

Island Sangha Sutra Book

2017

We are grateful to the following teachers and communities
for their contributions to this Sutra book:

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Table of Contents

- 1 - Incense Offering
- 2 - Bowing Ceremony
- 3 - The Insight That Brings Us To The Other Shore
- 4 - Sutra Opening Verse
- 5 - Ti Sarana Threefold Vow of Refuge
- 6 - Great Vows for All
- 7 - Sharing the Merit
- 8 - Recitation of the Five Mindfulness Trainings
- 9 - Recitation the Fourteen Mindfulness Trainings
- 10 - The Three Refuges
- 11 - The Five Remembrances
- 12 - Invoking the Bodhisattvas' Names
- 13 - Formal Meal Gathas
- 14 - Discourse on Love
- 15 - Discourse on Happiness
- 16 - Discourse on Knowing the Better Way to Live Alone
- 17 - Discourse on the Full Awareness of Breathing
- 18 - Discourse on Measuring and Reflecting
- 19 - Discourse on the Absolute Truth
- 20 - Discourse on the Four Establishments of Mindfulness
- 21 - Discourse on the Five Ways of Putting an End to Anger
- 22 - Discourse on the Middle Way
- 23 - Discourse on the Dharma Seal
- 24 - Discourse on the Eight Realizations of the Great Beings
- 25 - Discourse on the White-Clad Disciple
- 26 - The Four Virtues of a Bodhisattva
- 27 - To-Rei Zenji: Bodhisattva's Vow
- 28 - Hakuin Zenji: Song of Zazen
- 29 - Song of the Grass-Roof Hermitage
- 30 - Practice Songs

1 - Incense Offering

The fragrance of this incense
invites the awakened mind
to be truly present with us now.

The fragrance of this incense
fills our practice center,
protects and guards our minds
from all wrong thinking.

The fragrance of this incense
collects us and unites us.
Precepts, concentration, insight,
we offer for all that is.

Namo bodhisattvebhya.
Namo mahasattvebhya.

2 - Bowing Ceremony

Opening Gatha

The one who bows and the one who is bowed to are both by nature empty.
Therefore the communication between them is inexpressibly perfect.
Our practice center is the Net of Indra reflecting all Buddhas everywhere.
And my own person reflects in all Buddhas,
to whom with my whole life I go for refuge.

(bell)

Prostrations

Offering light in the Ten Directions,
the Buddha, the Dharma, and the Sangha,
to whom we bow in gratitude.

(bell)

Teaching and living the way of awareness
in the very midst of suffering and confusion,
Shakyamuni Buddha, the Awakened One,
to whom we bow in gratitude.

(bell)

Cutting through ignorance,
awakening our hearts and our minds,
Manjushri, the Bodhisattva of Great Understanding,
to whom we bow in gratitude.

(bell)

Working mindfully, working joyfully
for the sake of all beings,
Samantabhadra, the Bodhisattva of Great Action,
to whom we bow in gratitude.

(bell)

Listening deeply, serving beings in countless ways,
Avalokiteshvara, the Bodhisattva of Great Compassion,
to whom we bow in gratitude.

(bell)

Seed of awakening and loving kindness
in children, sprouts, and all beings,
Maitreya, the Buddha to be born,
to whom we bow in gratitude.

(bell)

Showing the way fearlessly and compassionately,
the stream of all our Ancestral Teachers,
to whom we bow in gratitude.

(2 bells)

3 - The Insight That Brings Us To The Other Shore

10 A - va - lo - ki-tesh - va-ra while prac-ti-cing deep-ly with the In-sight that Brings Us to the O - ther

17 Shore, sud-den-ly dis - co - vered that all_ of the five Skan-dhas are e - qual-ly emp-ty and with

26 this rea-li - sa-tion he o - ver-came all_ Ill - be-ing. "Lis-ten Sa-ri - pu-tra this Bo - dy it -

34 self_ is Emp-ti-ness and Emp-ti-ness it - self is this Bo - dy. This Bo - dy is not o - ther than Emp-ti-ness and

42 Emp-ti-ness is not o - ther than this Bo - dy. The same is true of Feel-ings, Per - cep - tions, Men-tal For

50 ma - tions and_ Con-sci-ous-ness. "Lis-ten Sa-ri - pu - tra all phe - no-me-na bear the mark of

57 Emp-ti-ness; their true na - ture is the na - ture of no Birth no Death, no Be-ing no Non - be-ing, no De

64 file-ment no Pu-ri-ty, no In creas - ing no De creas - ing. That is why in Emp-ti - ness Bo - dy,

71 Feel-ings, Per - cep - tions, Men-tal For - ma-tions and Con-sci-ous-ness are_ not_ se-pa-rate self

78 en-ti-ties. The Eigh-teen Realms of Phe - no-me-na which are the six Sense Or-gans, six Sense Ob

86 jects and six Con-sci-ous- nes-ses are_ al - so_ not se-pa-rate self en-ti-ties. The Twelve Links of

94 In - ter-de - pen-dent A - ri - sing and their Ex - tinc-tion are_ al - so_ not se-pa-rate self en-ti-ties.

Ill - be - ing, the Cau-ses of Ill - be - ing, the End of Ill - be - ing, the Path, _____ in-sight and at

V.S.

102
tain - ment are al - so not se - pa - rate self en - ti - ties. Who - e - ver can see this no lon - ger needs

110
a - ny - thing to at - tain. Bo - dhi - sat - tvas who prac - tice the In - sight that Brings Us to the

118
O - ther Shore see no more ob - sta - cles in their mind, and be cause there are no more ob - sta - cles in their

125
mind, they can o - ver - come all fear, de - stroy all wrong per - cep - tions and re - a - lise Per - fect Nir -

132
va - na. "All Bud - dhas in the past, pre - sent and fu - ture by prac - ti - cing the In - sight that

140
Brings Us to the O - ther Shore are all ca - pa - ble of at - tain - ing Au - then - tic and Per - fect En -

148
ligh - ten - ment. "There - fore Sa - ri - pu - tra it should be known that the In - sight that

155
Brings Us to the O - ther Shore is a Great Man - tra, the most il - lu - mi - na - ting man - tra, the high - est

163
man - tra, a man - tra be yound com pare, the True Wis - dom that has the po - wer to put an

172
end to all kinds of suf - fer - ing. There - fore let us pro - claim a

179
man - tra to praise the In - sight that Brings Us to the O - ther Shore:

187
Ga - te, Ga - te, Pa - ra - ga - te, Pa - ra - sam - ga - te, Bo - dhi Sva - ha!

4 - Sutra Opening Verse

Namo Tassa Bhagavato Arahato Samma Sambuddhassa
 Namō Tassa Bhagavato Arahato Samma Sambuddhassa
 Namō Tassa Bhagavato Arahato Samma Sambuddhassa

The Dharma is deep and lovely.
 We now have a chance to see it,
 study it, and practice it.
 We vow to realize its true meaning.

5 - Ti Sarana Threefold Vow of Refuge

Buddham saranam gacchami.
 Dhammam saranam gacchami.
 Sangham saranam gacchami.

I take refuge in the Buddha.
 I take refuge in the Dharma.
 I take refuge in the Sangha.

Buddham saranam gacchami.
 Dhammam saranam gacchami.
 Sangham saranam gacchami.

6 - Great Vows for All

The many beings are numberless; I vow to save them.
 Greed, hatred, and ignorance rise endlessly; I vow to abandon them.
 Dharma gates are countless; I vow to wake to them.
 The Buddha's way is unsurpassed; I vow to embody it fully.

7 - Sharing the Merit

Reciting the sutras (reciting the precepts) (transmitting the precepts),
 practicing the way of awareness,
 gives rise to benefits without limit.
 We vow to share the fruits with all beings.
 We vow to offer tribute to parents, teachers, friends,
 and numerous beings
 who give guidance and support along the path.

Ceremonies

8 - Recitation of the Five Mindfulness Trainings

Introduction (*Recitation Leader may deliver in their own words, or use the following.*)

Dear friends, today we have gathered as a Sangha to recite the Five Mindfulness Trainings. The Buddha offered these ancient precepts as guidelines for living an ethical life. They express the mind of universal understanding and compassion, and are the basis by which we train ourselves in mindfulness. Therefore our teacher in Plum Village, has translated them as mindfulness trainings, and we consider them as trainings for our own practice and deepening. Please listen to each mindfulness training and answer “yes” silently every time you see that you have made an effort to study, practice, and observe the mindfulness training read.

Sanghakarman Procedure

Sanghakarman Master: Has the entire community assembled?

Sangha Convener: The entire community has assembled.

Sanghakarman Master: Is there harmony in the community?

Sangha Convener: Yes, there is harmony.

Sanghakarman Master: Is there anyone not able to be present who has asked to be represented, and have they declared themselves to have done their best to study and practice the Five Mindfulness Trainings?

Sangha Convener: No, there is not.

Or

Sangha Convener: Yes, [NAME], for health reasons, cannot be at the recitation today. She has asked [NAME] to represent her and she declares that she has done her best to study and practice the mindfulness trainings.

Sanghakarman Master: What is the reason for the community gathering today?

Sangha Convener: The community has gathered to practice the recitation of the Five Mindfulness Trainings.

Sanghakarman Master: Noble community, please listen. Today, [DATE], has been declared to be the Mindfulness Training Recitation Day. We have gathered at the appointed time. The noble community is ready to hear and recite the mindfulness trainings in an atmosphere of harmony, and the recitation can proceed. Is this statement clear and complete?

Everyone: Clear and complete
[BELL]

1. Reverence for Life

Aware of the suffering caused by the destruction of life, I vow to cultivate compassion and learn ways to protect the lives of people, animals, plants, and minerals. I am determined not to kill, not to let others kill, and not to condone any act of killing in the world, in my thinking and in my way of life.

(1 breath)

This is the first of the Five Mindfulness Trainings.
Have you made an effort to study and practice it in your daily life?

(2 breaths)

(bell)

2. True Happiness

Aware of the suffering caused by exploitation, social injustice, stealing, and oppression, I vow to cultivate loving kindness and learn ways to work for the well-being of people, animals, plants, and minerals. I vow to practice generosity by sharing my time, energy, and material resources with those who are in real need. I am determined not to steal and not to possess anything that should belong to others. I will respect the property of others, but I will prevent others from profiting from human suffering or the suffering of other species on Earth.

(1 breath)

This is the second of the Five Mindfulness Trainings.
Have you made an effort to study and practice it in your daily life?

(2 breaths)

(bell)

3. True Love

Aware of the suffering caused by sexual misconduct, I vow to cultivate responsibility and learn ways to protect the safety and integrity of individuals, couples, families, and society. I am determined not to engage in sexual relations without love and a long-term commitment. To preserve the happiness of myself and others, I am determined to respect my commitments and the commitments of others. I will do everything in my power to protect children from sexual abuse and to prevent couples and families from being broken by sexual misconduct.

(1 breath)

This is the third of the Five Mindfulness Trainings.
Have you made an effort to study and practice it in your daily life?

(2 breaths)

(bell)

4. Loving Speech and Deep Listening

Aware of the suffering caused by unmindful speech and the inability to listen to others, I vow to cultivate loving speech and deep listening in order to bring joy and happiness to others and relieve others of their suffering. Knowing that words can create happiness or suffering, I vow to learn to speak truthfully, with words that inspire self-confidence, joy, and hope. I am determined not to spread news that I do not know to be certain and not to criticize or condemn things of which I am not sure. I will refrain from uttering words that can cause division or discord, or that can cause the family or the community to break. I will make all efforts to reconcile and resolve all conflicts, however small.

(1 breath)

This is the fourth of the Five Mindfulness Trainings.
Have you made an effort to study and practice it in your daily life?

(2 breaths)

(bell)

5. Nourishment and Healing

Aware of the suffering caused by unmindful consumption, I vow to cultivate good health, both physical and mental, for myself, my family, and my society by practicing mindful eating, drinking, and consuming. I vow to ingest only items that preserve peace, well-being, and joy in my body, in my consciousness, and in the collective body and consciousness of my family and society. I am determined not to use alcohol or any other intoxicant or to ingest foods or other items that contain toxins, such as certain TV programs, magazines, books, films, and conversations. I am aware that to damage my body or my consciousness with these poisons is to betray my ancestors, my parents, my society, and future generations. I will work to transform violence, fear, anger, and confusion in myself and in society by practicing a diet for myself and for society. I understand that a proper diet is crucial for self-transformation and for the transformation of society.

(1 breath)

This is the fifth of the Five Mindfulness Trainings.
Have you made an effort to study and practice it in your daily life?

(2 breaths)

(bell)

Brothers and Sisters, we have recited the Five Wonderful Precepts, the foundation of happiness for the individual, the family, and society. We should recite them regularly so that our study and practice of the precepts can deepen day by day.

9 - Recitation the Fourteen Mindfulness Trainings

Sanghakarman Procedure

Sanghakarman Master: Has the entire community assembled?

Sangha Convener: The entire community has assembled.

Sanghakarman Master: Is there harmony in the community?

Sangha Convener: Yes, there is harmony.

Sanghakarman Master: Is there anyone not able to be present who has asked to be represented, and have they declared themselves to have done their best to study and practice the Mindfulness Trainings?

Sangha Convener: No, there is not.

or

Sangha Convener: Yes, *(name)*, for health reasons, cannot be at the recitation today. He has asked *(name)* to represent him, and he declares that he has done his best to study and practice the mindfulness trainings.

Sanghakarman Master: Why has the community assembled today?

Sangha Convener: The community has assembled to practice the recitation of the Fourteen Mindfulness Trainings of the Order of Interbeing.

Sanghakarman Master: Noble community, please listen. Today, *(date)*, has been declared as the day to recite the Fourteen Mindfulness Trainings of the Order of Interbeing. The community has assembled at the appointed time and is ready to hear and recite the Fourteen Mindfulness Trainings in an atmosphere of harmony. Thus, the recitation can proceed.

Is that correct?

Everyone: That is correct.

(repeat question and answer three times)

(bell)

Introduction

Today, as a community, we will recite the Fourteen Mindfulness Trainings. May we give each other spiritual support.

The Fourteen Mindfulness Trainings are the very essence of the Order of Interbeing. They are the torch lighting our path, the boat carrying us, the teacher guiding us. Let us listen with serene minds.

Consider the Mindfulness Trainings as a clear mirror in which to look at ourselves. Say “Yes,” silently, every time you see that you have made an effort to learn, practice, and observe the mindfulness training read.

(three breaths)

(bell)

Brothers and Sisters are you ready?

Everyone (silently): We are ready.

These, then, are the Fourteen Mindfulness Trainings of the Order of Interbeing.

The First Mindfulness Training: Openness

Aware of the suffering created by fanaticism and intolerance, we are determined not to be idolatrous about or bound to any doctrine, theory, or ideology, even Buddhist ones. Buddhist teachings are guiding means to help us look deeply and to develop compassion. They are not doctrines to fight, kill, or die for.

(one breath)

This is the First Mindfulness Training of the Order of Interbeing. Have you studied, practiced, and observed it since the last recitation?

(two breaths)

(bell)

The Second Mindfulness Training: Non-attachment to Views

Aware of the suffering created by attachment to views and wrong perceptions, we are determined to avoid being narrow-minded and bound to present views. We shall learn and practice non-attachment to views in order to be open to receive others' insights and experiences. Truth is found in life, and we will observe life in and around us in every moment, ready to learn throughout our lives.

(one breath)

This is the Second Mindfulness Training of the Order of Interbeing. Have you studied, practiced, and observed it since the last recitation?

(two breaths)

(bell)

The Third Mindfulness Training: Freedom of Thought

Aware of the suffering brought about when we impose our views on others, we are committed not to force others, even our children, by any means whatsoever – such as authority, threat, money, propaganda, or indoctrination -- to adopt our views. We will, however, help others renounce fanaticism and narrowness through compassionate dialogue.

(one breath)

This is the Third Mindfulness Training of the Order of Interbeing. Have you studied, practiced, and observed it since the last recitation?

(two breaths)

(bell)

The Fourth Mindfulness Training: Awareness of Suffering

Aware that looking deeply at the nature of suffering can help us develop compassion and find ways out of suffering, we are determined not to avoid or close our eyes before suffering. We are committed to finding ways, including personal contact, images, and sounds, to be with those who suffer, so we can understand their situation deeply and help them transform their suffering into compassion, peace, and joy.

(one breath)

This is the Fourth Mindfulness Training of the Order of Interbeing. Have you studied, practiced, and observed it since the last recitation?

(two breaths)

(bell)

The Fifth Mindfulness Training: Compassionate, Healthy Living

Aware that true happiness is rooted in peace, solidity, freedom, and compassion, and not in wealth or fame, we are determined not to take as the aim of our life fame, profit, wealth, or sensual pleasure. We are committed to living simply and sharing our time, energy, and material resources with those in need. We will practice mindful consuming, not using alcohol, drugs, or any other products that bring toxins into our own and the collective body and consciousness.

(one breath)

This is the Fifth Mindfulness Training of the Order of Interbeing. Have you studied, practiced, and observed it since the last recitation?

(two breaths)

(bell)

The Sixth Mindfulness Training: Taking Care of Anger

Aware that anger blocks communication and creates suffering, we are determined to take care of the energy of anger when it arises and to recognize and transform the seeds of anger that lie deep in our consciousness. When anger comes up, we are determined not to do or say anything, but to practice mindful breathing or mindful walking and acknowledge, embrace, and look deeply into our anger. We will learn to look with the eyes of compassion at those we think are the cause of our anger.

(one breath)

This is the Sixth Mindfulness Training of the Order of Interbeing. Have you studied, practiced, and observed it since the last recitation?

(two breaths)

(bell)

The Seventh Mindfulness Training: Dwelling Happily in the Present Moment

Aware that life is available only in the present moment and that it is possible to live happily in the here and now, we are committed to training ourselves to live deeply each moment of daily life. We will try not to lose ourselves in dispersion or be carried away by regrets about the past, worries about the future, or craving, anger, or jealousy in the present. We will practice mindful breathing to come back to what is happening in the present moment. We are determined to learn the art of mindful living by touching the wondrous, refreshing, and healing elements that are inside and around us, and by nourishing seeds of joy, peace, love, and understanding in ourselves, thus facilitating the work of transformation and healing in our consciousness.

(one breath)

This is the Seventh Mindfulness Training of the Order of Interbeing. Have you studied, practiced, and observed it since the last recitation?

(two breaths)

(bell)

The Eighth Mindfulness Training: True Community and Communication

Aware that lack of communication always brings separation and suffering, we are committed to training ourselves in the practice of compassionate listening and loving speech. We will learn to listen deeply without judging or reacting and refrain from uttering words that can create discord and cause the community to break. We will make every effort to keep communication open and resolve all conflicts, however small.

(one breath)

This is the Eighth Mindfulness Training of the Order of Interbeing. Have you studied, practiced, and observed it since the last recitation?

(two breaths)

(bell)

The Ninth Mindfulness Training: Truthful and Loving Speech

Aware that words can create suffering or happiness, we are committed to learning to speak truthfully and constructively, using only words that inspire hope and confidence. We are determined not to say untruthful things for the sake of personal interest or to impress people, nor to utter words that might cause division or hatred. We will not spread news that we do not know to be certain nor criticize or condemn things of which we are not sure. We will do our best to speak out about situations of injustice, even when doing so may threaten our safety.

(one breath)

This is the Ninth Mindfulness Training of the Order of Interbeing. Have you studied, practiced, and observed it since the last recitation?

(two breaths)

(bell)

The Tenth Mindfulness Training: Protecting and Nourishing the Sangha

Aware that the essence and aim of a Sangha is the practice of understanding and compassion, we are determined not to use the Buddhist community for personal gain or profit or transform our community into a political instrument. A spiritual community should, however, take a clear stand against oppression and injustice and should strive to change the situation without engaging in partisan conflicts.

(one breath)

This is the Tenth Mindfulness Training of the Order of Interbeing. Have you studied, practiced, and observed it since the last recitation?

(two breaths)

(bell)

The Eleventh Mindfulness Training: Right Livelihood

Aware that great violence and injustice have been done to our environment and society, we are committed not to live with a vocation that is harmful to humans and nature. We will do our best to select a livelihood that helps realize our ideal of understanding and compassion. Aware of global economic, political, and social realities, we will behave responsibly as consumers and as citizens, not investing in companies that deprive others of their chance to live,

(one breath)

This is the Eleventh Mindfulness Training of the Order of Interbeing. Have you studied, practiced, and observed it since the last recitation?

(two breaths)

(bell)

The Twelfth Mindfulness Training: Reverence for Life

Aware that much suffering is caused by war and conflict, we are determined to cultivate nonviolence, understanding, and compassion in our daily lives, to promote peace education, mindful mediation, and reconciliation within families, communities, nations, and in the world. We are determined not to kill and not to let others kill. We will diligently practice deep looking with our Sangha to discover better ways to protect life and prevent war.

(one breath)

This is the Twelfth Mindfulness Training of the Order of Interbeing. Have you studied, practiced, and observed it since the last recitation?

(two breaths)

(bell)

The Thirteenth Mindfulness Training: Generosity

Aware of the suffering caused by exploitation, social injustice, stealing, and oppression, we are committed to cultivating loving kindness and learning ways to work for the well-being of people, animals, plants, and minerals. We will practice generosity by sharing our time, energy, and material resources with those who are in need. We are determined not to steal and not to possess anything that should belong to others. We will respect the property of others, but will try to prevent others from profiting from human suffering or the suffering of other beings.

(one breath)

This is the Thirteenth Mindfulness Training of the Order of Interbeing. Have you studied, practiced, and observed it since the last recitation?

(two breaths)

(bell)

The Fourteenth Mindfulness Training: Right Conduct

Aware that sexual relations motivated by craving cannot dissipate the feeling of loneliness but will create more suffering, frustration, and isolation, we are determined not to engage in sexual relations without mutual understanding, love, and long-term commitment. In sexual relations, we must be aware of future suffering that may be caused. We know that to preserve the happiness of ourselves and others, we must respect the rights and commitments of ourselves and others. We will do everything in our power to protect children from sexual abuse and to protect couples and families from being broken by sexual misconduct. We will treat our bodies with respect and preserve our vital energies (sexual, breath, spirit) for the realization of our bodhisattva ideal. We will be fully aware of the responsibility of bringing new lives into the world, and will meditate on the world into which we are bringing new beings.

(one breath)

This is the Fourteenth Mindfulness Training of the Order of Interbeing. Have you studied, practiced, and observed it since the last recitation?

(two breaths)

(bell)

Brothers and Sisters, we have recited the Fourteen Mindfulness Trainings of the Order of Interbeing as a community.

10 - The Three Refuges

I take refuge in the Buddha,
the one who shows me the way in this life.

I take refuge in the Dharma,
the way of understanding and of love.

I take refuge in the Sangha,
the community that lives in harmony and awareness.

(bell)

Dwelling in the refuge of Buddha,
I clearly see the path of light and beauty in the world.

Dwelling in the refuge of Dharma,
I learn to open many doors
on the path of transformation.

Dwelling in the refuge of Sangha,
Shining light that supports me,
keeping my practice free of obstruction.

(bell)

Taking refuge in the Buddha in myself,
I aspire to help all people recognize their own awakened nature,
realizing the mind of love.

Taking refuge in the Dharma in myself,
I aspire to help all people fully master the ways of practice
and walk together on the path of liberation.

Taking refuge in the Sangha in myself,
I aspire to help all people build fourfold communities,
to embrace all beings, and support their transformation.

11 - The Five Remembrances

I am of the nature to grow old.
There is no way to escape growing old.

(bell)

I am of the nature to have ill health.
There is no way to escape having ill health.

(bell)

I am of the nature to die.
There is no way to escape death.

(bell)

All that is dear to me, and everyone I love are of the nature to change.
There is no way to escape being separated from them.

(bell)

My actions are my only true belongings.
I cannot escape the consequences of my actions.
My actions are the ground on which I stand.

12 - Invoking the Bodhisattvas' Names

We invoke your name, Avalokiteshvara.
 We aspire to learn your way of listening
 in order to help relieve the suffering in the world.
 You know how to listen in order to understand.
 We invoke your name in order to practice listening
 with all our attention and open-heartedness.
 We will sit and listen without any prejudice.
 We will sit and listen without judging or reacting.
 We will sit and listen in order to understand.
 We will sit and listen so attentively that we will be able to hear
 what the other person is saying and also what is left unsaid.
 We know that just by listening deeply we already alleviate
 a great deal of pain and suffering in the other person.

(bell)

We invoke your name, Manjushri.
 We aspire to learn your way, which is to be still, and to look deeply
 into the heart of things and into the hearts of people.
 We will look with all our attention and open-heartedness.
 We will look with unprejudiced eyes.
 We will look without judging or reacting.
 We will look deeply so that we will be able to see and understand
 the roots of ill-being, the impermanent and selfless nature of all that is.
 We will practice your way of using the sword of understanding
 to cut through the bonds of ill-being,
 thus freeing ourselves and other species.

(bell)

We invoke your name, Samantabhadra.
 We aspire to practice your aspiration
 to act with the eyes and heart of compassion.
 We vow to bring joy to one person in the morning
 and to ease the pain of one person in the afternoon.
 We know that the happiness of others is our own happiness,
 and we vow to practice joy on the path of service.
 We know that every word, every look, every action,
 and every smile can bring happiness to others.
 We know that if we practice wholeheartedly,
 we ourselves may become an inexhaustible source of peace and joy
 for our loved ones and for all species.

(bell)

We invoke your name, Ksitigarbha.
We aspire to learn your way so as to be present
where there is darkness, suffering, oppression, and despair,
so that we may bring light, hope, relief, and liberation to those places.
We are determined not to forget about or abandon
those who are in desperate situations.
We shall do our best to establish contact with them
when they cannot find a way out of their suffering,
and when their cries for help, justice, equality, and human rights are not heard.
We know that hell can be found in many places on earth,
and we do not want to contribute to making more hells on earth.
Rather, we want to help unmake the hells that already exist.
We shall practice to realize the qualities of perseverance and stability
which belong to the earth, so that, like the earth,
we can always be supportive and faithful to those who need us.

(bell)

We invoke your name, Sadaparibhuta. We aspire to learn your way of never
disparaging or underestimating any living being. With great respect, you say to all you
meet, "You are someone of great value, you have Buddha nature, I see this potential
in you."
We will look with a wise, compassionate gaze, so we are able to hold up a mirror
where others can see their ultimate nature reflected. We will remind people who feel
worthless that they too are a precious wonder of life. We vow to water only the
positive seeds in ourselves and in others, so that our thoughts, words and actions can
encourage confidence and self-acceptance in ourselves, our children, our loved ones,
and in everyone we meet. Inspired by the great faith and insight that everyone is
Buddha, we will practice your way of patience and inclusiveness so we can liberate
ourselves from ignorance and misunderstanding, and offer freedom, peace, and joy to
ourselves, to others and to our society.

13 - Formal Meal Gathas

The five contemplations

This food is the gift of the whole universe –
the earth, the sky, and much hard work.

May we eat in mindfulness so as to be worthy to receive it.

May we transform our unskillful states of mind,
and learn to eat with moderation.

May we take only foods that nourish us and prevent illness.

We accept this food to realize the path of understanding and love.

Lifting our empty plate

My plate, empty now, will soon be filled with precious food.

Seeing the plate filled with food

In this food, I see clearly the presence of the entire universe
supporting my existence.

Sitting down

Sitting here is like sitting under the Bodhi tree.

My body is mindfulness itself, calm and at ease, free from distraction.

Looking at the plate of food before the first mouthful

Many beings are struggling for food today.

I pray that they all may have enough to eat.

*(As a bowl is passed, each person offers a small piece of their food to all who
hunger. The last person offers the bowl on the altar.)*

Contemplating our food

This plate of food, so fragrant and appetizing, also contains much suffering.

The first four mouthfuls (1)

With the first taste, I promise to offer joy.

With the second, I promise to help relieve the suffering of others.

With the third, I promise to see others' joy as my own.

With the fourth, I promise to learn the way of non-attachment and equanimity.

Looking at the plate when we have eaten

My plate is empty. My hunger is satisfied.

I vow to live for the benefit of all beings.

Discourses

14 - Discourse on Love

Those who want to attain peace should practice being upright, humble, and capable of using loving speech. They will know how to live simply and happily, with senses calmed, without being covetous and carried away by the emotions of the majority. Let them not do anything that will be disapproved of by the wise ones.

(And this is what they contemplate):

“May everyone be happy and safe, and may their hearts be filled with joy.

“May all living beings live in security and in peace — beings who are frail or strong, tall or short, big or small, visible or not visible, near or far away, already born or yet to be born. May all of them dwell in perfect tranquility.

“Let no one do harm to anyone. Let no one put the life of anyone in danger. Let no one, out of anger or ill will, wish anyone any harm.

“Just as parents love and protect their children at the risk of their own lives, we should cultivate boundless love to offer to all living beings in the entire cosmos. We should let our boundless love pervade the whole universe, above, below, and across.

“Our love will know no obstacles. Our hearts will be absolutely free from hatred and enmity. Whether standing or walking, sitting or lying, as long as we are awake, we should maintain this mindfulness of love in our own hearts. This is the noblest way of living.”

Free from wrong views, greed, and sensual desires, living in beauty and realizing perfect understanding, those who practice boundless love will certainly transcend birth and death.

— Metta Sutta (Suttanipata 1)

15 - Discourse on Happiness

I heard these words of the Buddha one time when the Lord was living in the vicinity of Shravasti at the Anathapindika monastery in the Jeta Park. Late at night, a deva appeared whose light and beauty made the whole Jeta Grove shine radiantly. After paying respects to the Buddha, the deva asked him a question in the form of a verse:

“Many gods and humans are eager to know
what are the greatest blessings
which can bring about a peaceful and happy life.
Please, Tathagata, will you teach us?”

(This is the Buddha’s answer):

“Not to be associated with foolish ones,
to live in the company of wise people,
and to honor those who are worth honoring —
this is the greatest happiness.

“To live in a good environment,
to have planted good seeds,
and to realize that you are on the right path —
this is the greatest happiness.

“To have a chance to learn,
to be skillful in your profession or craft,
and to know how to practice the precepts and loving speech —
this is the greatest happiness.

“To be able to support your parents,
to cherish your own family,
and to have a job that you like —
this is the greatest happiness.

“To live correctly, to be generous in giving,
to be able to give support to relatives and friends,
and to live a life of blameless conduct —
this is the greatest happiness.

“To avoid doing bad things,
to avoid being caught by alcoholism or drugs,
and to be diligent in doing good things —
this is the greatest happiness.

“To be humble and polite,
to be grateful and content with a simple life,
and not to miss the occasion to learn the dharma —
this is the greatest happiness.

“To persevere and be open to change,
to have regular contact with sincere practitioners,
and to participate in dharma discussions —
this is the greatest happiness.

“To live diligently and attentively,
to perceive the Noble Truths,
and to realize Nirvana —
this is the greatest happiness.

“To live in the world,
with your heart undisturbed by the world,
with all sorrows ended, dwelling in peace —
this is the greatest happiness.

“One who accomplishes this
will remain unvanquished wherever they go.
Always they will be safe and happy —
This is the greatest happiness.”

— Mahamangala Sutta (Suttanipata 1)

16 - Discourse on Knowing the Better Way to Live Alone

I heard these words of the Buddha one time when the Lord was staying at the monastery in the Jeta Grove, in the town of Shravasti. He called all the monks to him and instructed them, “Bhikkhus!” And the bhikkhus replied, “We are here.” The Blessed One taught, “I will teach you what is meant by ‘knowing the better way to live alone.’ I will begin with an outline of the teaching, and then I will give a detailed explanation. Bhikkhus, please listen carefully.” “Blessed One, we are listening.” The Buddha taught:

”Do not pursue the past. Do not lose yourself in the future.
The past no longer is. The future has not yet come.
Looking deeply at life as it is in the very here and now,
the practitioner dwells in stability and freedom.
We must be diligent today. To wait until tomorrow is too late.
Death comes unexpectedly. How can we bargain with it?
The sage calls a person who knows how to dwell in mindfulness night and day
‘the one who knows the better way to live alone.’

“Bhikkhus, what is meant by ‘pursuing the past’?”

”When we think about the way our body was in the past, the way our feelings were in the past, the way our perceptions were in the past, the way our mental factors were in the past, the way our consciousness was in the past; when we think about these things and our mind is burdened by and attached to these things which belong to the past, then we are pursuing the past.

“Bhikkhus, what is meant by ‘not pursuing the past’?”

”When we think about the way our body was in the past, the way our feelings were in the past, the way our perceptions were in the past, the way our mental factors were in the past, the way our consciousness was in the past; when we think about these things but our mind is neither enslaved by nor attached to these things which belong to the past, then we are not pursuing the past.

“Bhikkhus, what is meant by ‘losing yourself in the future’?”

”When we think about the way our body will be in the future, the way our feelings will be in the future, the way our perceptions will be in the future, the way our mental factors will be in the future, the way our consciousness will be in the future; when we think about these things and our mind is burdened by and daydreaming about these things which belong in the future, then we are losing ourselves in the future.

“Bhikkhus, what is meant by ‘not losing yourself in the future’?”

”When we think about the way our body will be in the future, the way our feelings will be in the future, the way our perceptions will be in the future, the way our mental factors will be in the future, the way our consciousness will be in the future; when we

think about these things but our mind is not burdened by or daydreaming about these things which belong in the future, then we are not losing ourselves in the future.

“Bhikkhus, what is meant by ‘being swept away by the present’?”

”When we do not study or learn anything about the Awakened One, or the teachings of love and understanding, or the community that lives in harmony and awareness; when we know nothing about the noble teachers and their teachings, and do not practice these teachings, and think, ‘This body is myself; I am this body. These feelings are myself; I am these feelings. This perception is myself; I am this perception. This mental factor is myself; I am this mental factor. This consciousness is myself; I am this consciousness,’ then we are being swept away by the present.

“Bhikkhus, what is meant by ‘not being swept away by the present’?”

”When we study and learn about the Awakened One, the teachings of love and understanding, and the community that lives in harmony and awareness; when we know about the noble teachers and their teachings, practice these teachings, and do not think, ‘This body is myself; I am this body. These feelings are myself; I am these feelings. This perception is myself; I am this perception. This mental factor is myself; I am this mental factor. This consciousness is myself; I am this consciousness,’ then we are not being swept away by the present.

“Bhikkhus, I have presented the outline and the detailed explanation of knowing the better way to live alone.”

Thus, the Buddha taught, and the bhikkhus were delighted to put his teachings into practice.

—Bhaddekaratta Sutta (Majjhima Nikaya 131)

17 - Discourse on the Full Awareness of Breathing

I

I heard these words of the Buddha one time when he was staying in Savatthi in the Eastern Park, with many well-known and accomplished disciples, including Sariputta, Mahamoggallana, Mahakassapa, Anuruddha, Revata, and Ananda. The senior bhikkhus in the community were diligently instructing bhikkhus who were new to the practice – some instructing ten bhikkhus, some twenty, some thirty, and some forty; and in this way the bhikkhus who were new to the practice gradually made great progress.

That night the moon was full, and the Pavarana Ceremony was held to mark the end of the rainy-season retreat. Lord Buddha, the Awakened One, was sitting in the open air, and his disciples were gathered around him. After looking over the assembly, he began to speak:

“O bhikkhus, I am pleased to observe the fruit you have attained in your practice. Yet I know you can make even more progress. What you have not yet attained, you can attain. What you have not yet realized, you can realize. To encourage your efforts, I will remain here until the next full-moon day.”

When they heard that the Lord Buddha was going to remain in Savatthi for another month, bhikkhus throughout the country began traveling there to study with him. The senior bhikkhus continued teaching the bhikkhus new to the practice even more ardently. Some were instructing ten bhikkhus, some twenty, some thirty, and some forty. With this help, the newer bhikkhus were able, little by little, to continue their progress in understanding.

When the next full-moon day arrived, the Buddha, seated under the open sky, looked over the assembly of bhikkhus and began to speak:

“O bhikkhus, our community is pure and good. At its heart, it is without useless and boastful talk, and therefore it deserves to receive offerings and be considered a field of merit. Such a community is rare, and any pilgrims who seek it, no matter how far they must travel, will find it worthy.

”O bhikkhus, there are bhikkhus in this assembly who have realized the fruit of Arhatship, destroyed every root of affliction, laid aside every burden, and attained right understanding and emancipation. There are also bhikkhus who have cut off the first five internal knots and realized the fruit of never returning to the cycle of birth and death.

“There are those who have thrown off the first three internal knots and realized the fruit of returning once more. They have cut off the roots of greed, hatred, and ignorance, and will only need to return to the cycle of birth and death one more time. There are those who have thrown off the three internal knots and attained the fruit of stream-enterer, coursing steadily to the Awakened State. There are those who practice the Four Establishments of Mindfulness. There are those who practice the

Four Right Efforts, and those who practice the Four Bases of Success. There are those who practice the Five Faculties, those who practice the Five Powers, those who practice the Seven Factors of Awakening, and those who practice the Noble Eightfold Path. There are those who practice the Nine Contemplations, and those who practice the Observation of Impermanence. There are also bhikkhus who are already practicing Full Awareness of Breathing.”

II

“O bhikkhus, the full awareness of breathing, if developed and practiced continuously, will be rewarding and bring great advantages. It will lead to success in practicing the Four Establishments of Mindfulness. If the method of the Four Establishments of Mindfulness is developed and practiced continuously, it will lead to success in the practice of the Seven Factors of Awakening. The Seven Factors of Awakening, if developed and practiced continuously, will give rise to understanding and liberation of the mind.

“What is the way to develop and practice continuously the method of Full Awareness of Breathing so that the practice will be rewarding and offer great benefit?”

“It is like this, bhikkhus: the practitioner goes into the forest or to the foot of a tree, or to any deserted place, sits stably in the lotus position, holding his or her body quite straight, and practices like this: ‘Breathing in, I know I am breathing in. Breathing out, I know that I am breathing out.’

1. ‘Breathing in a long breath, I know I am breathing in a long breath. Breathing out a long breath, I know I am breathing out a long breath.
2. ‘Breathing in a short breath, I know, I am breathing in a short breath. Breathing out a short breath, I know I am breathing out a short breath.
3. ‘Breathing in, I am aware of my whole body. Breathing out, I am aware of my whole body.’ You practice like this.
4. ‘Breathing in, I calm my whole body. Breathing out, I calm my whole body.’ You practice like this.
5. ‘Breathing in, I feel joyful. Breathing out, I feeling joyful.’ You practice like this.
6. ‘Breathing in, I feel happy. Breathing out, I feel happy.’ You practice like this.
7. ‘Breathing in, I am aware of my mental formations. Breathing out, I am aware of my mental formations.’ You practice like this.
8. ‘Breathing in, I calm my mental formations. Breathing out, I calm my mental formations.’ You practice like this.

9. 'Breathing in, I am aware of my mind. Breathing out, I am aware of my mind.' You practice like this.

10. 'Breathing in, I make my mind happy. Breathing out, I make my mind happy.' You practice like this.

11. 'Breathing in, I concentrate my mind. Breathing out, I concentrate my mind.' You practice like this.

12. 'Breathing in, I liberate my mind. Breathing out, I liberate my mind.' You practice like this.

13. 'Breathing in, I observe the impermanent nature of all dharmas. Breathing out, I observe the impermanent nature of all dharmas.' You practice like this.

14. 'Breathing in, I observe the disappearance of all desires. Breathing out, I observe the disappearance of all desires.' You practice like this.

15. 'Breathing in, I observe the no-birth, no-death nature of all phenomena. Breathing out, I observe the no-birth, no-death nature of all phenomena.' You practice like this.

16. 'Breathing in, I observe letting go. Breathing out, I observe letting go.' You practice like this.

"The Full Awareness of Breathing, if developed and practiced continuously according to these instructions, will be rewarding and of great benefit."

III

"In what way does one develop and continuously practice the Full Awareness of Breathing, in order to succeed in the practice of the Four Establishments of Mindfulness?"

"When the practitioner breathes in or out a long or a short breath, aware of his breath or his whole body, or aware that he is making his whole body calm and at peace, he abides peacefully in the observation of the body in the body, persevering, fully awake, clearly understanding his state, gone beyond all attachment and aversion to this life. These exercises of breathing with Full Awareness belong to the First Establishment of Mindfulness, the body.

"When the practitioner breathes in or out aware of joy or happiness, of the mental formations, or makes the mental formations peaceful, she abides peacefully in the observation of the feelings in the feelings, persevering, fully awake, clearly understanding her state, gone beyond all attachment and aversion to this life. These exercises of breathing with Full Awareness belong to the Second Establishment of Mindfulness, the feelings.

“When the practitioner breathes in or out with awareness of the mind, or makes the mind happy, or collects the mind in concentration, or frees and liberates the mind, he abides peacefully in the observation of the mind in the mind, persevering, fully awake, clearly understanding his state, gone beyond all attachment and aversion to this life. These exercises of breathing with Full Awareness belong to the Third Establishment of Mindfulness, the mind. Without Full Awareness of Breathing, there can be no development of meditative stability and understanding.

“When the practitioner breathes in or breathes out and contemplates the essential impermanence or the essential disappearance of desire or the no-birth, no-death nature of all phenomena, she abides peacefully in the observation of the objects of mind in the objects of mind, persevering, fully awake, clearly understanding her state, gone beyond all attachment and aversion to this life. These exercises of breathing with Full Awareness belong to the Fourth Establishment of Mindfulness, the objects of mind.

“The practice of Full Awareness of Breathing, if developed and practiced continuously, will lead to perfect accomplishment of the Four Establishments of Mindfulness.”

IV

“Moreover, if they are developed and continuously practiced, the Four Establishments of Mindfulness will lead to perfect abiding in the Seven Factors of Awakening. How is this so?

“When the practitioner can maintain, without distraction, the practice of observing the body in the body, the feelings in the feelings, the mind in the mind, and the objects of mind in the objects of mind, persevering, fully awake, clearly understanding his state, gone beyond all attachment and aversion to this life, with unwavering, steadfast, imperturbable meditative stability, he will attain the First Factor of Awakening, namely mindfulness. When this factor is developed, it will come to perfection.

“When the practitioner can abide in meditative stability without being distracted and can investigate every dharma, every object of mind that arises, then the Second Factor of Awakening will be born and developed in her, the factor of investigating dharmas. When this factor is developed, it will come to perfection.

“When the practitioner can observe and investigate every dharma in a sustained, persevering, and steadfast way, without being distracted, the Third Factor of Awakening will be born and developed in him, the factor of energy. When this factor is developed, it will come to perfection.

“When the practitioner has reached a stable, imperturbable abiding in the stream of practice, the Fourth Factor of Awakening will be born and developed in her, the factor of joy. When this factor is developed, it will come to perfection.

“When the practitioner can abide undistractedly in the state of joy, he will feel his body and mind light and at peace. At this point the Fifth Factor of Awakening will be born

and developed, the factor of ease. When this factor is developed, it will come to perfection.

“When both body and mind are at ease, the practitioner can easily enter into concentration. At this point the Sixth Factor of Awakening will be born and developed in her, the factor of concentration. When this factor is developed, it will come to perfection.

“When the practitioner is abiding in concentration with deep calm, he will cease discriminating and comparing. At this point the Seventh Factor of Awakening is released, born, and developed in him, the factor of letting go. When this factor is developed, it will come to perfection.

“This is how the Four Establishments of Mindfulness, if developed and practiced continuously, will lead to perfect abiding in the Seven Factors of Awakening.”

V

“How will the Seven Factors of Awakening, if developed and practiced continuously, lead to the perfect accomplishment of true understanding and complete liberation?”

“If the practitioner follows the path of the Seven Factors of Awakening, living in quiet seclusion, observing and contemplating the disappearance of desire, she will develop the capacity of letting go. This will be a result of following the path of the Seven Factors of Awakening and will lead to the perfect accomplishment of true understanding and complete liberation.”

VI

This is what the Lord, the Awakened One, said; and everyone in the assembly felt gratitude and delight at having heard his teachings.

— Anapanasatti Sutta, Majjhima Nikaya 118

18 - Discourse on Measuring and Reflecting

I heard these words of the Buddha one time when he was staying with the Bhagga people in Sumsumaragiri, in the Deer Park in the Bhesakala Grove. The Venerable Mahamoggallana addressed the bhikkhus, “My friends.”

“Yes, friend,” they replied to the Venerable Mahamoggallana.

The Venerable Mahamoggallana spoke as follows:

“My friends, suppose there is a bhikkhu who says to the other bhikkhus: ‘Please talk to me, Reverend Bhikkhus. I want you to offer me guidance.’ If he is difficult to talk to, endowed with qualities that make him difficult to deal with, impatient, intolerant, not good at accepting constructive criticism or the words of advice and instruction from friends in the practice, then those who practice the path of sublime conduct with him will think, ‘He is not one to be spoken to, he is not one to be instructed, he is not someone to have confidence in.’ What are the qualities that make someone difficult to approach?

“My friends, a bhikkhu who is attached to wrong desires and is controlled by wrong desires is difficult to approach and talk to.

“These are other reasons that make it difficult to approach and talk to him: a person praises himself and despises others; he is easily angered and mastered by his anger; because he is angry, he bears a grudge; because he is angry, he is bad-tempered; because he is angry, he speaks in a bad-tempered way; he accuses one who has corrected him; he disparages one who has corrected him; he corrects in turn one who has corrected him; he evades the criticism by asking another question; he changes the subject; he manifests ill-temper, anger, and sulkiness; he does not succeed in explaining his behavior when corrected; he is unmindful and ill-willed; he is jealous and greedy; he is hypocritical and deceitful; he is stubborn and arrogant; or he is worldly and clings to things that belong to this world and finds it difficult to let go. These, my friends, are the habit energies that make it difficult to approach and talk to him.

“My friends, suppose there is a bhikkhu who requests of other bhikkhus: ‘Please talk to me, Reverend Bhikkhus. I want you to offer me guidance.’ If he is easy to talk to, endowed with qualities that make him easy to deal with, patient, tolerant, open and able to accept constructive criticism or the words of advice and instruction from friends in the practice, then those who practice the path of sublime conduct with him will think, ‘He is someone we can talk to, someone we can instruct, someone we can have confidence in.’ What are the qualities that make someone easy to approach?

“My friends, a bhikkhu who is not caught in wrong desires and is not controlled by wrong desires is easy to approach and talk to. He does not praise himself and despise others; he is not easily angered or mastered by his anger; because he is not angry, he

does not bear a grudge; because he is not angry, he is not bad-tempered; because he is not angry, he does not speak in a bad-tempered way; he does not accuse one who has corrected him; he does not disparage one who has corrected him; he does not correct in turn one who has corrected him; he does not evade the criticism by asking another question; he does not change the subject; he does not manifest ill-temper, anger, and sulkiness; he succeeds in explaining his behavior when corrected; he is not jealous and greedy; he is not hypocritical and deceitful; he is not stubborn and arrogant; he is not worldly nor does he cling to things that belong to this world and he does not find it difficult to let go. These, my friends, are the qualities that make it easy to approach and talk to him.

“My friends, one should infer one’s own state by considering the state of others in the following way: ‘That person has wrong desires and is controlled by his wrong desires; therefore, I do not find him easy to approach. If I had wrong desires and were controlled by those wrong desires, others would not find me easy to approach.’ When one sees this clearly, one should make the following determination: ‘May I not be attached to wrong desires or be controlled by those wrong desires.’

“This method of reflection needs to be practiced in other cases, such as praising oneself and despising others, being easily angered and mastered by anger, and so on.

“My friends, this is how a bhikkhu should reflect on himself: ‘At this moment, am I attached to wrong desires and controlled by wrong desires?’ If when a bhikkhu reflects in this way, he knows, ‘At this moment, I am attached to wrong desires and controlled by wrong desires,’ then he should practice diligently to put an end to these unwholesome mental formations. If, on the other hand, when he reflects, he knows, ‘At this moment, I am not attached to wrong desires and not controlled by wrong desires,’ then a bhikkhu should live with a feeling of happiness, and he should practice diligently to nourish and increase these wholesome mental formations.

“This method of reflection needs to be practiced in other cases, such as praising oneself and despising others, becoming easily angered and mastered by anger, and so on.

“If, my friends, when he reflects, a bhikkhu sees clearly that he has not yet given up all these unbeneficial qualities, then he should practice diligently to give them all up. If, when he reflects, a bhikkhu sees clearly that he has given up all these unwholesome mental formations, then he should live with a feeling of happiness, and he should practice diligently to nourish and increase these wholesome mental formations.

“It is like when a young person who is fond of adorning himself contemplates his face in the mirror or a bowl of clear water. If he sees dirt or a blemish on his face, he tries to clean it. If he does not see dirt or a blemish, he thinks to himself, ‘It is good, my face is clean.’

“So, my friends, if a bhikkhu reflects and sees that all these unwholesome mental formations have not yet been given up, then he practices diligently to give them all up. If he sees that he has given them all up, he feels happy about this and knows that he needs to practice diligently in order to nourish and increase these wholesome mental formations.”

The Venerable Mahamoggallana had spoken. The bhikkhus were delighted, had confidence in, and accepted their teacher’s words.

Anumana Sutta, Majjhima Nikaya 15

19 - Discourse on the Absolute Truth

He who still abides by a dogmatic view, considering it as the highest in the world, thinking “this is the most excellent” and disparaging other views as inferior, is still considered not to be free from disputes.

When seeing, hearing, or sensing something and considering it as the only thing that can bring comfort and advantage to self, one is always inclined to get caught in it and rule out everything else as inferior.

Caught in one’s view and considering all other views as inferior — this attitude is considered by the wise as bondage, as the absence of freedom. A good practitioner is never too quick to believe what is seen, heard, and sensed, including rules and rites.

A good practitioner has no need to set up a new theory for the world, using the knowledge she has picked up or the rules and rites she is practicing. She does not consider herself as “superior,” “inferior,” or “equal” to anyone.

A good practitioner abandons the notion of self and the tendency to cling to views. He is free and does not depend on anything, even on knowledge. He does not take sides in controversies and does not hold on to any view or dogma.

She does not seek for anything or cling to anything, either this extreme or the other extreme, either in this world or in the other world. She has abandoned all views and no longer has the need to seek for comfort or refuge in any theory or ideology.

To the wise person, there are no longer any views concerning what is seen, heard, or sensed. How could one judge or have an opinion concerning such a pure being who has let go of all views?

A wise person no longer feels the need to set up dogmas or choose an ideology. All dogmas and ideologies have been abandoned by such a person. A real noble one is never caught in rules or rites. He or she is advancing steadfastly to the shore of liberation and will never return to the realm of bondage.

Paramatthaka Sutta, Sutta Nipata 4.5

20 - Discourse on the Four Establishments of Mindfulness

I

I heard these words of the Buddha one time when he was living at Kammassadhamma, a market town of the Kuru people. The Buddha addressed the bhikkhus, “O bhikkhus,” and the bhikkhus replied, “Venerable Lord.”

The Buddha said, “Bhikkhus, there is a most wonderful way to help living beings realize purification, overcome directly grief and sorrow, end pain and anxiety, travel the right path, and witness nirvana. This way is the Four Establishments of Mindfulness.

“What are the Four Establishments?”

1. “Bhikkhus, a practitioner remains established in the observation of the body in the body, diligent, with clear understanding, mindful, having abandoned every craving and every distaste for this life.
2. “They remain established in the observation of the feelings in the feelings, diligent, with clear understanding, mindful, having abandoned every craving and every distaste for this life.
3. “They remain established in the observation of the mind in the mind, diligent, with clear understanding, mindful, having abandoned every craving and every distaste for this life.
4. “They remain established in the observation of the objects of mind in the objects of mind, diligent, with clear understanding, mindful, having abandoned every craving and every distaste for this life.”

II

”And how does a practitioner remain established in the observation of the body in the body?”

“They go to the forest, to the foot of a tree, or to an empty room, sit down cross-legged in the lotus position, hold their body straight, and establish mindfulness in front of themselves. They breathe in, aware that they are breathing in. They breathe out, aware that they are breathing out. When they breathe in a long breath, they know, ‘I am breathing in a long breath.’ When they breathe out a long breath, they know, ‘I am breathing out a long breath.’ When they breathe in a short breath, they know, ‘I am breathing in a short breath.’ When they breathe out a short breath, they know, ‘I am breathing out a short breath.’

“They use the following practice: ‘Breathing in, I am aware of my whole body. Breathing out, I am aware of my whole body. Breathing in, I calm my body. Breathing out, I calm my body.’

“Just as a skilled potter knows when they make a long turn on the wheel, ‘I am making a long turn,’ and knows when they make a short turn, ‘I am making a short turn,’ so a practitioner, when they breathe in a long breath, knows, ‘I am breathing in a long breath,’ and when they breathe in a short breath, knows, ‘I am breathing in a short breath,’ and when they breathe out a long breath, knows, ‘I am breathing out a long breath,’ and when they breathe out a short breath, knows, ‘I am breathing out a short breath.’

“They use the following practice: ‘Breathing in, I am aware of my whole body. Breathing out, I am aware of my whole body. Breathing in, I calm my body. Breathing out, I calm my body.’

“Moreover, when a practitioner walks, they are aware, ‘I am walking.’ When they are standing, they are aware, ‘I am standing.’ When they are sitting, they are aware, ‘I am sitting.’ When they are lying down, they are aware, ‘I am lying down.’ In whatever position their body happens to be, they are aware of the position of their body.

“Moreover, when the practitioner is going forward or backward, they apply full awareness to their going forward or backward. When they look in front or look behind, bend down or stand up, they also apply full awareness to what they are doing. They apply full awareness to wearing the sanghati robe or carrying the alms bowl. When they eat or drink, chew or savor the food, they apply full awareness to all this. When passing excrement or urinating, they apply full awareness to this. When they walk, stand, lie down, sit, sleep or wake up, speak or are silent, they shine their awareness on all this.

“Further, the practitioner meditates on their very own body, from the soles of the feet upward, and then from the hair on the head downward, a body contained inside the skin and full of all the impurities which belong to the body: ‘Here is the hair of the head, the hairs on the body, the nails, teeth, skin, flesh, sinews, bones, bone marrow, kidneys, heart, liver, diaphragm, spleen, lungs, intestines, bowels, excrement, bile, phlegm, pus, blood, sweat, fat, tears, grease, saliva, mucus, synovial fluid, urine.’

“Bhikkhus, imagine a sack that can be opened at both ends, containing a variety of grains — brown rice, wild rice, mung beans, kidney beans, sesame, white rice. When those with good eyesight open the bag, they will review it like this: ‘This is brown rice, this is wild rice, these are mung beans, these are kidney beans, these are sesame seeds, this is white rice.’ Just so, the practitioner passes in review the whole of their body, from the soles of the feet to the hair on the top of the head, a body enclosed in a layer of skin, and full of all the impurities that belong to the body: ‘Here is the hair of the head, the hairs on the body, nails, teeth, skin, flesh, sinews, bones, bone marrow, kidneys, heart, liver, diaphragm, spleen, lungs, intestines, bowels, excrement, bile, phlegm, pus, blood, sweat, fat, tears, grease, saliva, mucus, synovial fluid, urine.’

“Further, in whichever position their body happens to be, the practitioner passes in review the elements which constitute the body: ‘In this body is the earth element, the water element, the fire element, and the air element.’

“As skilled butchers or apprentice butchers, having killed a cow, might sit at the crossroads to divide the cow into many parts, the practitioner passes in review the elements which comprise their very own body: ‘Here is the earth element, the water element, the fire element, and the air element.’

“Further, the practitioner compares their own body with a corpse which they visualize thrown onto a charnel ground, and lying there for one, two, or three days – bloated, blue in color, and festering, and they observe: ‘This body of mine is of the same nature. It will end up in the same way. There is no way it can avoid that state.’

“Further, the practitioner compares their own body with a corpse which they visualize thrown onto a charnel ground, pecked at by crows, eaten by hawks, vultures, and jackals, and infested with maggots and worms, and they observe: ‘This body of mine is of the same nature. It will end up in the same way. There is no way it can avoid that state.’

“Further, the practitioner compares their own body with a corpse which they visualize thrown onto a charnel ground; it is just a skeleton with a little flesh and blood sticking to it, and the bones are held together by the ligaments.

“Further, the practitioner compares their own body with a corpse which they visualize thrown onto a charnel ground; it is just a skeleton, no longer adhered to by any flesh, but still smeared by a little blood, and the bones are still held together by the ligaments.

“Further, the practitioner compares their own body with a corpse which they visualize thrown onto a charnel ground; all that is left is a collection of bones scattered here and there; in one place a hand bone, in another a shin bone, a thigh bone, a pelvis, a spinal column, a skull.

“Further, the practitioner compares their own body with a corpse which they visualize thrown onto a charnel ground; all that is left is a collection of bleached bones, the color of shells.

“Further, the practitioner compares their own body with a corpse which they visualize thrown onto a charnel ground; it has been lying there for more than one year and all that is left is a collection of dried bones.

“Further, the practitioner compares their own body with a corpse which they visualize thrown onto a charnel ground; all that is left is the dust that comes from the rotted bones, and they observe: ‘This body of mine is of the same nature. It will end up in the same way. There is no way it can avoid that state.’

“This is how the practitioner remains established in the observation of the body in the body, observation of the body from within or from without, or both from within and from without. They remain established in the observation of the process of coming-to-be in the body, or the process of dissolution in the body, or both the process of coming-to-be and the process of dissolution. Or they are mindful of the fact, ‘There is a body here,’ until understanding and full awareness come about. They remain established in

the observation, free, not caught up in any worldly consideration. That is how to practice observation of the body in the body, O bhikkhus.”

III

“Bhikkhus, how does a practitioner remain established in the observation of the feelings in the feelings?”

“Whenever they have a pleasant feeling, the practitioner is aware, ‘I am experiencing a pleasant feeling.’ The practitioner practices like this for all the feelings, whether they are pleasant, painful, or neutral, observing when they belong to the body and when they belong to the mind.

“This is how the practitioner remains established in the observation of the feelings in the feelings, observation of the feelings from within or from without, or observation of the feelings both from within and from without. They remain established in the observation of the process of coming-to-be and the process of dissolution. Or they are mindful of the fact, ‘There is feeling here,’ until understanding and full awareness come about. They remain established in the observation, free, not caught in any worldly consideration. That is how to practice observation of the feelings in the feelings, O bhikkhus .”

IV

“Bhikkhus, how does a practitioner remain established in the observation of the mind in the mind?”

“When their mind is desiring something, the practitioner is aware, ‘My mind is desiring.’ When their mind is not desiring, they are aware, ‘My mind is not desiring.’ They are aware in the same way concerning a hating mind, a confused mind, a collected mind, a dispersed mind, an expansive mind, a narrow mind, the highest mind, and a concentrated and liberated mind.

“This is how the practitioner remains established in the observation of the mind in the mind, observation of the mind from within or from without, or observation of the mind both from within and from without. They remain established in the observation of the process of coming-to-be and the process of dissolution. Or they are mindful of the fact, ‘There is mind here,’ until understanding and full awareness come about. They remain established in the observation, free, not caught in any worldly consideration. That is how to practice observation of the mind in the mind, O bhikkhus.”

V

“Bhikkhus, how does a practitioner remain established in the observation of the objects of mind in the objects of mind?”

“First of all, they observe the objects of mind in the objects of mind with regard to the Five Hindrances. How do they observe this?”

“When there is sensual desire present in them, they are aware, ‘Sensual desire is present in me.’ Or when sensual desire is not present in them, they are aware, ‘Sensual desire is not present in me.’ When sensual desire begins to arise, they are aware of it. When sensual desire that has already arisen is abandoned, they are aware of it. When sensual desire that has already been abandoned will not arise again in the future, they are aware of it.

“They practice in the same way concerning anger, dullness and drowsiness, agitation and remorse, and doubt.

“Further, the practitioner observes the objects of mind in the objects of mind with regard to the Five Aggregates of Clinging. How do they observe this?”

“They observe like this: ‘Such is form. Such is the arising of form. Such is the disappearance of form. Such is feeling. Such is the arising of feeling. Such is the disappearance of feeling. Such is perception. Such is the arising of perception. Such is the disappearance of perception. Such are mental formations. Such is the arising of mental formations. Such is the disappearance of mental formations. Such is consciousness. Such is the arising of consciousness. Such is the disappearance of consciousness.

“Further, bhikkhus, the practitioner observes the objects of mind in the objects of mind with regard to the six sense organs and the six sense objects. How do they observe this?”

“They are aware of the eyes and aware of the form, and they are aware of the internal formations which are produced in dependence on these two things. They are aware of the birth of a new internal formation, and they are aware of abandoning an already produced internal formation, and they are aware when an already abandoned internal formation will not arise again.

“They are aware in the same way of the ears and sound, the nose and smell, the tongue and taste, the body and touch, the mind and the objects of mind.

“Further, bhikkhus, the practitioner remains established in the observation of the objects of mind in the objects of mind in regard to the Seven Factors of Awakening.”

VI

“Bhikkhus, those who practice the Four Establishments of Mindfulness for seven years can expect one of two fruits: the highest understanding in this very life, or, if there remains some residue of affliction, they can attain the fruit of no-return.

“Let alone seven years, bhikkhus, whoever practices the Four Establishments of Mindfulness for six, five, four, three, two years, or one year, for seven, six, five, four,

three, or two months, one month, or half a month, can also expect one of the two fruits: either the highest understanding in this very life, or, if there remains some residue of affliction, they can attain the fruit of no-return.

“That is why I have said that this path, the path of the four grounds for the establishment of mindfulness, is the most wonderful path, which helps beings realize purification, transcend grief and sorrow, destroy pain and anxiety, travel the right path, and realize nirvana.”

The Bhikkhus were delighted to hear the teaching of the Buddha. They took it to heart and put it into practice.

— Satipatthana Sutta, Majjhima Nikaya 10

21 - Discourse on the Five Ways of Putting an End to Anger

This is what I heard one time when the Buddha was staying in the Anathapindika Monastery in the Jeta Grove near the town of Shravasti. One day the Venerable Shariputra said to the monks: “Friends in the practice, today I want to share with you five ways of putting an end to anger. Please listen carefully and put into practice what I teach you.” The bhikkhus agreed and listened carefully.

The Venerable Shariputra said: “What are these five ways of putting an end to anger? This is the first way, my friends: If there is someone whose bodily actions are not kind but his words are kind, then, if you are angry with that person and you are wise, you should know how to meditate in order to put an end to this anger.

“My friends, say there is a bhikkhu who is practicing asceticism and he wears the patchwork robe. One day he is going past a filthy rubbish heap with excrement, urine, mucus, and all other kinds of filth, but he sees on the rubbish heap a piece of cloth, and then with his right hand he takes the other end and stretches it out. He sees that this piece of cloth is not torn, and also it has not been dirtied by excrement, urine, sputum, and other kinds of filth. So immediately he folds it up and puts it away to bring home, to wash clean, and to sew, along with other pieces of material, into a patchwork robe. It is the same, my friends, when someone’s bodily action is not kind but his words are kind. We should not give our attention to the unkind bodily action of that person. We should only be attentive to his kind words, in order to put an end to our anger. Someone who is wise should practice in that way.

“My friends, this is the second method: If there is someone whose words are not kind but her bodily actions are kind, if you become angry with that person and you are wise, you should know the way of meditating in order to put an end to this anger.

“My friends, say that not far from the village there is a deep lake of water, but the surface of the water is covered with algae and grass. Now, there is someone who comes near to the lake, and that person is very thirsty and suffering greatly from the heat. She takes off her clothes and leaves them on the bank of the lake, jumps down into the water and uses her hands in order to clear away the algae and the grass, and in comfort and enjoyment, she bathes and drinks the cool water of the lake. It is the same, my friends, with someone whose words are not kind but whose bodily actions are kind. You should not give your attention to that person’s words. You should only be attentive to that person’s bodily actions in order to be able to put an end to your anger. Someone who is wise should practice in that way.

“Here is the third method, my friends: If there is someone whose bodily actions are not kind, whose words are not kind, but in their heart there is still a little kindness, then, if you feel anger with that person and you are wise, you should find a way of meditating in order to put an end to that anger.

“My friends, say there is someone who is going to the crossroads. He is very weak, very thirsty, very poor, very hot, deprived, and full of sorrow. When he comes to the crossroads there is a buffalo’s footprint, and in that footprint, there is a little stagnant rainwater. He thinks to himself: ‘Although there is very little of this water in the

buffalo's footprint at the crossroads, if I were to use my hand or a leaf in order to scoop up the water, then I would stir it up and it would become muddied and undrinkable. Therefore, I would not be able to quench my thirst and end my deprivation, the heat I am feeling, and all the suffering. I shall have to kneel down, place my arms and my knees on the earth, and use my mouth in order to drink the water directly from the hole.'

"Straight away he kneels down on the earth, places his lips in the water in the buffalo footprint, and drinks it. Like this, my friends, when you see someone whose bodily actions are not kind, whose words are not kind, but in that person's heart there is still a little kindness, you should not give your attention to that person's actions and words which are not kind, but you should be attentive to the little kindness which is in that person's heart in order to be able to put an end to your anger. Someone who is wise should practice in that way.

"This is the fourth method my friends. If there is someone whose bodily actions are not kind, whose words are not kind, and in that person's heart there is nothing which could be called kind, then, if you are angry with that person and you are wise, you should find a way to meditate in order to put an end to your anger.

"My friends, suppose that there is someone who is making a long journey, and when she has made a part of the journey she falls sick. She is in a very bad way, completely exhausted, alone, without any traveling companions. The village she left behind is already far behind and the village she is going to is also far ahead. She falls into despair and she knows that she will die before she ends her journey. If at that point there is someone else who comes along and sees this person's situation, she immediately comes to her assistance. She leads her by the hand to the next village, takes care of her, treats her for her illness and makes sure that she has everything she needs in the way of clothes, medicine and food. Thanks to this help, the other person's life is saved. The reason her life is saved is the compassion and loving-kindness of the person who came along.

"Just so, my friends, when you see someone whose bodily actions are not kind, whose words are not kind, and in whose heart there does not seem to be anything left which could be called kindness, you should give rise to this thought: 'Someone whose bodily actions are not kind, whose words are not kind, and in whose heart there does not seem to be any kindness at all is someone who is suffering. Without a doubt, they are on the way to realms of extremely great suffering. If they do not meet a good spiritual friend there will be no chance for them to transform and to be able to go to realms of happiness.' Thinking like that, you will be able to open your heart to that person with love and compassion. You will be able to put an end to your anger and help that person. Someone who is wise should practice like this.

"My friends, this is the fifth method: If there is someone whose bodily actions are kind, whose words are kind, and whose mind is also kind, then, if you are angry with that person and you are wise, you should find a way of meditating in order to put an end to your anger.

“My friends, suppose that not far from the village there is a very beautiful lake. The water in the lake is clear and sweet, the bed of the lake is even, the banks of the lake are full of beautiful trees, green grass grows up around the lake, and everywhere the green fresh trees give shade. Someone comes to the lake who is thirsty, who is suffering from heat, and whose body is covered in sweat. He takes off his clothes and leaves them on the shore of the lake, jumps down into the water and finds great comfort and enjoyment in bathing and drinking the water. All his heat, thirst, and suffering disappear at the same time. In the same way, my friends, when you see someone whose bodily actions are kind, whose words are kind, and whose mind is also kind, you should give your attention to all the kindness of that person concerning body, speech, and mind and not allow anger to overwhelm you. If you do not know how to live happily with someone who is as fresh as that then you cannot be called someone who has wisdom.

“My dear friends, I have shared with you the five ways of putting an end to anger.”

When the bhikkhus heard the Venerable Shariputra’s words, they were very happy to receive them and put them into practice.

— Majjhima Agama 25 (corresponds with Anguttara Nikaya III 186)

22 - Discourse on the Middle Way

I heard these words of the Buddha one time when the Lord was staying at the guest house in a forest of the district of Nala. At that time, the venerable Kaccayana came to visit him and asked, “The Tathagata has spoken of Right View. How would the Tathagata describe Right View?”

The Buddha told the venerable monk, “People in the world tend to believe in one of two views: the view of being or the view of non-being. That is because they are bound to wrong perception. It is wrong perception that leads to the concepts of being and non-being. Kaccayana, most people are bound to the internal formations of discrimination and preference, grasping and attachment. Those who are not bound to the internal knots of grasping and attachment no longer imagine and cling to the idea of a self. They understand, for example, that suffering comes to be when conditions are favorable, and that it fades away when conditions are no longer favorable. They no longer have any doubts. Their understanding has not come to them through others; it is their own insight. This insight is called Right View, and this is the way the Tathagata would describe Right View.

“How is this so? When a person who has correct insight observes the coming to be of the world, the idea of nonbeing does not arise in them, and when they observe the fading away of the world, the idea of being does not arise in their mind. Kaccayana, viewing the world as being is an extreme; viewing it as nonbeing is another extreme. The Tathagata avoids these two extremes and teaches the Dharma dwelling in the Middle Way.

“The Middle Way says that this is, because that is; this is not, because that is not. Because there is ignorance, there are impulses; because there are impulses, there is consciousness; because there is consciousness, there is the psyche-soma; because there is the psyche-soma, there are the six senses; because there are the six senses, there is contact; because there is contact, there is feeling; because there is feeling, there is craving; because there is craving, there is grasping; because there is grasping, there is becoming; because there is becoming, there is birth; because there is birth, there are old age, death, grief, and sorrow. That is how the entire mass of suffering arises. But with the fading away of ignorance, impulses cease; with the fading away of impulses, consciousness ceases; . . . and finally birth, old age, death, grief, and sorrow will fade away. That is how this entire mass of suffering ceases.”

After listening to the Buddha, the Venerable Kaccayana was enlightened and liberated from sorrow. He was able to untie all of his internal knots and attain Arhatship.

23 - Discourse on the Dharma Seal

I heard these words of the Buddha one time when the Lord was residing at Vaishali with his community of bhikkhus. One day, he told the community, “Do you know of the wonderful Dharma Seal? Today I would like to tell you about it and explain it to you. Please use your pure mind to listen and receive it with care, and make the best effort to remember and practice it.” The community of bhikkhus replied, “Wonderful, World-Honored One! Please teach us. We will listen carefully.”

The Buddha said, “Emptiness is neither being nor nonbeing. It is free from all wrong views. It is neither produced nor destroyed, and it cannot be grasped by views. Why is this so? Because emptiness cannot be located in space. It has no form. It is not an object of perception. It has never been born, and the intellect cannot grasp it. Because it cannot be grasped, it embraces all dharmas and dwells only in non-discursive, non-discriminative wisdom. This is the only true and right understanding, bhikkhus! You should know that not only emptiness, but all dharmas are like that. This is the Dharma Seal.

“The Dharma Seal is also called the Three Doors of Liberation. It is the basic teaching of all Buddhas, the eye of all Buddhas, the destination of all Buddhas. Listen and receive it with care. Memorize it well and practice it right in the heart of reality.

“Bhikkhus, find a quiet place to meditate, such as in a forest under a tree. There you can see that form is painful, empty, and impermanent, and as a result, you will not be attached to form. Then do the same for feelings, perceptions, mental formations, and consciousnesses. See that they are painful, empty, and impermanent, and rise above wrong views about them. Realize the non-discriminative understanding of feelings, perceptions, mental formations, and consciousness. Bhikkhus, the Five Aggregates are empty. They are produced from the mind. Once the mind stops operating in its usual way, the aggregates stop operating as well. When you see this, you will be liberated, free from all views. This is emptiness, the First Door of Liberation.

“Bhikkhus, dwelling in concentration, see the dissolution of form, and be free from the illusory nature of perception vis-à-vis sound, smell, taste, touch, and mental formations. This meditation is called signlessness, the Second Door of Liberation. Once you have entered this door, your knowledge will be pure. Because of this purity of understanding, the three defiling qualities of mind – greed, hatred, and delusion – will be uprooted. With these uprooted, you will dwell in the realm of nondiscursive, nondiscriminative knowledge. When you are dwelling in this knowledge, views concerning ‘me and mine,’ and thus all views, no longer have the bases and the occasions to arise.

Bhikkhus, once you are free from the view ‘I am,’ you no longer consider what you see, hear, feel, and perceive as realities independent of your own consciousness. Why? Because you know that consciousness also arises from conditions and is impermanent. Because of its impermanent nature, it cannot be grasped either. This meditation is called wishlessness, the Third Door of Liberation. Once you enter this door, you experience fully the true nature of all dharmas, and you no longer cling to any dharma because you have seen the unconditioned nature of all dharmas.”

The Buddha told the community of bhikkhus, “This is the wonderful Seal of the Dharma, the Three Doors of Liberation. If you learn and practice it, you will certainly attain pure knowledge.”

The monks were very happy to hear the teaching of the World-Honored One. They paid respect to him and promised to learn and practice this wonderful teaching.

— Taisho Revised Tripitaka 104

24 - Discourse on the Eight Realizations of the Great Beings

Wholeheartedly, day and night, disciples of the Awakened One should recite and meditate on the Eight Realizations discovered by the Great Beings.

The First Realization is the awareness that the world is impermanent. Political regimes are subject to fall. Things composed of the four elements are empty, containing within them the seeds of suffering. Human beings are composed of Five Aggregates and are without a separate self. They are always in the process of change – constantly being born and constantly dying. They are empty of self and without a separate existence. The mind is the source of all confusion, and the body the forest of all unwholesome actions. Meditating on this, you can be released from the round of birth and death.

The Second Realization is the awareness that more desire brings more suffering. All hardships in daily life arise from greed and desire. Those with little desire and ambition are able to relax, their body and mind free from entanglement.

The Third Realization is the awareness that the human mind is always searching outside itself and never feels fulfilled. This brings about unwholesome activity. Bodhisattvas, on the other hand, know the value of having few desires. They live simply and peacefully, so they can devote themselves to practicing the Way. They regard the realization of perfect understanding to be their only career.

The Fourth Realization is the awareness that indolence is an obstacle to practice. You must practice diligently to transform unwholesome mental states that bind you, and you must conquer the four kinds of Mara in order to free yourself from the prisons of the Five Aggregates and the three worlds.

The Fifth Realization is the awareness that ignorance is the cause of the endless round of birth and death. Bodhisattvas always listen to and learn from others so their understanding and skillful means can develop, and so they can teach living beings and bring them great joy.

The Sixth Realization is the awareness that poverty creates hatred and anger, which creates a vicious cycle of negative thoughts and actions. When practicing generosity, bodhisattvas consider everyone – friends and enemies alike – to be equal. They do not condemn anyone's past wrongdoings or hate even those presently causing harm.

The Seventh Realization is the awareness that the five categories of sensual desire – money, sex, fame, overeating, and oversleeping – lead to problems. Although you are in the world, try not to be caught in worldly matters. A monk, for example, has in his possession only three robes and one bowl. He lives simply in order to practice the Way. His precepts keep him free of attachment to worldly things, and he treats everyone equally and with compassion.

The Eighth Realization is the awareness that the fire of birth and death is raging, causing endless suffering everywhere. Take the Great Vow to help all beings, to suffer with all beings, and to guide all beings to the Realm of Great Joy.

These Eight Realizations are the discoveries of great beings, Buddhas and bodhisattvas who have practiced diligently the way of understanding and love. They have sailed the Dharmakaya boat to the shore of nirvana, and have then returned to the ordinary world, free of the five sensual desires, their minds and hearts directed toward the Noble Way. Using these Eight Realizations, they help all beings recognize the suffering in the world. If disciples of the Buddha recite and meditate on these Eight Realizations, they will put an end to countless misunderstandings and difficulties and progress toward enlightenment, leaving behind the world of birth and death, dwelling forever in peace.

– Taisho Revised Tripitaka 779

25 - Discourse on the White-Clad Disciple

I heard these words of the Buddha one time when he was staying at the monastery in the Jeta Grove near Shravasti that had been donated by the layman Anathapindika. On that day, Anathapindika came with five hundred other lay students of the Buddha to the hut where Shariputra resided. They bowed their heads in reverence to Shariputra and sat down respectfully to one side. Venerable Shariputra offered them skillful teachings, bringing them joy and confidence in the Three Jewels and the practice of the true Dharma. Then, Shariputra and the five hundred laymen and women went together to the hut of the Buddha, where Shariputra, Anathapindika, and the other five hundred laymen and women prostrated at the Buddha's feet and sat down to one side.

When he observed that everyone was seated, the Buddha addressed Shariputra, saying, "Shariputra, if lay students of the Buddha, those who wear white robes, study and practice the Five Precepts and the Four Contemplations, they will realize without hardship the capacity to abide happily in the present moment. They know they will not fall into the realms of hell, hungry ghosts, animals, and other suffering paths.

"Such men and women will have attained the fruit of stream-enterer, and they will have no fear of descending into dark paths. They are on the way of right awakening. They will only need to return to the worlds of gods or men seven more times before attaining perfect liberation and the end of suffering.

"Shariputra, how do lay students of the Buddha, those who wear white robes, study and practice the Five Precepts and the Four Contemplations?

"Lay students of the Buddha refrain from killing, put an end to killing, rid themselves of all weapons, learn humility before others, learn humility in themselves, practice love and compassion, and protect all living beings, even the smallest insects. They uproot from within themselves any intention to kill. In this way, lay students of the Buddha study and practice the first of the Five Precepts.

"Lay students of the Buddha refrain from taking what has not been given, put an end to taking what has not been given. They find joy in being generous without expecting anything in return. Their minds are not obscured by greed or craving. They constantly guard their own honesty and uproot from within themselves any intention to take what has not been given. In this way, lay students of the Buddha study and practice the second of the Five Precepts.

"Lay students of the Buddha refrain from sexual misconduct, put an end to sexual misconduct, and protect everyone – those under the care of their father, mother, or both father and mother; their elder sister or elder brother; their parents-in-law or other in-laws; those of the same sex; the wife, daughter, husband or son of another; and those who have been raped, assaulted, or sexually abused, or who have been prostitutes. Lay students of the Buddha uproot from within themselves any intention to commit sexual misconduct. In this way, lay students of the Buddha study and practice the third of the Five Precepts.

“Lay students of the Buddha refrain from saying what is not true, put an end to saying what is not true. They say only what is true, and they find great joy in saying what is true. They always abide in truth and are completely reliable, never deceiving others. They have uprooted from within themselves any intention to say what is not true. In this way, lay students of the Buddha study and practice the fourth of the Five Precepts.

“Lay students of the Buddha refrain from drinking alcohol, put an end to drinking alcohol. They uproot from within themselves the habit of drinking alcohol. In this way, lay students of the Buddha study and practice the fifth of the Five Precepts.

“Shariputra, how do lay students of the Buddha attain the Four Contemplations and abide happily in the present moment with ease and without hardship? They practice being aware of the Buddha, meditating on the one who has come from Suchness and returns to Suchness; as one who is truly and fully awakened, without any attachments; as one whose understanding and practice are perfect; as the Well-Gone One; as one who knows and fully understands the world; as one who has attained the very highest; as one who has tamed what needs to be tamed; as a teacher of humans and gods; as an Awakened One; and as a World-Honored One. When they meditate in this way, all unwholesome desires come to an end, and impure, sorrowful, or anxious elements no longer arise in their hearts. As a result of contemplating the Buddha, their thoughts are clear, they feel joy, and they arrive at the first of the Four Contemplations, abiding happily in the present moment, with ease and without any hardships.

“Shariputra, the lay students of the Buddha practice being aware of the Dharma, meditating as follows: the Dharma is taught by the Lord Buddha with great skill; it can lead to complete liberation; it can lead to a state of no afflictions; it is cool and refreshing; its value is timeless. When lay students of the Buddha meditate on and observe the Dharma in this way, all unwholesome desires come to an end, and impure, sorrowful, or anxious elements no longer arise in their hearts. As a result of contemplating the Dharma, their thoughts are clear, they feel joy, and they arrive at the second of the Four Contemplations, abiding happily in the present moment, with ease and without any hardship.

“Shariputra, the lay students of the Buddha practice being aware of the Sangha, meditating as follows: the noble community of the Tathagata is advancing in a good direction; it is on an upright path; it is oriented toward the Dharma; it lives the teachings in the way they are meant to be lived. In that community, there are the Four Pairs and the Eight Grades – realized Arhats and those who are realizing the fruit of Arhatship, non-returners and those who are realizing the fruit of non-returning, once-returners and those who are realizing the fruit of one-returning, and stream-enterers and those who are realizing the fruit of stream-entry. The noble community of the Tathagata has successfully realized the practice of the Precepts (*shila*), the practice of concentration (*samadhi*), and the practice of insight (*prajña*). It has liberation and liberated vision. It is worthy of respect, honor, service, and offerings. It is a beautiful field of merit for everyone. As a result of contemplating the Sangha, their thoughts are clear, they feel joy, and they arrive at the third of the Four Contemplations, abiding happily in the present moment, with ease and without any hardship.

“Shariputra, the lay students of the Buddha practice being mindful of the Precepts, meditating as follows: the Precepts have no drawbacks, flaws, impurities, or unsound points; and they help us abide in the land of the Tathagata. The Precepts are not of the nature to deceive. They are always praised, accepted, practiced, and guarded by the holy ones. As a result of contemplating these Trainings, the students’ thoughts are clear, they feel joy, and they arrive at the fourth of the Four Contemplations, abiding happily in the present moment, with ease and without any hardship.

“Shariputra, remember that white-clad disciples of the Buddha who practice in this way will not descend into hell realms, hungry ghost realms, animal realms, or any other realms of suffering. They have experienced the fruit of stream-entry, which means not falling into paths of hardship or wrongdoing. Having entered the stream, they cannot help but go in the direction of right awakening. They will only need to return to the world of gods or humans seven more times before they arrive at complete liberation and the end of sorrow.”

Thus spoke the Buddha. The Venerable Shariputra, the other monks and nuns, the layman Anathapindika, and the other five hundred laymen and laywomen heard these words and were delighted to put them into practice.

– Upasaka Sutra, Madhyama Agama 128

26 - The Four Virtues of a Bodhisattva

1

The bodhisattva's four methods of guidance are giving, kind speech, beneficial action, and cooperation.

“Giving” means non-greed. Non-greed means not to crave. Not to crave means not to curry favor. Even if you govern the Four Continents, you should always convey the correct teaching with non-greed. It is to give away unneeded belongings to someone you don't know, to offer flowers blooming on a distant mountain to the Tathagata, or, again, to offer treasures you had in your former life to sentient beings. Whether it is of teaching or of material, in each case we are originally endowed with the virtue that accompanies giving. The question is not whether the gift is cheap or small, because its merit is still authentic.

When you leave the way to the way, you attain the way. At the time of attaining the way, the way is always left to the way. When treasure is left just as treasure, treasure becomes giving. You give yourself to yourself and others to others. The power of the causal relations of giving reaches to devas, human beings, and even enlightened sages. The reason is that in the act of giving, the one who gives and one who receives form a connection with each other.

Buddha said, “When a person who practices giving goes to an assembly, people take notice.” You should know that the mind of such a person communicates subtly with others. Therefore, give even a phrase or verse of the truth; it will be a wholesome seed for this and other lifetimes. Give your valuables, even a penny or a blade of grass; it will be a wholesome root for this and other lifetimes. The truth can turn into valuables; valuables can turn into the truth. This is all because the giver is willing.

If you study giving closely, you see that to accept a body and to give up the body are both giving. Making a living and producing things can be nothing other than giving. To leave flowers to the wind, to leave birds to the seasons, are also acts of giving. Not only should you make an effort to give, but also be mindful of every opportunity to give. You are born into this present life because of the merit of giving in the past.

Buddha said, “If you are to practice giving to yourself, how much more so to your parents, partner, and children.” Therefore you should know that to give to yourself is a part of giving. To give to your family is also giving. Even when you give a particle of dust, you should rejoice in your own act, because you correctly transmit the merit of all buddhas, and for the first time practice an act of a bodhisattva. The mind of a sentient being is difficult to change. You should keep on changing the minds of sentient beings, from the first moment that they have one particle, to the moment that they attain the way. This should be started by giving. For this reason giving is the first of the six paramitas.

Mind is beyond measure. Things given are beyond measure. Moreover, in giving, mind transforms the gift and the gift transforms mind.

2

“Kind speech” means that when you see sentient beings you arouse the mind of compassion and offer words of loving care. It is contrary to cruel or violent speech.

In the secular world, there is the custom of asking after someone's health. In Buddhism there is the phrase, “Please treasure yourself” and the respectful address to seniors, “May I ask how you are?” It is kind speech to speak to sentient beings as you would to a baby.

Praise those with virtue; pity those without it. If kind speech is offered, little by little virtue will grow. Thus even kind speech which is not ordinarily known or seen comes into being. You should be willing to practice it for this entire present life; do not give up, world after world, life after life. Kind speech is the basis for reconciling rulers and subduing enemies. Those who hear kind speech from you have a delighted expression and a joyful mind. Those who hear of your kind speech will be deeply touched -- they will never forget it.

You should know that kind speech arises from kind mind, and kind mind from the seed of compassionate mind. You should ponder the fact that kind speech is not just praising the merit of others; it has the power to turn the destiny of the nation.

3

“Beneficial action” is skillfully to benefit all classes of sentient beings, that is, to care about their distant and near future, and to help them by using skillful means. In ancient times, someone helped a caged tortoise; another took care of an injured sparrow. They did not expect a reward; they were moved to do so only for the sake of beneficial action.

Foolish people think that if they help others first, their own benefit will be lost; but this is not so. Beneficial action is an act of oneness, benefiting self and others together. Thus you should benefit friend and enemy equally. You should benefit self and others alike. If you have this mind, even beneficial action for the sake of grasses, trees, wind, and water is spontaneous and unremitting. This being so, make a wholehearted effort to help those trapped by ignorance.

4

“Cooperation” means non-difference. It is non-difference from self, non-difference from others. For example, the Tathagata was born into the human world, and lived a human life. Judging from this identification with the human world you can suppose that he might identify himself with other worlds. When you know cooperation, self and other are of one kind.

“Cooperation” means right form, dignity, correct manner. There is a truth that after self assimilates others to itself, self lets itself be assimilated by others. The relationship of self and others is infinitely varied according to circumstances.

The Guanzi says, “The sea does not refuse water because of its identity with water. You should further understand that water is originally endowed with the virtue of not rejecting the sea. On this account water habitually gathers itself, flowing into the sea, and earth accumulates itself, forming a mountain.” My understanding is that because the ocean itself does not reject the ocean, it is the ocean, and it is large. Because mountains do not exclude mountains, they are mountains and they are high.

With a gentle expression, practice cooperation for all people. Each of these four methods of guidance includes all four. Thus, there are sixteen methods of guiding sentient beings.

— Dōgen, Trans. & copyright by L. Richmond and K. Tanahashi, adapted by Three Treasures Sangha

27 - To-Rei Zenji: Bodhisattva's Vow

Leader:

I am only a simple disciple,
But I offer these respectful words:

Assembly:

When I regard the true nature of the many dharmas,
I find them all to be sacred forms
Of the Tathagata's never-failing essence.
Each particle of matter, each moment,
Is no other than the Tathagata's inexpressible radiance.
With this realization, our virtuous ancestors,
With compassionate minds and hearts,
Gave tender care to beasts and birds.

Among us, in our own daily lives,
Who is not reverently grateful for the protections of life:
Food, drink, and clothing!
Though they are inanimate things,
They are nonetheless the warm flesh and blood,
The merciful incarnations of Buddha.

All the more, we can be especially sympathetic
And affectionate with foolish people,
Particularly with someone who becomes a sworn enemy
And persecutes us with abusive language.
That very abuse conveys the Buddha's boundless loving-kindness.
It is a compassionate device to liberate us entirely
From the mean-spirited delusions that we have built up
With our wrongful conduct from the beginningless past.
With our response to such abuse,
We completely relinquish ourselves,
And the most profound and pure faith arises.

At the peak of each thought, a lotus flower opens,
And on each flower, there is revealed a Buddha.
Everywhere is the Pure Land in its beauty.
We see fully the Tathagata's radiant light
Right where we are.
May we retain this mind
And extend it throughout the world,
So that we and all beings become mature in Buddha's wisdom.

28 - Hakuin Zenji: Song of Zazen

All beings by nature are Buddha,
As ice by nature is water.
Apart from water, there is no ice;
Apart from beings, no Buddha.

How sad that people ignore the near
And search for truth afar:
Like someone in the midst of water
Crying out in thirst;
Like a child of a wealthy home
Wandering among the poor.

Lost on dark paths of ignorance,
We wander through the Six Worlds.
From dark path to dark path —
When shall we be freed from birth and death?

Oh, the zazen of the Mahayana!
To this the highest praise!
Devotion, repentance, training,
The many paramitas —
All have their source in zazen.

Those who try zazen even once
Wipe away beginningless crimes.
Where are all the dark paths then?
The Pure Land itself is near.

Those who hear this truth even once
And listen with a grateful heart,
Treasuring it, revering it,
Gain blessings without end.

Much more, those who turn about
And bear witness to self-nature,
Self-nature that is no-nature,
Go far beyond mere doctrine.

Here, effect and cause are the same.
The Way is neither two nor three.
With form that is no-form,
Going and coming, we are never astray.
With thought that is no-thought,
Singing and dancing are the voice of the Law.

Boundless and free is the sky of Samadhi!
Bright the full moon of wisdom!

Truly, is anything missing now?
 Nirvana is right here, before our eyes.
 This very place is the Lotus Land;
 This very body, the Buddha.

29 - Song of the Grass-Roof Hermitage

I built a grass hut where there's nothing of value.
 After eating, I relax and enjoy a nap.
 When it was completed, fresh weeds appeared.
 Now it's been lived in — covered by weeds.

The person in the hut lives here calmly,
 Not stuck to inside, outside, or in between.
 Places worldly people live, s/he doesn't live.
 Realms worldly people love, s/he doesn't love.
 Though the hut is small, it includes the entire world.
 In ten square feet, an old one illumines forms and their nature.
 A Great Vehicle bodhisattva trusts without doubt.
 The middling or lowly can't help wondering;
 Will this hut perish or not?
 Perishable or not, the original master is present,
 Not dwelling south or north, east or west.

Firmly based on steadiness, it can't be surpassed.
 A shining window below the green pines —
 Jade palaces or vermilion towers can't compare with it.
 Just sitting with head covered all things are at rest.
 Thus, this mountain monk doesn't understand at all.
 Living here s/he no longer works to get free.
 Who would proudly arrange seats, trying to entice guests?

Turn around the light to shine within, then just return.
 The vast inconceivable source can't be faced or turned away from.
 Meet the ancestral teachers, be familiar with their instruction,
 Bind grasses to build a hut, and don't give up.
 Let go of hundreds of years and relax completely.
 Open your hands and walk, innocent.
 Thousands of words, myriad interpretations
 Are only to free you from obstructions.
 If you want to know the undying person in the hut,
 Why would you separate from this skin bag in the present time.

— Shih-T'ou Hsi-ch'ien, trans. by & copyright: D. Leighton

30 - Practice Songs

1. Breathing In, Breathing Out

Breathing in, breathing out
Breathing in, breathing out
I am blooming as a flower. I am fresh as the dew.
I am solid as the mountain. I am firm as the earth.
I am free.
Breathing in, breathing out
Breathing in, breathing out
I am water, reflecting what is real, what is true.
And I feel there is space deep inside of me
I am free, I am free, I am free.

2. The Island Within

Breathing in, I go back to the island within myself.
There are beautiful trees within the island,
there are clear streams of water,
there are birds, sunshine and fresh air.
Breathing out, I feel safe.
I enjoy going back to my island.

3. Dear Friends

Dear friends, dear friends, Let me tell you how I feel
You have given me such treasures, I love you so.

4. I Have Arrived, I Am Home

I have arrived, I am home in the here and in the now. (2x)
I am solid, I am free. I am solid, I am free.
In the ultimate, I dwell. In the ultimate, I dwell.

5. In Out Deep Slow

In, out
Deep, slow
Calm, ease
Smile, release.
Present moment,
Wonderful moment.

6. And When I Rise

And when I rise, let me rise like a bird, joyfully.
And when I fall, let me fall like a leaf, gracefully, without regrets.
And when I sit, let me sit like a mountain, solidly.
And when I lay, let me lay like a lake, calm and still, reflecting all.
And when I work, let me work like a bee, lazily.
And when I play, let me play like the rays of the sun, rejoicingly.

7. No Coming, No Going

No coming, no going
No after, no before
I hold you close to me.
I release you to be so free
Because I am in you, and you are in me (2x)

8. Happiness Is Here And Now

Happiness is here and now.
I have dropped my worries.
Nowhere to go, nothing to do,
no longer in a hurry.
Happiness is here and now.
I have dropped my worries.
Somewhere to go, something to do,
but I don't need to hurry.