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Namo Tassa Bhagavato Arahato Sammasambuddhasa

### Summary

This article is a transcription of a Dhamma Talk given by Venerable Piyadassi Mahathera on the 10<sup>th</sup> of August 1992. Venerable Piyadassi talked about the importance of bhavana, the development and culture of mind; as the heart of Buddhist practice. His teaching also includes the meaning and examples of Dhammaviharin - living according to the Dhamma.

Venerable Piyadassi Mahathera also explained and illustrated the significance of cultivating the ten essential qualities of high standard in Buddhist practice.

### Buddha's Teachings from Venerable Piyadassi Mahathera, 10 August 1992

This is a talk given by Venerable Piyadassi Mahathera when he visited the Buddhist Discussion Centre Australia on 10 August 1992.

Recognized by Buddhists throughout the World as a leading figure in Buddhism, Venerable Piyadassi Mahathera is a renowned authority and scholar on Buddhist Teachings and Meditation. He has written many books on the subject of Buddhism that have been published in both Western and Eastern Countries.

A Buddhist Monk for over 50 years, Venerable Piyadassi Mahathera is Abbot of two major Sri Lankan Temples in Colombo and Kandy. He has travelled the world on many occasions giving lectures, talks and guidance in Buddhist Teachings and how this discipline can be applied to living in the world at this difficult time.

With his kind permission, we reprint a summary of the Dhamma talk Venerable Piyadassi gave students during this visit.

"Sisters and Brothers,

As this is a meditation class, I think you expect me to speak on meditation. The word meditation we use, for want of a better word, for bhavana. Bhavana is the word used by the Buddha both in Pali and Sanskrit, the same word.

If you consult a good Dictionary, you will find several meanings to the word meditation. Thinking, thinking quietly, thinking seriously, contemplation. These are the meanings attached to the word meditation. Now the word bhavana, means development or culture.

What is it that we cultivate and develop?

It is mind development, and mind culture. It is better to understand these two words. Now it is everywhere, they use the word meditation, but we have no other word. Bhavana means mind culture or mind development.

You know in this world; people want to keep physically fit. To keep fit, to do physical exercise, physical culture, what do they do? I ask you, in Australia, in Canada, in America, anywhere, what do they do? They are running, jogging, bending, twisting - all sorts of doing with the physical body. But the interesting thing is for mental training, mental exercise, just the opposite.

You sit down for your meditation. You see that your mind is running faster than your body. Your mind is running, jogging, twisting, bending, very fast. But to have mental training, mental culture, you must drop all that.

Therefore you try to collect, collect, collect, stop your running, stop your jogging, stop your bending, twisting. You have to get calm - just the opposite. You get this understanding not from books. You sit down, you do meditation.

Observe you are seeing how your mind works. Now when you experience that, it is not book work, it is not listening to a talk, or reading a book. You experience it, see how your mind works. Now comes a thought, it disappears, reappears. You see, you are experiencing all that. In Buddhism this is the heart. If you remove meditation from Buddhism, you remove the very heart.

During the Buddha's time, one of his disciples came to see him. He put a question to the Buddha. He used the word Dhammaviharin. Dhamma means the Buddha's Teaching, vihari means living. So Dhammaviharin is living according to the Dhamma. Now the disciple's question is: "Bhante, what is meant by Dhammaviharin?"

Now the Buddha answers. "There is a disciple who is very clever in studying the Dhamma, the Tripitaka, the Buddha's Teaching. Very clever in studying Dhamma but does not go and behave like a hen on her eggs".

You know when a person is meditating, it is like a hen on her eggs. The hen on her eggs is seemingly very inactive, but actually doing something very important. Warming the eggs so that the chicks hatch. But the squirrel in the revolving cage is seemingly very active. The squirrel, just merely turning the wheel, but seemingly active. So we are also in the world sometimes like the squirrel, and when you come here, you are like the hen on her eggs.

So, this person who studies the Dhamma is very clever but does not go for meditation. The Buddha says that person is very clever in studying the Dhamma, but not Dhammaviharin, not living according to the Dhamma.

Then there is one who studies the Dhamma, and is also very clever in Teaching others, or convincing others. But that person does not go for meditation. The Buddha says that disciple is very clever at Teaching but is not Dhammaviharin - not living according to the Dhamma.

The next is one who can recite Dhamma, has committed it to memory and can recite the good things, but does not go for meditation. The Buddha says that disciple is not Dhammaviharin. The fourth is one who reflects on the Dhamma - a good thing but does not go for meditation.

The disciple who learns the Dhamma and does meditation, the Buddha says, this disciple is Dhammaviharin.

When the Buddha was about to pass away, all the monks and disciples gathered together. Soon our Supreme Master will pass away. Let us pay our Homage, our Respect to our Supreme Teacher. They all gathered together.

One monk had not come. Dhammarama was his name. So these monks said, "Bhante, Dhammarama has not come". Buddha said, "Alright, you go and call him, I want to see him". The monks went to his kuti and said, "The Buddha wants to see you". So he came.

You know, the Buddha is very interesting. If a person does anything wrong, and the Buddha knows very well what has happened, he will never say "why didn't you do this?", or "why did you do this?" He never put it that way. Even in a court of Law we don't do that. Just see what has happened.

The Buddha also, he knows what has happened. He knows that person has done something very wrong. He'll just hear you, what have you got to say.

So the Buddha also said, "Now Dhammarama, they say that you are not here". "Yes Bhante." Now, the Buddha sees what answer he gives.

"Bhante, I thought if I can stay in my kuti and do a little meditation and get some mental attainment, I think that's the best way to pay Homage to my Teacher, rather than going there to see my Teacher's body".

"Sadhu, Sadhu, Sadhu". Excellent, excellent, excellent, the Buddha said, "All follow Dhammarama".

So you see there, also you find the Buddha used the pride of place for meditation.

From the Buddha's point of view, each one of us is a conflux of mind and body. Flux is our physical body changing, not remaining the same for two consecutive moments. Let alone religion and philosophy, looking at it from a purely scientific standpoint, all things are changing.

If you knock here, you cannot knock the same place again. Scientifically speaking, because the particles of matter there, and the environment are all in vibration. So the scientists tell us all things are changing.

The Buddha antedated modern science by 23 centuries when he said "anicca" - not permanent, or not stable and fixed. So, now we know that this body is changing. But the mind is also in flux. Mind and mental factors are all changing.

Now in your meditation, you can see how a thought comes, disappears, how fast they come and go. It can be a wholesome thought, unwholesome thought, ugly thought, beautiful thought. So mind is a flux, flowing, faster than the body. Seventeen times faster from an Abhidhamma point of view. Observe these things in your meditation.

After the Buddha, the first Western Philosopher to come out with the flux theory was Heroclitus, from Greece. Maybe these ideas were transported to Greece. To illustrate this idea of flowing, he said "Man cannot step twice into the same river". Is he right? Yes, because when he goes there, comes out, and goes again - that is flowing. That river is gone now. Do you understand?

If you know your Dhamma, if you know your Teaching, Buddha's Teaching, if you know the root of the Dhamma, we will go a stage further and say, not only man cannot step twice into the same river, but, the same man cannot step twice into the same river. Man is also changing, when he comes out, another man is going in really.

In Buddhism the pride of place is given to the human mind. Buddhism is the most psychological of religions. All theistic religions, by theistic I mean all religions that profess a God, permanent, everlasting creator, that permanent creator rewards the good deeds of his creatures, and also punishes the bad deeds.

The Buddha is not against these terms God, or soul, he is not against them. But when you say permanent and everlasting, the Buddha says, "I cannot say anything is permanent or everlasting".

That's the thing you see. He tried to find out, to locate anything permanent here. He found the body flux, he found the mind flux, but he couldn't locate

any permanent entity, any permanent soul or self here. Therefore, he said, "I won't say there is anything permanent".

Not the terms God and soul - only not permanent.

Therefore, all theistic religions are theocentric. Theos, from Greek meaning God. Now Buddha was not a God or Brahma, or a supernatural being. He is an historical figure. Also, he was a human being. Born as a man, enlightened as a man, lived as a man, passed away as a man.

But after he attained enlightenment at the age of 35, he was not an ordinary man, or philosopher. He was an extraordinary man, magnificent man, a unique being.

How did he become a unique being? His body too was subject to sickness, death, old age, dying. Nothing unnatural here, just blood and flesh and bones. So, to become enlightened he worked for it, many, many lives, and he cultivated ten essential qualities of high standard.

Dana, charitable giving, sila, morality, nekkhamma, renunciation, panna, wisdom, viriya, effort, khanti, patience, sacca, truthfulness, adhitthana, determination, metta, loving kindness, upekkha, equanimity. These are the ten essential qualities of high standard. Even he sacrificed his life for the sake of enlightenment.

It is not the prerogative of a chosen few. We each can cultivate the ten essential qualities of high standard. Enlightenment means to understand ourselves. You find the four Noble Truths, that's the essence and quintessence of the Buddha's Teaching. Have you understood yourself? No, no.

When two persons meet, there are really six persons. How do you get six out of the two? Each person as he sees himself or herself - one. Each person as the other person sees him or her - two. Each person as he really is or as she really is - three.  $3 \times 2 = 6$ .

Each one thinks I am so and so, depending on his ego, his conceit, his pride. He then thinks who the other person is. Then there is the real person. That's what Buddha did, understand the real person.

When we understand ourselves, no more fire here, no more raga fire, hate, lust or delusion. Buddha once said, "I am a person cool, and free from all fires". We cannot say that. When we are doing meditation, all those things are there, sleeping. The latent tendencies are there.

So, the Buddha's Teaching is anthropocentric, from the Greek - man, man centered.

In this world, I cannot think of any person who walked like Buddha. The greatest walker in the world is the Buddha. He walked and walked the highways of India, enfolding all within his aura of loving compassion, to

meet people. So, the Buddha meets all types of people from all walks of life, Princes and paupers, rich and poor, literate and illiterate, women and children.

But when he detected any weakness or shortcomings, the Buddha never said, "You are a sinner, a wretched sinner", the Buddha said, "monks, this is due to ignorance".

From the Buddha's point of view, this is the worst taint, worst defilement, the crowning corruption of all our madness is ignorance.

From an Abhidhamma point of view, you can't have craving without ignorance. You can't have hatred without ignorance. Moha, ignorance, can work without any help, independently.

Do you do breathe meditation? That's the one the Buddha praised.

Little Rahula, Prince Siddhartha's son, joined the order when he was very young. The Buddha wanted to Teach him. He gave him seven types of meditation, from less to more advanced.

First, he gave Rahula the four Brahma vihara, metta, karuna, mudita, upekkha, love, compassion, sympathetic joy and equanimity. I call them the Art of Noble Living. Some call it Divine Abiding. It doesn't carry any meaning unless you know the terms.

You cultivate love to get rid of hatred. Love and hatred do not co-exist. When you say love, there is no compromising limitations.

Metta means to be a person without any attachment. The word love is not enough.

If you do some harm to another person to defend yourself, don't say I'm justified in doing that. That's not, Buddhism. That's harming.

There are no compromising limitations in the Buddha's metta. It is love without attachment, or bond, or tie. May they be well and happy, may all persons be well and happy. Metta is like quicksilver, you put it anywhere and it doesn't get attached. To love without attachment is sometimes not easy, but not impossible.

You know in this world, sometimes I hear young people say, "I love you more than my life" Lovers say that. That is lovers' life. But when he sees the response is not to his satisfaction, then anger.

Not, "I love you more than my life". And why? That is not real love. It is very selfish that thing, very possessive. So, metta is a wonderful thing.

You start with yourself. May I be well, may I be happy, may no harm come to me. May all living beings be well and happy. It's the easiest way to do it. I like to be well and happy. May others also be well and happy. Not selfish.

Send it to those in the hall, wishing these meditators to be well and happy. Then you go beyond the hall, whole of Melbourne, whole of Australia, further, further - like you drop a pebble into the water, it goes out in circles and circles and circles. So, let your love go in circles like that.

Compassion you see, to avoid violence. Then cultivate sympathetic joy, appreciative joy. This is the opposite to jealousy. That's the best way to understand this word. Mudita, appreciative joy, congratulative joy, gladness, altruistic joy.

The Buddha says, you do this appreciative joy to get rid of aversion to meditation. In the beginning there is dislike, cultivate joy - liking for the meditation. It gets rid of hatred, repulsion, aversion.

After the four very mild meditations, you go a little higher. Now examine the unpleasant nature of your body - to get rid of raga, lust. You see that all things are not so pleasant.

Then the Buddha says cultivate anicca. Cultivate impermanent. Then you get rid of "I am", "I am" notion. People aren't fixed, they are changing. Do that meditation. Also, Rahula could get conceit because he thinks, Buddha is my father. Contemplate impermanence.

Then he comes to anapanasati - the highest, breathing meditation. You may ask, "What is this meditation?". We are breathing all the time, even when we are asleep. The importance is mindfulness. Mindfully breathing in, mindfully breathing out.

At other times, this is not possible. But when we decide to meditate, we cut off all outside distractions. This is also why we meditate in sitting posture, to cut off bodily distractions, mindfully concentrating. If you can't sit on a cushion, you can sit on a chair, but the chair must have a straight back otherwise you can fall asleep.

The important thing is to keep the body erect, the spinal column and the head. Only for this meditation the sitting posture is essential. Can we lie down to meditate? Yes, but there is a danger of falling asleep. When you are walking, you are just mindful of your walking, not the breath.

There should be no effort to control the breath, just allow it to ebb and flow at its own natural rhythm. There are people who have meditated for 10 or 15 years who some days find they cannot concentrate for even one minute. That is the nature of the mind.

The Cardiac Society in London has done research with this meditation and has accepted its curative effects. There are now 68,000 British patients doing breathing meditation. They said this meditation had done more for the patients than curative drugs.

Unlike some other meditation practices, this meditation has an effect on both sides of the brain, and thus it is capable of bringing marvelous results to patients. A Sri Lankan Dr. Bodiniki, Consultant Psychiatrist to Harley Hospital, Essex, U.K., says that 30 minutes of meditation, 15 minutes in the morning and 15 minutes at night, gives the body relaxation equal to 6 or 7 hours of sleep.

It has been scientifically proved that anapanasati meditation is capable of synchronizing the workings of both sides of the brain and reducing the patient's oxygen needs, blood pressure and heart rate.

This meditation can also be used to get people off drug addiction. I once went to Joseph Goldstein's Meditation Centre in Boston. These young people were meditating for one, two or three months and gradually developed an aversion towards all liquor and drugs. Radical changes have occurred. The parents are surprised at these results and then also come and do a little meditation to find out the benefits.

Question: What happens when the mind won't stay still? What is the best thing to do?

Answer: Do some metta meditation. If you find you are sleepy, either go to sleep if you are tired, or to wake up, stir the physical body. Wash the face, rub vigorously, and set the mind to doing the meditation.

When you cannot sleep in the night you can do a little breathing meditation, or if you are troubled, you can just stretch the body and make it like a dead body. Don't think, just be there, aware. One hour, two hours, just relax. When you get up in the morning you are invigorated, and you can do your work. Meditators do not need as much sleep as the meditation is itself relaxing for body and mind. Instead of 6 or 7 hours sleep we meditate instead. It's good."

After the Dhamma talk concluded, Members of our Centre expressed their gratitude for Venerable Piyadassi Mahathera's kindness in visiting our Centre and offering his exceptional advice and Blessings to help us. Members then made many offerings of flowers, incense and other Dhamma gifts to the Venerable.

Practicing Meditation is one of the 10 ways of making merit as taught by the Buddha, being aware of absolute truth. The 10 ways are listed (with Pali) for consideration and practice, for your reference.

1. DANA, Generosity
2. SILA, Observing Precepts
3. BHAVANA, Practice of Concentration and Meditation
4. APACAYANA, Respect for Dhamma Teachers
5. VEYYAVACCA, giving a helping hand for others to perform Virtuous Deeds
6. PATTIDANA, Sharing Merits
7. PATTANUMODANA, Joyful acknowledgements in the sharing of



Merits

8. DHANIMASSAVANA, Listening to Dhamma
9. DHAMMADESANA, Teaching Dhamma
10. DITTHUJUKAMMA, Righting one's own Wrong Views

May you practice and develop Buddhist meditation.

May all beings, in the ten directions, seen and unseen, receive blessings from this script.

We thank the Devas and Devatas of Learning for their help in and guidance with the writing of this script.

May you be well and happy.

May all beings be well and happy.

This script was written and edited by Pennie White and Leanne Eames.