicing meditation under his guidance. One of the pieces that //was// recorded is translated here. //A Heart Released// (//Muttodaya//) is a record of passages from his sermons, made during the years 1944-45 by two monks who were staying under his guidance, and edited by a third monk, an ecclesiastical official who frequently visited him for instruction in meditation. The first edition of the book was printed with his permission for free distribution to the public. The title of the book was taken from a comment made by the Ven. Chao Khun Upali Gunupamacariya (Jan Siricando) who, after listening to a sermon delivered by Phra Ajaan Mun on the root themes of meditation, praised the sermon as having been delivered with '//muttodaya//' -- a heart released -- and as conveying the heart of release.

The unusual style of Phra Ajaan Mun's sermons may be explained in part by the fact that in the days before his ordination he was skilled in a popular form of informal village entertainment called //maw lam//. //Maw lam// is a contest in extemporaneous rhyming, usually

reproducing the war between the sexes, in which the battle of wits can become quite fierce. Much use is made of word play: riddles, puns, innuendoes, metaphors, and simple playing with the sounds of words. The sense of language that Ajaan Mun developed in //maw lam// he carried over into his teachings after becoming a monk. Often he would teach his students in extemporaneous puns and rhymes. This sort of word play he even applied to the Pali language, and a number of instances can be cited in //Muttodaya//: in Section 3, the pun on the word //dhatu//, which can mean both physical element and speech element (phoneme); the use of the phonemes //na mo ba dha// (the basic elements in the phrase //namo buddhaya//, homage to the Buddha) to stand for the four physical elements; the play on //namo// and //mano// in Section 4; the use of the //Patthana// as an image for the mind in Section 5; the extraction of the word //santo// (peaceful) from //pavessanto// in Section 13 and Section 16; the grammatical pun on //loke// in Section 14 and //santo// in Section 13; the threes in Section 12; the eights in Section 16; and so on.

This sort of rhetorical style has gone out of fashion in the West and is going out of style today even in Thailand, but in the Thailand of Ajaan Mun's time it was held in high regard as a sign of quick intelligence and a subtle mind. Ajaan Mun was able to use it with finesse as an effective teaching method, forcing his students to become more quick-witted and alert to implications, correspondences, multiple levels of meaning, and the elusiveness of language; to be less dogmatic in their attachments to the meanings of words, and less inclined to look for the truth in terms of language. As Ajaan Mun once told a pair of visiting monks who were proud of their command of the medieval text, The Path of Purification, the //niddeśa// (analytical expositions) on virtue, concentration, and discernment contained in that work were simply //nidāna// (fables or stories). If they wanted to know the truth of virtue, concentration, and discernment, they would have to bring these qualities into being in their own hearts and minds.

* * * * *

A Heart Released

Section 1.

Practice is what keeps the true Dhamma pure.

The Lord Buddha taught that his Dhamma, when placed in the heart of an ordinary run-of-the-mill person, is bound to be thoroughly corrupted (//saddhamma-patirūpa//); but if placed in the heart of a Noble One, it is bound to be genuinely pure and authentic, something that at the same time can be neither effaced nor obscured.

So as long as we are devoting ourselves merely to the theoretical study of the Dhamma, it can't serve us well. Only when we have trained our hearts to eliminate their 'chameleons' (see Section 10) -- their corruptions (//upakkilesa//) -- will it benefit us in full measure.

And only then will the true Dhamma be kept pure, free from distortions and deviations from its original principles.

* * *

Section 2.

To follow the Buddha, we must train ourselves well before training others.

//purisadamma-sarathi sattha deva-manussanam buddho bhagavati//

Our Lord Buddha first trained and tamed himself to the point where he attained unexcelled right self-awakening (//anuttara-sammasambodhinana//), becoming //buddho//, one who knows, before becoming //bhagava//, one who spreads the teaching to those who are to be taught. Only then did he become //sattha//, the teacher and trainer of human and divine beings whose stage of development qualifies them to be trained. And thus, //kalyano kittisaddo abbhuggato//: His good name has spread to the four quarters of the compass even up to the present day.

The same is true of all the Noble Disciples of the past. They trained and tamed themselves well before helping the Teacher spread his teachings to people at large, and so their good name has spread just like the Buddha's.

If, however, a person spreads the teaching without first having trained himself well, //papako saddo hoti//: His bad name will spread to the four quarters of the compass, due to his error in not having followed the example of the Lord Buddha and all the Noble Disciples of the past.

* * *

Section 3.

The root inheritance, the starting capital for self-training.

Why is it that wise people -- before chanting, receiving the precepts, or performing any other act of merit -- always take up //namo// as their starting point? Why is it that //namo// is never omitted or discarded? This suggests that //namo// must be significant. If we take it up for consideration, we find that //na// stands for the water element, and //mo// for the earth element -- and with this, a line from the scriptures comes to mind:

//mata-petika-sambhavo odana-kummasa-paccayo//:

'When the generative elements of the mother and father are combined, the body comes into being. When it is born from the mother's womb, it is nourished with rice and bread, and so is able to develop and grow.' //Na// is the mother's element; //mo//, the father's element. When these two elements are combined, the mother's fire element then heats the combination until it becomes what is called a //kalala//, a droplet of oil. This is the point where the connecting cognizance (//patisandhi-vinnana//) can make its connection, so that

the mind becomes joined to the //namo// element. Once the mind has taken up residence, the droplet of oil develops until it is an //ambuja//, a glob of blood. From a glob of blood it becomes a //ghana//, a rod, and then a //pesi//, a piece of flesh. Then it expands itself into a lizard-like shape, with five extensions: two arms, two legs, and a head.

(As for the elements //ba//, breath, and //dha//, fire, these take up residence later, because they are not what the mind holds onto. If the mind lets the droplet of oil drop, the droplet of oil vanishes or is discarded as useless. It has no breath or fire, just as when a person dies and the breath and fire vanish from the body. This is why we say they are secondary elements. The important factors are the two original elements, //namo//.)

After the child is born, it has to depend on //na//, its mother, and //mo//, its father, to care for it, nurturing it and nourishing it with such foods as rice and bread, at the same time teaching and training it in every form of goodness. The mother and father are thus called the child's first and foremost teachers. The love and benevolence the mother and father feel for their children cannot be measured or calculated. The legacy they give us -- this body -- is our primal inheritance. External wealth, silver or gold, come from this body. If we didn't have this body, we wouldn't be able to do anything, which means that we wouldn't have anything at all. For this reason, our body is the root of our entire inheritance from our mother and father, which is why we say that the good they have done us cannot be measured or calculated. Wise people thus never neglect or forget them.

We first have to take up this body, this //namo//, and only then do we perform the act of bowing it down in homage. To translate //namo// as homage is to translate only the act, not the source of the act.

This same root inheritance is the starting capital we use in training ourselves, so we needn't feel lacking or poor when it comes to the resources needed for the practice.

* * *

Section 4.

The root foundation for the practice.

The two elements, //namo//, when mentioned by themselves, aren't adequate or complete. We have to rearrange the vowels and consonants as follows: Take the //a// from the //n//, and give it to the //m//; take the //o// from the //m// and give it to the //n//, and then put the //ma// in front of the //no//. This gives us //mano//, the heart. Now we have the body together with the heart, and this is enough to be used as the root foundation for the practice. //Mano//, the heart, is primal, the great foundation. Everything we do or say comes from the heart, as stated in the Buddha's words:

//mano-pubbangama dhamma
mano-settha mano-maya//:

'All dhammas are preceded by the heart, dominated by the heart, made from the heart.' The Buddha formulated the entire Dhamma and Vinaya from out of this great foundation, the heart. So when his disciples contemplate in accordance with the Dhamma and Vinaya until

//namo// is perfectly clear, then //mano// lies at the end point of formulation. In other words, it lies beyond all formulations.

All supposings come from the heart. Each of us has his or her own load, which we carry as supposings and formulations in line with the currents of the flood (//ogha//), to the point where they give rise to unawareness (//avijja//), the factor that creates states of becoming and birth, all from our not being wise to these things, from our deludedly holding them all to be 'me' or 'mine'.

* * *

Section 5.

The root cause of everything in the universe.

The seven books of the Abhidhamma, except for the Patthana (The Book on Origination), are finite in scope. As for the Patthana, it is //anantanaya//, infinite in scope. Only a Buddha is capable of comprehending it in its entirety. When we consider the Pali text, which begins //hetu-paccayo//, we find that the cause (//hetu//) that acts as the primal sustaining factor (//paccaya//) for all things in the cosmos is nothing other than the heart. The heart is the great cause -- what is primal, what is important. All things apart from it are effects or conditions. The remaining factors mentioned in the Patthana, from //arammana// (objective support) to //aviggata// (not without) can act as sustaining factors only because the great cause, the heart, comes first. Thus //mano//, discussed in Section 4; //thitibhutam//, which will be discussed in Section 6; and the great cause discussed here all refer to the same thing. The Buddha was able to formulate the Dhamma and Vinaya, to know things with his ten-powered intuition, and to comprehend all knowable phenomena, all because the great cause acted as the primal factor. His comprehension was thus infinite in scope. In the same way, all of the disciples had this great cause acting as their primal factor and so were able to know in accordance with the Buddha's teachings. This is why the Venerable Assaji, the fifth of the five brethren, taught Upatissa (the Venerable Sariputta),

//ye dhamma hetu-pabhava tesam hetum tathagato
tesanca yo nirodho ca evam vadi mahasamano//:

'Whatever dhammas arise from a cause...' This great cause being the important factor, the primal factor, then when the Venerable Assaji reached this point -- the great cause -- how could the Venerable Sariputta's mind help but penetrate down to the current of the Dhamma? -- for everything in the world comes about due to the great cause. Even the transcendent dhammas are reached by the great cause. This is why the Patthana is said to be infinite in its scope. Whoever trains the heart, the great cause, until it is clear and dazzling, is capable of knowing everything of every sort infinitely, both within and without.

* * *

Section 6.

The root instigator of the cycle of death and rebirth.

//thitibhutam avijja-paccaya
sankhara...upadanam...bhavo...jati...//

Each and every one of us born as a human being has a birthplace: we have our parents as our birthplace. So why did the Buddha formulate the teaching on sustained conditions only from the factor of unawareness onwards? What unawareness comes from, he didn't say. Unawareness has to have a mother and father just as we do, and we learn from the above line that //thitibhutam// is its mother and father. //Thitibhutam// refers to the primal mind. When the primal mind is imbued with delusion, there is a sustaining factor: the condition of unawareness. Once there is unawareness, it acts as the sustenance for the fashioning of //sankhara//, mental fashionings, together with the act of clinging to them, which gives rise to states of becoming and birth. In other words, these things will have to keep on arising and giving rise to each other continually. They are thus called sustained or sustaining conditions because they support and sustain one another.

Awareness and unawareness both come from //thitibhutam//. When //thitibhutam// is imbued with unawareness, it isn't wise to its conditions; but when it is imbued with awareness, it realizes its conditions for what they really are. This is how the matter appears when considered with the clear insight leading to emergence (//vutthana-gamini vipassana//).

To summarize: //Thitibhutam// is the primal instigator of the cycle of death and rebirth. Thus it is called the root source of the three (see Section 12). When we are to cut the cycle of death and rebirth so that it disconnects and vanishes into nothingness, we have to train the primal instigator to develop awareness, alert to all conditions for what they really are. It will then recover from its delusion and never give rise to any conditions again. //Thitibhutam//, the root instigator, will stop spinning, and this will end our circling through the cycle of death and rebirth.

* * *

Section 7.

The supreme position: the foundation for the paths, fruitions, and
//nibbana//.

//aggam thanam manussesu maggam satta-visuddhiya//:

'The supreme position is to be found among human beings: the path to the purification of living beings.' This can be explained as follows: We have received our legacy from //namo//, our parents -- i.e. this body, which has taken a human birth, the highest birth there is. We are supreme beings, well-placed in a supreme position, complete with the treasures of thought, word, and deed. If we want to amass external treasures, such as material wealth, money, and gold, we can. If we want to amass internal treasures, such as the extraordinary qualities of the paths, their fruitions, and //nibbana//, we also can. The Buddha formulated the Dhamma and Vinaya for us human beings, and not at all for cows, horses, elephants, and so on. We human beings are a race that can practice to reach purity. So we shouldn't be discouraged or self-deprecating, thinking that we are lacking in worth or potential, because as human beings we are capable. What we don't

have, we can give rise to. What we already have, we can make greater. This is in keeping with the teaching found in the Vessantara Jataka:

//danam deti, silam rakkhati, bhavanam bhavetva,
ekacco saggam gacchati, ekacco mokkham gacchati,
nissanayam//:

'Having worked at amassing wisdom through being charitable, observing the precepts, and developing the mind in line with the teachings of the Lord Buddha, those who work only a little will have to go to heaven, while those who are determined and really do the work -- and at the same time having the help of the potential and perfections they have developed in the past -- will reach //nibbana// without a doubt. '

Common animals are said not to be supreme because they can't act as human beings can. So it is rightly said that human beings are well-placed in a supreme position, able to lead themselves to the paths, their fruitions, and to pure //nibbana//

* * *

Section 8.

The stronghold that forms the practice area for training oneself.

In which set of principles did the Lord Buddha establish our stronghold? When we consider this question, we find that he established our stronghold in the great frames of reference (//satipatthana//).

To make a comparison with worldly affairs: In armed battles where victory is at stake, it is necessary to find a stronghold. If one obtains a good stronghold, one can successfully ward off the weapons of the enemy; and there one can accumulate great strength to launch an attack, driving the enemy to defeat. Such a place is thus called a stronghold, i.e. a place complete with strong stockades, gates, moats and embattlements.

So it is with the affairs of the Dhamma when we take the great frames of reference as our stronghold, in that those who go into battle with the enemy -- defilement -- must start out by keeping track of the body as their frame of reference, because when such things as sensual passion arise, they arise at the body and mind. Because the sight of a body causes the mind to be aroused, we can conclude that the body is the provocation, and so we must examine the body as a means of stilling the Hindrances (//nivarana//) and calming the mind. This is a point that you should work at and develop as much as possible. In other words, keep investigating that point without giving way at all. When an image (//uggaha nimitta//) of any part of the body arises, take that part of the body as the basic theme for your investigation. You don't have to go shifting to other parts. To think that, 'I've already seen this part. Other parts I haven't seen, so I'll have to go and investigate other parts,' isn't advisable at all. Even if you investigate the body until you have it analyzed minutely into all of its parts that are composed of the properties (//dhatu//) of earth, water, fire, and wind -- this is called //patibhaga// -- you should still keep examining the body as it first appeared in the original image until you have it mastered. To master it, you have to examine that same point over and over again, just as when you chant.

If you memorize a particular discourse and then leave it, without chanting or repeating it again, you will forget it, and it won't serve any purpose, due to your complacency in not mastering it. The same holds true in your investigation of the body. Once an image of any part arises, if you don't investigate it repeatedly, and instead heedlessly let it pass, it won't serve any purpose at all.

This investigation of the body has many citations, one being in our present-day ordination ceremony. Before all else, the preceptor must tell the ordinand the five meditation themes -- hair of the head, hair of the body, nails, teeth, and skin, i.e., this very body -- because of their importance. In the Commentary to the Dhammapada, it is said that an unwise preceptor who doesn't teach the investigation of the body may destroy his pupil's potential for arahantship. So at present the preceptor must first teach the five meditation themes.

In another spot the Buddha taught that there is no such thing as a Buddha or an arahant who has not fixed on at least one part of the body as a meditation theme. Thus he told a group of 500 monks who were discussing the earth -- saying that such and such a village had red soil or black soil, etc. -- that they were discussing external earth when they should be investigating internal earth. In other words, they should have been investigating this body intelligently, penetrating it throughout and making it absolutely clear. When the Buddha finished his discussion of this topic, all 500 monks reached the fruition of arahantship.

From this we can conclude that the investigation of the body must be important. Each and every person who is to gain release from all suffering and stress has to investigate the body. If we are to accumulate great strength, we must accumulate it by investigating the body. Even the Lord Buddha, when he was about to attain Awakening, started out by investigating the breath -- and what is the breath, if not the body?

So the great frames of reference, starting with the contemplation of the body, are said to be our stronghold. Once we have obtained a good stronghold -- i.e., once we have put the principles of the great frames of reference into practice until we have them mastered -- we should then investigate things as they are in terms of the inherent nature of their elements, using the strategies of clear insight, which will be discussed next.

* * *

Section 9.

The strategies of clear insight, techniques for uprooting defilement.

The nature of all good things is that they come from things that aren't good, just as lotuses that are fair and lovely are born from mud that is filthy and repulsive; yet once they rise clear of the mud, they are clean and pure, becoming a fitting headdress for a king, a viceroy, or a courtier, never again returning to the mud. In this they are like the earnest meditator, one engaged in a persistent effort. Such a person must investigate a thing that is filthy and repulsive if the mind is to gain release from all filthy and repulsive things. The 'thing that is filthy and repulsive' here is the body. The body is an assemblage of filth, urine, and excrement. The things that are exuded from the hair of the head, the hair of the body, nails, teeth, skin, and so on are all forms of excrement. When they fall into food, people

take offense at it. The food has to be thrown out, for no one can stomach it. Moreover, the body has to be constantly washed and scrubbed if it is to look presentable. If we don't clean it, it will smell rank and no one will let us come near. Clothing and other accessories, when they are apart from the body, are clean and attractive, but as soon as they come into contact with the body they become dirty. If we let them go without washing for a long time, no one will let us come near, because of the smell.

From this we can see that the body is a house of urine and excrement, //asubha// -- unattractive; //patigula// -- repulsive. When still alive, it's bad enough; when there is no more life to it, it's even more disgusting, to the point where nothing else can compare. So from the very beginning, all earnest meditators investigate the body methodically until they have it mastered. Before the body becomes clear, they investigate whichever part or aspect of the body is agreeable to their temperament until a particular aspect of the body appears as an //uggaha nimitta//. Then they focus on that aspect, working at it and developing it repeatedly.

'Working at it and developing it repeatedly' should be understood as follows: When rice farmers grow rice, they work in the soil, plowing the soil and planting rice in the soil. The following year they grow rice in the soil again. They don't grow their rice in the air or in the middle of the sky. They grow it only in the soil, and the rice then fills their granaries of its own accord. When they work repeatedly in the soil, they don't have to plead, 'Rice, O rice, please come and fill our granaries.' The rice pours in of its own accord. And even if they forbid it, saying, 'Rice, O rice, don't come and fill our granaries,' if they have completed their work in the soil, there's no doubt but that the rice will still come and keep their granaries full.

In the same way, we as earnest meditators should keep investigating the body at the point that is agreeable to our temperaments or first appears for us to see. No matter what, we should not neglect or abandon that point. Working at it repeatedly doesn't refer only to the practice of walking meditation. We should be mindful, continuing our investigation in all places and at all times. Sitting, standing, walking, and lying down; eating, drinking, working, speaking, and thinking, we should always have all-round mindfulness of the present: This is what is meant by 'working at it repeatedly'.

Once you have investigated the body until it is clear, you should then consider dividing it up into its various parts, using your own way of being methodical. Separate the body into the elements of earth, water, fire, and wind, examining it until you really see it in those terms. At this stage, you may use any strategies of your own devising that are agreeable to your temperament, but you must not in any event abandon the original reference point that first appeared to you. When you are investigating at this stage, you should work at it and develop it repeatedly. Don't investigate once and then let it go for half a month or a month. Investigate in and out, back and forth, again and again. In other words, withdraw inward to quiet the mind and then come out again to investigate the body. Don't exclusively investigate the body or exclusively quiet the mind.

When you have investigated in this way until you have it thoroughly mastered, what happens next is what comes of its own accord. The mind is bound to converge in a big way; and the instant it converges, everything will appear to converge, being one and the same. The entire world will be nothing but elements. At the same time, an image will appear of the world as being level as a drum head, because the entire

world is of one and the same inherent nature. Forests, mountains, people, animals -- even you yourself -- will all ultimately have to be leveled down in one and the same way. Together with this vision, knowledge arises, cutting off all doubts in the heart. This is called //yatha-bhuta-nana-dassana vipassana//: the clear insight that both knows and sees things for what they actually are.

This step is not the end point. It is the beginning of the next stage we have to practice, which we as earnest meditators are to work at and develop repeatedly in order for heightened awareness to be mastered and complete. Then we will see that the mental fashionings that suppose, 'This is mine... That is me,' are inconstancy; and that because of attachment they are suffering -- for all elements have been the way they are all along: arising, aging, growing ill, and dying, arising and deteriorating since before we were born. From time immemorial, this is the way they have been. But because the conditions of the mind and the five //khandhas// -- //rupa//, //vedana//, //sanna//, //sankhara//, and //vinnana// -- have fashioned and labeled throughout every existence up to the present, through lives too numerous to number, the mind has been deluded into following its supposings. It's not the case that our supposings have attached themselves to us. When you come right down to it, there's no doubt but that all phenomena in the world, whether endowed with consciousness or not, have been the way they are -- arising and deteriorating on their own -- in just this way.

So we realize, //pubbe ananussu tesu dhammesu// -- these regularities of behavior (lit. 'dhamma-nesses') have been this way from the past. Even though no one has told us, we know that this is just the way they have been. This is why the Buddha maintained with regard to this point that he didn't hear this from anyone, wasn't taught this by anyone -- for this is just the way these things had been since before his time. Thus we can see that the regularities in the behavior of all elements are bound to be this way. But because the conditions of the mind have fastened into all of these things for so many lives, they have behaved in line with those supposings. The mind has been overwhelmed by latent tendencies (//anusaya//) to the point where it is deluded into believing them, and so states of becoming and birth have been created through the clinging of the conditions of the mind.

Thus the earnest meditator comes to analyze things down in line with their inherent nature, seeing that,

//sabbe sankhara anicca, sabbe sankhara dukkha//:

Acts of mental fashioning -- the conditions of the mind -- are what is inconstant. The world of living beings is constant: It is simply the way it is. Analyze these things in terms of the four Noble Truths as a way of rectifying the conditions of the mind, so that you can see for certain, in your own right, that these conditions of the mind are inconstant and stressful. And the fact that you haven't seen in your own right that they are inconstant and stressful is why you have fallen for mental fashionings. When you truly see this, it will rectify the conditions of the mind. The realization will come to you,

//sankhara sassata natthi//:

'There are no mental fashionings that are constant and lasting.' Mental fashionings are simply conditions of the mind, like mirages. As for living beings, they have been a constant feature of the world all along. When you know both sides -- i.e., that living beings are simply the way they are, and that mental fashionings are simply a condition

of the mind that supposes them -- then //thitibhutam//, the primal mind that has no conditions, can gain release.

As for the teaching that all phenomena or regularities of behavior are not-self: How could they be the self? Their business is simply to arise the way they do. Thus the Buddha taught,

//sabbe dhamma anatta//:

'All phenomena are not-self.' We as earnest meditators should investigate things to see them clearly in this way, until the mind is made to converge, enabling us to see truly and vividly along these lines in our own right, at the same time giving rise to the knowledge that accompanies this vision. This is what is meant by //vutthana-gamini vipassana// (clear insight leading to emergence). We should work at this stage until it is mastered, until we see truly and clearly, along with the full convergence of the mind and its concurrent knowledge, converging against the current, curing the latent tendencies, turning supposing into release; or until we converge on the primal mind that is simply the way it is, to the point where it is absolutely clear, with the concurrent knowledge,

//Khina jati nanam hoti//:

'There is the knowledge of no more birth.'

This stage is not an assumption or a supposing. It isn't anything fashioned or conjectured into being, nor is it anything that can be obtained by wanting. It is something that arises, is, and knows entirely of its own accord. Intense, relentless practice in which we analyze things shrewdly on our own is what will cause it to arise of its own accord.

This has been compared to rice plants. Once we have properly nourished and cared for the rice plant, the results -- the grains of rice -- are not something that can be obtained by wanting. They will appear of their own accord. If a person who wants to get rice is lazy and doesn't care for the rice plant, he can keep wanting until the day he dies, but no rice grains will appear for him. The same holds true with the reality of release: It isn't something that can be obtained by wanting. A person who wants release but who practices wrongly or doesn't practice -- and wastes his time being lazy until the day he dies -- won't meet with release at all.

* * *

Section 10.

The primal mind is radiant and clear by nature, but is darkened because of corruptions.

//pabhassaramidam bhikkhave cittam
tanca kho agantukehi upakkilesehi upakkilittham//:

'Monks, this mind is originally radiant and clear, but because passing corruptions and defilements come and obscure it, it doesn't show its radiance.' This has been compared to a tree in the poem that runs,

A tall tree with 6,000 branches:
Big chameleons swarm it each day by the hundreds,

Small chameleons, each day by the thousands.
If the owner doesn't watch out,
They'll bring along more and more of their friends every day.

This can be explained as follows: The tall tree with 6,000 branches -- if we cut off the three zeroes, this leaves us with six, which stands for the six sense doors, the entry way for the chameleons, i.e., things that are counterfeit, not things that are genuine. Defilements aren't genuine. They are simply things that come drifting in through the sense doors by the hundreds and thousands. Not only that, defilements that haven't yet arisen will arise more and more every day as long as we don't find a means for rectifying the nature of the mind.

The mind is something more radiant than anything else can be, but because counterfeits -- passing defilements -- come and obscure it, it loses its radiance, like the sun when obscured by clouds. Don't go thinking that the sun goes after the clouds. Instead, the clouds come drifting along and obscure the sun.

So meditators, when they know in this manner, should do away with these counterfeits by analyzing them shrewdly, as explained in the strategies of clear insight, Section 9. When they develop the mind to the stage of the primal mind, this will mean that all counterfeits are destroyed, or rather, counterfeit things won't be able to reach into the primal mind, because the bridge making the connection will have been destroyed. Even though the mind may then still have to come into contact with the preoccupations of the world, its contact will be like that of a bead of water rolling over a lotus leaf.

* * *

Section 11.

One's self-training as a meditator has to be in keeping with one's temperament.

A famous horse-trainer once approached the Lord Buddha and asked him how he trained his disciples. The Buddha responded by asking the trainer how he trained horses. The trainer replied that there were four kinds of horses: (1) those easy to tame, (2) those of an intermediate sort, (3) those genuinely hard to tame, and (4) those that couldn't be tamed at all, and had to be killed. The Buddha replied, 'So it is with me.' (1) Those easy to tame, i.e., those whose minds gather easily, should eat enough food to nourish the body. (2) Those of an intermediate sort, i.e., those whose minds have some trouble settling down, should not be allowed to eat much -- only a little food. (3) Those genuinely hard to tame, i.e., those who really have trouble getting their minds to settle down, shouldn't eat at all, but they have to be //attannu// They have to know their own strength and exactly how much they will be able to endure. (4) As for those who couldn't be tamed and had to be killed -- i.e., those termed //padaparama// who couldn't subdue their minds at all -- the Buddha would withdraw the bridge. In other words, he wouldn't teach them, which was tantamount to killing them.

* * *

Section 12.

The Mulatika Discourse.

//Tika// means three. //Mula// means root. Together they mean 'things that are roots in sets of three.' Passion, aversion, and delusion are three, termed the roots of what is unwise. Craving comes in threes: sensual craving, craving for becoming, and craving for no becoming. The floods and effluents (//asava//) of the mind each come in threes: sensuality, states of becoming, and unawareness. If a person falls in with these sorts of threes, then,

//tiparivattam//:

He or she will have to keep spinning around in threes, and so the three realms -- the realms of sensuality, form, and formlessness -- will have to continue as they are, for these threes are the roots of the three realms.

The remedy also comes in threes: virtue, concentration, and discernment. When people practice in line with the virtue, concentration, and discernment forming the cure, then,

//na tiparivattam//:

They won't have to keep spinning in threes. The three realms won't exist. In other words, they will gain utter release from the three realms.

* * *

Section 13.

Only a visuddhi deva is an individual truly at peace.

//akuppam sabba-dhammesu neyyadhamma pavessanto//:

'One must have a mind unaroused with regard to any defilements and must know all phenomena both within and without,

- //santo//

in order to be calm and at peace.' A person at peace in this way will have a fully developed sense of conscience and shame, mental qualities that are pure and clean, a firm, steady mind, and a personal integrity endowed with the qualities of a //deva// (celestial being), as stated in the stanza that runs,

//hiri-ottappa-sampanna sukkadhamma-samahita
santo sappurisa loke deva-dhammati vuccare//.

//Devas// by birth -- the inhabitants of the celestial realms -- are replete with sensual pleasures and restless with defilement. How then can they be at peace? This stanza thus must surely refer to //visuddhi devas// (//devas// through purity), i.e., to arahants. Such people are genuinely at peace and qualify as having a fully developed sense of conscience and shame, together with 'white qualities,' i.e. true purity.

Section 14.

Activityless-ness is the end point of the world, beyond supposing and formulation.

//saccanam caturo pada
kkinasava jutimanto te loke parinibbuta//

The four Noble Truths -- suffering, its cause, its cessation, and the path to its cessation -- are activities in that each truth has an aspect that has to be done: Suffering has to be understood, its cause abandoned, its cessation made clear, and the path to its cessation developed. All of these are aspects that have to be done -- and if they have to be done, they must be activities. So we can conclude that all four truths are activities. This is in keeping with the first verse quoted above, which speaks of the four truths as feet, stair treads, or steps that must be taken for the task to be finished. What follows is thus termed activityless-ness -- like writing the numerals 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 0, then erasing 1-9, leaving just 0, and not writing anything more. What is left is read as 'zero,' but it doesn't have any value at all. You can't use it to add, subtract, multiply, or divide with any other numerals, yet at the same time you can't say that it doesn't exist, for there it is: 0 (zero).

This is like the discernment that knows all around, because it destroys the activity of supposing. In other words, it erases supposing completely and doesn't become involved with or hold on to any supposings at all. With the words 'erasing' or 'destroying' the activity of supposing, the question arises, 'When supposing is entirely destroyed, where will we stay?' The answer is that we will stay in a place that isn't supposed: right there with activityless-ness.

This explanation is in line with the aspects of reality that appear clearly only to those who practice, and that people who don't practice can't know. Only when we listen and then practice accordingly until we see and know of our own accord will we be able to understand.

The meaning of the next verse is this: 'Those who have no more effluents extinguish the three realms and are dazzling.' In other words, they have practiced persistence and made an investigation '//bhavito bahulikato//.' In other words, they have worked at it and developed it repeatedly to the point where the mind has the strength capable of analyzing and destroying all supposings so as to reach activityless-ness. They can thus gain release from the three realms.

In extinguishing the three realms, arahants don't fly up into the realms of sensuality, form, and formlessness. They stay right where they are. The same was true of the Buddha: When he extinguished the three realms, he was sitting in one spot, under the Bodhi tree. He didn't fly up into the three realms. He extinguished them at the mind -- for right there in the mind is where the three realms exist.

Those who aim at extinguishing the three realms should thus extinguish them in their own hearts. Only then will they obliterate activity -- the act of supposing -- from the heart, leaving just activityless-ness. This is the primal heart, the primal Dhamma, which knows no death.

* * *

Section 15.

The nine abodes of living beings.

The realms of the heavenly beings, the human realm, and the realms of destitution (//apaya//) are classed as the sensual realm, the abode of living beings who indulge in sensuality. Taken together, they count as one. The realms of form, the abodes of living beings who have attained //rupa jhana//, are four. The realms of formlessness, the abodes of living beings who have attained //arupa jhana//, are also four. So altogether there are nine abodes for living beings. Those -- the arahants -- who are wise to the nine abodes leave them and don't have to live in any of them. This appears in the last of the Novice's Questions (//samanera-panha//), '///dasa nama kim//' -- What is ten? -- which is answered. '///dasahangehi samannagato arahati vuccati ti//' -- The arahant, one who is endowed with ten qualities, gains release from the nine abodes of living beings. This can be compared to writing the numerals 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10. 1 to 9 are numbers that can be counted, named, added, subtracted, multiplied, and divided. As for ten -- 1 and 0 (zero) -- when we erase the 1, because it's a repetition, we are left with 0 (zero). If we use 0 to add, subtract, multiply, or divide with any other number, it won't increase the value of that number; and 0 by itself has no value at all -- but you can't say that it doesn't exist, because there it is. The same is true with the heart: It's a nature whose attributes are like 0. When 0 is connected to any other number, it greatly increases the value of that number. For instance, 1 connected with 0 becomes 10. So it is with the heart. When connected with anything, it instantly proliferates into things elaborate and fantastic. But when trained until it is wise and discerning with regard to all knowable phenomena, it returns to its state as 0 (zero) -- empty, open, and clear, beyond all counting and naming. It doesn't stay in the nine places that are abodes for living beings. Instead, it stays in a place devoid of supposing and formulation: its inherent nature as 0 (zero), or activityless-ness, as mentioned in Section 14.

* * *

Section 16.

The significance of the first sermon, the middle sermon, and the final sermon.

The sermons delivered by the Lord Buddha at three points in his career have a great significance to which Buddhists should give special thought and consideration.

A. //At the beginning of the Buddha's career// he delivered a sermon to the five brethren at the forest in the Deer Park at Isipatana near Benares. This was his first sermon, called the Wheel of Dhamma. He started with the two extremes that those who have gone forth from the household life should not indulge in, saying,

//dveme bhikkhave anta pabbajitena na sevitabba//:

'Monks, there are these two extremes that those who have gone forth

from the household life should not pursue: indulgence in sensual pleasure and indulgence in self--affliction.' To explain: Indulgence in sensual pleasure lies on the side of love; indulgence in self-affliction, on the side of hate. Both sides are causes of suffering and stress. When we practice self-purification and yet fall into either of these two sides, we can't be said to have entered the middle way, for when we are making a persistent effort to practice and the mind becomes fully calm and relaxed, we are pleased; when the mind thinks and becomes restless and distracted, we are displeased. Being pleased is indulgence in pleasure; being displeased, indulgence in self-affliction. Being pleased is passion, being displeased is aversion, and not being wise to passion and aversion is delusion.

Whoever makes an effort to develop persistence in concentration has to start out by running into these two extremes. If we run into these extremes, we are classed as wrong, but it is only normal that we be wrong before we can be right. Even the Buddha, before his Awakening, was completely wrong in just the same way. Even his two foremost disciples were wrong -- and held pernicious doctrines to boot. All the other disciples started out wrong from the beginning as well. But when the Buddha came to follow the middle way while meditating under the shade of the Bodhi tree, after having gained the first two knowledges -- remembrance of previous lifetimes and knowledge of the death and rebirth of living beings -- in the first two watches of the night, he gained the third knowledge -- knowledge of the ending of mental effluents -- in the watch toward dawn. This was when he found the genuine middle way, releasing his mind from the error of the two extremes. Released from the clan, class, abodes, lineage, and legacy of convention and supposing, he attained the clan, class, abode, lineage, and legacy of the Noble Ones. The Noble Disciples came to know following the Buddha, acting correctly in line with the knowledge of the ending of mental effluents, and gained release from error just as he had.

As for us as meditators, in the very beginning it is only normal that we will have to be wrong. As long as we let ourselves be pleased and displeased in the development of merit and wisdom, we fall under the sway of the ways of the world (//lokadhamma//), and when we are under the sway of the ways of the world, we are shaken by pleasure and displeasure. This is called being shaken back and forth.

//uppanno kho me//:

Where do the ways of the world arise? In ourselves. The ways of the world have eight factors, and the path that cures them has eight as well. The eightfold path is the cure for the eight ways of the world. Thus the Buddha taught the middle way as the cure for the two extremes.

Once we have cured ourselves of the two extremes, we enter the noble path, cutting across the currents of the world, making the mind //cago patinissaggo mutti analayo// -- relinquish, release, and rest easy.

To summarize: As long as the two extremes still exist in your heart, you are not on the right track. But when your heart gains release from the two extremes, you become unshakable: free from impurities and safe from the flood. This is why the meaning of the Wheel of Dhamma is very significant. When the Buddha explained the Wheel of Dhamma, it caused the elements of the world to tremble. And when the message is so significant, how could they help but tremble? The elements of the world are nothing else but this very body of ours. Our body is composed of the world's elements and it trembles because

the mind sees into something it has never seen before. The fact that the mind is released from the two extremes is what causes the elements of the world to tremble. They tremble because the mind is not coming back to give rise to them ever again.

B. //At the mid-point of the Buddha's career// he delivered the Patimokkha Exhortation to an assembly of 1,250 arahants at the Squirrels' Feeding Grounds in the Royal Bamboo Grove near Rajagaha. One of the important points was,

//adhicitte ca ayogo etam buddhana-sasanam//:

'Heighten the mind: That is the teaching of the Buddhas.' To heighten the mind, we have to be calm and at peace.

//iccha lobha-samapanno samano kim bhavissati//:

'When we are endowed with desire -- greedy, struggling, and deluded -- how can we be calm and at peace?' We need to practice by following the discipline as our starting point and by developing our meditation theme, beginning with walking and sitting meditation. We must work at our contemplation of the great frames of reference and develop it repeatedly, starting by keeping track of the body as our frame of reference. At first we should contemplate the parts of the body by means of //parikamma savana//, i.e., by means of conjecture -- that this part is like that, and that is like this -- because if we do this mindfully, with self-awareness, the mind won't wander far from the body and will settle down easily. When we practice //parikamma savana// repeatedly, an //uggaha nimitta// will arise. We should then master that stage until we reach //patibhaga//, analyzing the vision into its parts. When we master //patibhaga// fully, it will turn into insight meditation. We then develop insight meditation to its highest degree so that the mind will reach //thitibhutam//, as discussed in the strategies of clear insight. This is what is meant by 'practice.' When we have practiced,

//mokkham//:

We will cross over and beyond. It is because of the practices that we have done to completion that we will cross over and beyond -- i.e., beyond the world. This is what is meant by the transcendent dhammas.

//khemam//:

We will gain relief from bondage.

Thus the message of the middle sermon is significant because it aims at release.

C. //At the end of his career//, when he was about to enter total //nibbana//, the Buddha delivered his final sermon in the midst of a gathering of Noble Disciples in the Royal Sala Grove of the Mallian gentry of Kusinara, saying, //handadani amantayami vo bhikkhave, pativediyami vo bhikkhave, khaya-vaya-dhamma sankhara, appamadena sampadetha//: 'I say to you, monks, do not be complacent. Contemplate fashionings that arise and then decay. When you contemplate in this manner, you will penetrate completely. ' That was all he said and he never said anything further. This is thus said to be his final sermon.

To explain the meaning: Where do fashionings arise? What are fashionings? Fashionings arise in our own minds. They are an effect or

condition of the mind that gives rise to all supposings. These fashionings are the culprits that suppose and formulate everything in the world. Actually, the things of the world -- in their elementary properties as phenomena -- are simply the way they are. Earth, trees, mountains, sky, and sunshine don't say that they are anything at all. Even the human body, which is also composed of the world's elements, doesn't say that it is this or that. Mental fashioning is the culprit that styles these things as being this or that -- and we fall for what it says as being true, holding that all these things are ours or ourselves. Passion, aversion, and delusion thus arise, causing the primal mind to stray deludedly after birth, aging, illness, and death, circling around endlessly through innumerable states of becoming and birth -- all through the instigation of mental fashioning.

This is why the Buddha taught us to contemplate mental fashionings as inconstant and stressful:

//sabbe sankhara anicca, sabbe sankhara dukkha//.

We keep at this until we see them with full and clear comprehension -- which arises as the fruit of having earlier developed //patibhaga// -- to the point where the mind enters the //bhavanga//, its underlying state. When the current of the //bhavanga// disappears, a genuinely intuitive understanding will arise right at the heart: 'That's just how they are -- inconstant and stressful.' When we master this and see it clearly and distinctly, we will then be wise to mental fashionings. Mental fashionings will no longer be able to fashion the mind into becoming aroused ever again, as stated in the verse,

//akuppam sabba-dhammesu neyyadhamma pavessanto//:

When mental fashioning can no longer fashion the mind, the mind doesn't become aroused. It is wise to all knowable dhammas,

- //santo//:

and thus calm and at peace, reaching release.

The words of this final sermon are truly significant. They can make the person who contemplates them awaken to the ultimate degree -- which is why the Buddha stopped speaking and said no more.

The sermons given at these three points in the Buddha's career have a significance over and beyond that of any other he ever gave. The first sermon aims at release, the middle sermon aims at release, the final sermon aims at release. In this way all three of them without exception aim at nothing but release.

* * *

Section 17.

Arahants of every sort attain both release through concentration and release through discernment, having developed the threefold training to completion.

//anasavam ceto-vimuttim panna-vimuttim
dittheva dhamme sayam abhinna sacchikatva
upasampajja viharanti//:

'They dwell without effluent, having entered the release through concentration and release through discernment realized and verified by themselves in the very present.'

This passage from the Canon shows that arahants of no matter what sort reach both release through concentration and release through discernment, free from effluents in the present. No distinctions are made, saying that this or that group reaches release only through concentration or only through discernment. The explanation given by the Commentators -- that release through concentration pertains to those arahants who develop concentration first, while release through discernment pertains to the 'dry insight' arahants, who develop insight exclusively without having first developed concentration -- runs counter to the path. The eightfold path includes both Right View and Right Concentration. A person who is to gain release has to develop all eight factors of the path. Otherwise he or she won't be able to gain release. The threefold training includes both concentration and discernment. A person who is to attain knowledge of the ending of mental effluents has to develop all three parts of the threefold training completely.

This is why we say that arahants of every sort have to reach both release through concentration and release through discernment .

* * * * *

Glossary

//anusaya//: Latent tendency -- sensual passion, irritation, views, doubt, pride, passion for states of becoming, and unawareness .

//apaya//: State of deprivation; the four lowest levels of existence -- rebirth in hell, as a hungry shade, as an angry demon, or as a common animal.

//arahant//: A person whose heart is freed from mental effluents (see //asava//) and is thus not destined for further rebirth .

//arupa jhana//: Meditative absorption in a non-physical object .

//asava//: Mental effluent -- sensuality, states of becoming, and unawareness.

//avijja//: Unawareness, ignorance, counterfeit knowledge.

//dhamma//: Event; phenomenon; the way things are in and of themselves; their inherent qualities; the basic principles underlying their behavior. Also, principles of behavior that human beings ought to follow so as to fit in with the right natural order of things; qualities of mind they should develop so as to realize the inherent quality of the mind in and of itself. By extension, 'Dhamma' is used also to refer to any doctrine that teaches such things.

//dhatu//: Element; property; potential. The four physical properties are those of earth (solidity), water (liquidity), fire (heat), and wind (energy or motion).

//khandha//: Component parts of sensory perception: //rupa// (physical

phenomena); //vedana// (feelings of pleasure, pain, or indifference); //Sanna// (concepts, labels, allusions); //sankhara// (mental fashionings, formations, processes); and //vinnana// (cognizance, consciousness).

//lokadhamma//: Ways of the world -- fortune, loss, praise, blame, status, disgrace, pleasure, and pain.

//nibbana//: Liberation; the unbinding of the mind from passion, aversion, and delusion, and thus from the round of death and rebirth.

//nivarana//: Hindrances to concentration -- sensual desire, ill will, torpor & lethargy, restlessness & anxiety, and uncertainty.

//ogha//: Flood; factors that sweep the mind along the round of death and rebirth -- sensuality, states of becoming, and unawareness.

//patibhaga//: The manipulation of visions that appear in meditation.

//rupa jhana//: Meditative absorption in a physical object or sensation.

//satipatthana//: Frame of reference; foundation of mindfulness -- body, feelings, mind, and mental qualities.

//uggaha nimitta//: An image appearing spontaneously during meditation.

//upakkilesa//: Mental corruption or defilement -- passion, aversion, and delusion in their various forms.

* * * * *

[end]