

Changing the World from Within

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Namô Tassa Bhagavatô Arahâtô Sammâ-Sambuddhassa
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Recently I taught a weekend retreat and one of the people who was new to Buddhist practice made the comment that they felt Buddhism was very passive, took a very passive stand on things because particularly in this retreat we were looking at the way that we respond to situations according to our conditioning, according to our habit patterns. We were observing that kind of reaction and the person who was new to this practice couldn't quite see where we take it from there. If what is happening to us and how we're reacting is almost predetermined then what do we do with that, and if we're just sitting on the cushion meditating how can we work with that? And if everything is already conditioned how can we ever act in the world to change what needs to be changed? So I'd like to talk on this subject tonight to try to explain that Buddhism isn't passive, in fact it is quite the opposite, it's a very active religion, it's a very active practice but the action happens at a point where we're not used to paying attention and that is within our own mind.

When we think about activity, when we think about action, when we think about making changes, particularly changes in the world, we ordinarily look outside –the people out there, at the institutions out there, at the situations out there, at the things out there. And very often we act with good intention but without much wisdom, and the results of that kind of action might be to make a situation even worse, or at the very least we might end up disappointed because we haven't achieved the result we were hoping for.

So the Buddhist orientation is that we're trying to change the world from the inside out. And the very understanding of what constitutes the world, what is the world, what makes up the world, that is an important point to get clear on from the start. The un-instructed person, they assume that their conception of the world, the way they apprehend the world, the way they assume the world is, is the truth. And in Buddhist practice we are starting to question our assumptions, our ideas about things as being true because "I think that way" or "I've been taught that" or "I've thought that" or "I've experienced that somewhere in my life." So we are questioning even what we mean by "the world." The world the Buddha said is "within this fathom-long body" – this mind and body constitute the world because we only know the world through the senses and through what we come in contact with, either directly or indirectly. Directly through what we see, but also indirectly from what we read about, even if we haven't seen that thing ourselves. So the Buddha's orientation is to first of all get to know what we mean by "the world" and how we take up the world so that we can start to see whether our picture of what is the world is accurate, is based on reality. Only then can we think about changing the world. Only when we see things clearly will we know what the world is, what needs to be changed and therefore if we understand what the world is, what's the best way to go about changing things that need change, or we think need changing.

It's not that we don't act in the world or change, but we become more cautious about thinking that we know where that change should take place and how we should go about doing it, because we

become more aware of the consequences of what we do rather than thinking that situations have static nature, they're like this, if we change something it'll make it forever the way I think it should be. We understand that every situation, every relationship, every institution, is constantly in a state of flux and flow, and if we make a change anywhere in that situation or organisation or institution or relationship, it is going to create new effects which will in turn give rise to new causes or consequences. And so instead of looking just at the immediate results, we are looking at the further results – what happens next. So in Buddhist practice we're applying this kind of investigation and development of understanding to our own inner world as well as to the world out there. Starting with understanding first of all our inner world because when we understand that, that allows us to understand the bigger picture and to understand how things come to be, and what's likely to happen as a result of what we do.

Buddhism is in fact a very active practice and a very active religion but the action is invisible for a lot of the time because it only goes on within our own mind. The Buddha gave the simile that it's like the hen sitting on her eggs. She's just sitting there, what she doing? She's not doing anything, she's just sitting there. But we know that if the hen doesn't sit there, doesn't sit there long enough, often enough, even though she's not doing anything but sitting there, that those eggs won't hatch, even if she wishes it, even if she hopes it, eggs won't hatch unless she just sits there. We can't see what's happening inside the eggs but we know that it's happening as a result of the hen sitting there. And our practice is like that, we have to be prepared to do the invisible work first so that we can do the more active work more skilfully. And it may seem very often that nothing much is happening from the outside unless we are looking inside at our own mind.

Now for all of you sitting here in the last half-hour of meditation, just watching, trying to watch the breath, you'll notice how active the mind is from the inside. Everyone looks very peaceful, everyone sitting very still, eyes closed, peaceful expression on the face, but I'm sure for a lot of you your mind is going very speedily – one thing to another, around and around and around. Outer appearances don't tell the whole story, and in Buddhist practice even though it looks like from the outside that we're just sitting there, there's a lot of work going on – observing the mind, observing what goes on in the mind, and starting to understand the process by which the mind comes into being, the process/interaction that creates our experience, gives us that sense of who we are and what we're doing in this moment.

The Buddha has given very clear instructions on how to take up this practice and tonight I'd particularly like to go through the 37 Requisites for Enlightenment, which are the 37 guidelines for developing the necessary spiritual qualities to be able to become enlightened. We have to remember though that this is a gradual practice, a gradual training that doesn't take place away from our ordinary everyday life. It's not about becoming spiritual and no longer living in the world, even monks and nuns live in the world, otherwise I wouldn't be here sitting in front of you now. This is the way I work, this is my job, teaching, if you like. We're engaged in the world too. So it's not about these 37 Requisites for Enlightenment are things you do when you're not doing your real life, these are what you start to develop in daily life as well as on the meditation cushion and then you bring back to your daily life what you've learnt through the specific practices that you do, and for all of us, it's going to take some time before we get enlightened. Most of us are going to take some time, we mightn't even do it in this lifetime, so we're looking at the long-haul, developing these qualities, these qualities of mind and qualities of heart, and gradually allowing them to grow until they become really forces in our way of being in the world.

Now the first of these 37 Requisites, these are all qualities of mind that we have to develop, they're not theories, they're not concepts outside, we have to bring them into our own experience. The first

of these is the Eightfold Path, the Noble Eightfold Path, and this Noble Eightfold Path which most of you would be familiar with has three sections to it. First is about morality and virtue and about living in the world, specifically about how we engage in our relationships with others, in our work with the society that we live in. Right speech, right action, right livelihood. This must give an indication that Buddhism isn't about passively living in society, Buddhism is about having a clear set of values which we try to express in our daily life in the way we relate to others through our speech and our behaviour, in the way that we make a living, in the way that we contribute to society. And not just a haphazard set of values, but in this Noble Eightfold Path the Buddha mentions livelihood which should not be pursued and also those kinds of behaviours which should be developed. And in this Noble Eightfold Path one of the factors is Right Aspiration or Intention. So we should be moving towards living with loving-kindness and compassion, with generosity and renunciation, challenging our inherent greed and hatred, and this is stated in the Noble Eightfold Path. And then to develop the mind specifically to be able to cultivate wholesome states of mind and to let go of and remove unwholesome states of mind based on self-centredness, based on anger and ill-will, based on desire, jealousy. This is all stated in the Noble Eightfold Path. Not only to meditate but to be mindful in one's daily life, to pay attention to what one is doing and how one is doing it – pay attention to how one is speaking and how one is thinking before one speaks and acts. This is all in the Noble Eightfold Path. Right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness, right concentration, giving rise to right understanding, supported by right intention.

Now tonight I can't hope to go into details about the different requisites for Enlightenment, I just want to make it clear that this path of practice is very active. To be able to change the way we think, change the way we speak, change the way we act, we have to undertake very active practice, and the Buddha has given us step by step instructions on how to do this. The Noble Eightfold Path gives us a basic grand plan, if you like, and the other requisites go into more specific details on how to make this plan happen.

So next of these requisites are the Four Foundations of Mindfulness, 4 places where we need to focus our attention if we're going to start to understand ourselves and understand the world. It's very telling that those four foundations, those four places to focus, are all within our own mind and body. The Buddha said if you get to know yourself you'll know the whole world. If you get to know what makes you tick, you react, you act, you'll know what makes the person next to you, the person around the corner, the person in power, the person that you like, the person you don't like. Get to know yourself.

So these four places where we need to focus our attention. The body itself, on our feelings, the reactions that we have to what we experience through seeing, hearing tasting, touching, smelling and thinking. To how we interpret those interactions. So first of all the *vedanā*, the feeling, is just how we experience it, before we makes sense of what we've come in contact with. So when we hear a loud sound, whether it's pleasant or unpleasant, as an experience, before we work out whether that sound is a dog or a car, whether it's someone's voice. And then to know the mood of the mind, know what states of mind are present. Whether we're in a happy frame of mind or an unhappy frame of mind. Whether we're in a greedy state of mind or a contented state of mind, because this will colour how we react to what we encounter in the world. When we're in a good mood we can cope with a lot more. When we're in a bad mood the smallest thing irritates us. So we start to see how we relate to the world is not caused by the world, it's caused by how we're feeling about the world, and that's the third foundation of mindfulness. And the last one is to observe the changes that take place in the mind as a result of our contact with the world, and to see what brings things into being – what makes me happy, what makes me angry, what happens when I see something like

that and how long does it last, and what happens next? Not out there, but in this mind itself. And to see how changeable, how unstable our reactions are. One moment it's this, next moment it's that. One day it's this, the next day it's that. And to see that our view of the world is just as changeable. When it goes the way I like, the world is great, when I'm in a bad mood, it doesn't matter what happens, the world is terrible. Focusing within our own mind and body.

Next of these requisites for enlightenment are the Four Right Efforts. And the Four Right Efforts are where we pay attention to what's happening in the mind and discern whether this is for my happiness or for my suffering. When this mood is present, when I have this kind of feeling, what happens next? Does it bring me happiness, does it bring me peace, does it help me to get on in the world? Does it bring me suffering, does it bring me into conflict, does it make me regret later on? Starting to get to know what happens next, both internally and in our relationships. Then as we start to become more awake to what's going on in the mind, we start to change what's there. This is very active work. Just waking up to what's in the mind in the first place, then changing it, how can we do that if we're not actively engaged? We have to be awake and then we have to refrain from following what is unskillful, what is unprofitable, what brings us suffering, and we have to be innovative and bring in something that is a better alternative. To be able to, if not remove the thought that's there, at least not to act on it. And then to build up the strength of the mind so that we can not only refrain from acting on it but we can replace it with something better. So these Four Right Efforts – not to let an unwholesome thought arise in the mind that hasn't arisen, not to let an unwholesome thought continue that has arisen, to make a wholesome thought that hasn't arisen arise in the mind, to make a wholesome thought that's present continue. The basic practice in Right Effort is to wake up, to restrain and then to substitute, or to make grow. Substitute the wholesome for the unwholesome and keep on growing the wholesome good thoughts. And we learn what is wholesome and what is unwholesome by seeing what it does to the mind. Jealous thoughts – how does it feel? How does it feel even if I don't say anything? And if I do act on jealousy what happens as a result? So we are mindful, paying attention, seeing what brings things into being, what allows them to continue, what happens when they cease.

In order to have a repertoire, in order to have confidence in this teaching, we practice 10 more of the requisites for enlightenment. These are the 5 Indriyas first of all – the 5 Spiritual Faculties – faith, energy, mindfulness, concentration and wisdom. These might sound like lists of things, and they are but it's just a convenient way of grouping together those qualities of mind and heart which support each other and which we can single out for special attention, to work on, to make them come to life for us.

So the first of these spiritual faculties is faith. In Buddhism faith means having the confidence to be willing to give it a go. Faith that the Buddha was enlightened or at least knew how to be happy, and that there is a path of practice that he gave that we can follow ourselves. To at least be confident to that extent, and then to be willing to try out what has been given as the instructions to follow, that's all that's required. But we may find out that some of the instructions aren't palatable – give up self-centredness – “hey but who's going to look after me if I don't keep that self-centredness?” So then the instructions are – well investigate what happens when you're self-centred, when you're looking after number one, when you make everything dependent on what's in it for me. Start observing how it feels, what it does to the mind, what it does to the stomach and the gut, what it does to your relationships with people, how it feels at the end of the day. So, am I willing to do that? Am I willing to question something that seems so fundamental to my self-preservation, to my security, to my happiness? It requires faith, that willingness to at least look.

In order to be willing to do it and able to do it, we have to apply energy. This is mental energy. Mental energy generates physical energy and this comes from having the confidence that there's something in this path, something worth pursuing, and then as we try to do the work we have to be mindful, we have to pay attention, not to out there, but to in here. We have to do it not only on the meditation cushion but in daily life. Not only once we get going in the day, but from the moment we wake up, trying to have continuous mindfulness throughout the whole of our day. Very very hard to do that if we don't apply energy and if we don't have the enthusiasm that comes from confidence. As we cultivate mindfulness in daily life and we start to see what happens in our mind as a result of the thoughts that come in, the emotional reactions, then we might want to change what we see.

And then to know in what way to change it, what to change it to. We go back to the teaching – the Buddha says to be kind, to be compassionate, to be generous. There's three qualities I can try to develop in my life. So we use the teaching to give us some sort of signpost of which direction to go in, and we also have the teaching which says that if you can't do anything good, then don't do anything. Just refrain. What can I do if I don't say or do anything? Go back to the breath. Pay attention to the body, stay focused in the present moment. Don't let the old patterns push you along, drive you to act. If it's not wise to act, if you don't know how to act, if you don't know what to say, just hold steady, on the breath, on the body. This is what the practice is about. This is what the teaching says to do. It requires tremendous amounts of mental energy to restrain oneself and if we practice developing mindfulness when it's easy then we'll be able to notice what's happening, catch ourselves and then direct attention where it's going to be safe – exert the power of mindfulness to protect us, and to protect the other person from unskilful speech or action on our part.

As we do this more and more in our daily life we find that we start to live much more at ease with ourself and with others. We also follow the guidelines of Right Action – keeping the precepts - not harming, not taking what is not given, being reliable, being true to our word, being honest, and keeping the mind clear through abstaining from drugs and alcohol. And then trying to develop contentment with what we have, being willing to give up desires for the next and biggest thing, practising renunciation. All of these things are in the teaching, all of these things give us the support we need to know what to do next, where should I be going if I shouldn't be doing this thing, what should I be developing if I shouldn't be developing that thing. This is where the faith comes in and as we practice in our daily life we find our meditation starts to unfold, we become able to sit with more ease in our meditation and as the mind becomes more calm, more tranquil, we become more clear-seeing, we start to see things that we never would have seen before. This clarity of mind starts to reveal itself in meditation and in daily life, and makes the mind ripe for the development of wisdom.

And wisdom in the Buddha's teaching is also very clearly laid out. Watch for these 3 things the Buddha said, these three characteristics of existence. Don't just believe them, that they exist, believe me that they exist, investigate for yourself and explore. Impermanence – that everything is changing. Unsatisfactoriness – that we can't hang on to the things that we like because they're constantly changing, that we can't depend that things will stay the way they are even if they're good right now. Things are constantly changing, changing, changing, and one day will change to the point that they no longer exist in the way we know them now. So this is unsatisfactory if we want it to be permanent, if we want things to stay as they are now. And the fact that we can't control this world, we can't even control this mind and body, this points to the fact of non-self – that there is no unchanging self or soul within this mind and body that is directing the whole show.

Understanding these three characteristics is very crucial to understanding the world. When we see within our own mind and in our own experience constant change, we might look for somewhere, something out there, that doesn't change. The Buddha said – do that – don't just believe everything

changes, try and find something that doesn't. And when we investigate we find over and over again, we can't discover anything that doesn't change. That tells us something about the world. Even the most terrible situation is not going to stay that way forever. Even the best situation isn't going to stay that way forever.

Now some situations we can change, we can do something about. That is, deliberately change. Other situations seem hopeless, we can't change them, how are we going to change them, what can we do. But if we really understand impermanence we'll know that even the most terrible situation isn't going to stay that way, as it is, forever. And the things we can't change, that we can't deliberately do something about, we may be able to modify in some way. We learn to see that things change little by little by little, maybe we can do our bit in a little way even if we can't change the big thing, but if we can't do anything we can know that this situation won't stay this way forever, and that can help us to bear with difficult times in our lives when there isn't much we can do deliberately to make them change the way we want them to. That's understanding impermanence within our own mind and body and then looking out in the world to see the same thing.

Now in order to come to that understanding we have to practice very actively, we have to keep on looking at our own mind and body and keep on looking out there, investigating, and the mind that we develop through our meditation practice, through our cultivation of goodness, becomes a mind which is strong enough and clear enough and calm enough to look and to keep on looking until we can see beyond the surface appearance of things, see through our assumptions, see things in a completely different way. That is what is fundamental to Buddhist practice.

Changing the way we see things so that we change the world. Seeing things accurately, seeing things as they are, changes the world. Changes the world because the world as we perceive it becomes more in tune with reality, and as we are more in tune with reality through our understanding then we act in the world with more wisdom and skill - the impact that we have in the world is a much more positive one.

So these five spiritual faculties – faith, energy, mindfulness, concentration and wisdom – as we develop them, as we strengthen them, they become powers in our life. Our spiritual practice isn't separate from how we live in the world. What we do in our spiritual life isn't separate from what we do in our ordinary life. We start to see the world as spiritual practice. This is the change in the world. We see people not as good and bad, but as suffering. Not as enemies or friends, but as bound by ignorance, sometimes acting foolishly, just as we do, but also containing within them seeds of goodness, potential for wisdom. Change the way we look at the world.

These qualities, in order to develop them, we have to actively take up the practice, we have to take up the practice of Four Foundations of Mindfulness, of Right Effort, we live out the Noble Eightfold Path in our daily life as well as in our meditation and then we bring to growth the Four Roads to Success. And these Four Roads to Success, the Iddhipadas, begin with chandha-iddhipada - which is zeal, or interest, or enthusiasm for the job at hand. These present us with a clear goal for our practice. If we don't have any idea where we hope to end up, why we're doing the practice, then we will very easily get side-tracked. So these four roads to success begin with having a very clear idea that the goal of our practice, where we want to end up, is Enlightenment. To be free of suffering, to be free of greed, hatred, and delusion. And then once we have that very clearly established, to generate the energy to do that work, to reach our goal. Energy is the next of the Iddhipadas. And to keep that goal in the forefront of our mind, so that the whole of our life is informed by our highest aspirations. Our values, our relationships, the way we use the material world, whether we recycle, whether we're wasteful, whether we try to look after this body by eating well, eating the right foods,

all of these things reflect our aspiration to live in this world without adding to the burden of the world, to live in this world skilfully so that we can maximise our potential to become enlightened. So we keep that in the forefront and it becomes the focus of our life.

And the last of these Four Iddhipadas, or Roads to Success, is investigation of the Dhamma. And this means relating every aspect of our life to the Dhamma. Investigating our experience in the light of the Buddha's teaching, and investigating the Buddha's teaching in the light of our experience, not just accepting the teaching but questioning it, investigating it, experimenting with it, seeing whether it's true because we've tried it out, not whether it's true because I think it is or I agree with it, but because we've tried it out, we've been energetic, we've been mindful and we've been awake. And then we know for ourselves.

Last of the 37 Factors are the Seven Factors of Enlightenment, and again these are a blueprint for the whole path. They start with mindfulness, energy, investigation of the Dhamma, investigation of our experience, leading to a mind which delights in Dhamma practice. No longer do we think, "I better go and meditate...I haven't done my hour today...Better go to the Dhamma Centre, nothing better on telly tonight..", we think, "Gee, I'd love to hear a Dhamma Talk! I'd like to go and meditate right now!". The mind leaps towards our Dhamma practice and this interest and enthusiasm, this joy, means that when we sit down and meditate we enjoy our practice even if we're not calm, even if we're not blissful, we enjoy the work that we're doing because now we've got the tools to work with the greedy mind, with the agitated mind, with the restless mind, with the sleepy mind, because we've been practising and we know that the mind is like this, changeable, uncertain, *dhukkha*, suffering, not in my control. So we work with the conditions whatever they are, and as we do this, more and more, our mind does become more peaceful, more tranquil, there's more clarity and more strength.

So we've able to experience moments of peacefulness, moments of concentration and to continue to develop the practice to the point where our meditation becomes a source of joy, of happiness in our life, we actually love to meditate, and when we meditate we feel great, and we take that feeling with us into the world. And we change the world. Even the most difficult circumstances, are just difficult circumstances. The mind which deals with difficult circumstances is still bright, is still joyful, is still buoyant. Things that seemed problems before are just the way things are, that's just the way people are, that's just what happens in life. We change the world. What the world is to us now is quite different, what we think is important is quite different, how we want to spend our time is quite different, what we aspire to attain in this life is quite different. We live with a much more equanimous and balanced state of mind. We cope with the ups and we cope with the downs, and we stay quite settled, quite peaceful, quite at ease.

This might seem very far away from where you feel you're at in your own practice and in your own life right now, but this is the promise of the path. In the particular analogy the Buddha gave of the hen sitting on her eggs, he said that if the hen sits on the eggs, she doesn't have to wish, "may they hatch safely". They will, whether she wishes or not. And the Buddha said that for one who wishes that their mind may be free of defilements and that they may be able to live at ease in the world with true wisdom and compassion, if they cultivate the path of practice, if they fulfil these 37 Requisites for Enlightenment, they don't need to wish, "oh may my mind be peaceful...may I be able to handle this situation that I'm in", it will happen naturally, whether you wish it or not, just like the hen will find that the eggs are hatching whether she wishes it or not. This is the promise given by the Buddha himself, but it doesn't happen just by wishing, this is how we finally twig to the fact that

Buddhism is a very active practice. The internal work is active, and once we've cleared up our own mind, then we are in a much better position to go out into the world and do what we can for the world. It's not that we just stay at home and look after ourselves but we look into the world and see what can I do, and can I do it in a way that is peaceful, loving and kind. If I can't do it in that way, then I'm adding to the angst of the world by going out and doing things with self-righteousness, with anger, feeling that I'm justified because it's a good cause. It doesn't matter what the cause is. So I encourage all of you to continue to practice to clean up the inner household so that all of us can act skilfully in the world for the sake of all beings everywhere, and may the merit of this teaching tonight help us all to attain nirvana.

Does anyone have any questions or comments? I'd be happy to try to answer some.

The question is – are the Seven Factors of Enlightenment sequential or can you take a shot at any of them at any time? This is actually a very good question because all of these factors, whether we're talking about the Seven Factors or the 37 Factors, the Requisites, they all interconnect and so that's the beauty of the Buddha's teaching, we see that it's like a multi-dimensional jigsaw puzzle, wherever you start you'll end up eventually meeting with some of the other parts of the path. We can also think of it like many different entrances to a walled garden, eventually you'll end up in the same place, but as far as working with them, they do have a sequential nature. For example if you think about faith, faith is a starting point for getting up and doing something which we call practice. So faith gives rise to energy and then we work out what am I meant to be doing. So we hear about mindfulness, and then we apply energy to try to be mindful, and the more mindful we are, the easier it is to concentrate, because concentration is mindfulness applied continuously to the meditation object. So the fact that we've got the energy to practice mindfulness means that we become skilled at mindfulness, which allows us to concentrate. When we concentrate, that kind of mind, which is more stable and has more clarity, is able to develop wisdom. So in that sense they are sequential, but we don't wait till we've got one perfect before we move on to the next. The Noble Eightfold Path, for example, we have to take up the various aspects and keep on working with them little by little by little. So it's not a matter of doing one, and then waiting till it's perfect to go onto the next. Once we take up one it will naturally, organically, lead on to connecting us with other aspects of the practice.

But we might take up one of the outlines that I've mentioned and use that as our framework. So we might take up the Four Foundations of Mindfulness or the Four Right Efforts and become familiar with them, read about them, get to know what they are and then start to work with them and see how practising the Four Foundations of Mindfulness, for example, how that helps us generate energy. It helps us to generate energy when we stay in the present moment, and don't allow the mind to run away to the past or the future. We don't waste our energy. So we find at the end of the day, if we've been mindful most of it, and kept bringing the mind back to the present moment, what we're doing while we're doing it, that we don't feel as exhausted as we normally do at the end of the day, because we've been keeping our attention in the present moment, not leaking energy by rushing off to the past or the future. So we start to notice the effect of doing these things, that effect we can only notice when we actually do them. Until we do them, they are just theory, someone else's ideas. When we do them they become an experience we can understand.

The question is – in the 37 Requisites energy is mentioned 3 times, is there any significance to that? Yes, I was thinking of speaking specifically about energy tonight but thought I'd give an overview. First of all, the fact that energy is mentioned a number of times, and mindfulness is mentioned a number of times, just as an indication of how important they are for the practice to take off and really develop. When we're talking about energy in Buddhist practice we're always talking first of all

about mental energy. In the worldly sense we think of energy as being physical but in Buddhism we know that the mind is the forerunner, the mind is the master, and if you are very tired but you really want to get something done, if it really interests you, or if there's a big investment in getting it finished, your mind will push through that physical tiredness to allow you to do it. But if you don't feel like it, if you can't be bothered, then even if you're feeling physically able, then you'll switch off. So in terms of the practice it's generating that mental energy, then you will be able to do the work that is necessary. So, whether you get up in the morning early enough to meditate, partly it's whether you're physically tired, but mostly it's whether you really want to do it. If you really want to do it, you'll find the time and the energy, physical energy. If you don't want to do it, you'll find a reason not to. And the mental energy, the Buddha said, finds its highest peak in the cultivation of the Four Right Efforts. That's where we're looking at what's wholesome or unwholesome in the mind, and removing the unwholesome, and developing the wholesome.

They produce energy. Doing produces energy. The more you do the practice, it's like building up muscles in the body, the more you do it, the more muscles, mental muscles, you build up. So the fact that you keep coming back to the breath even when the mind wanders away means you're strengthening the mind, even if it seems a struggle to keep on doing it. Just doing it is going to strengthen the ability to stay with the meditation object.

That seems to be the end, so I'd like to ask James to come up to make any announcements. And I'd like to make an announcement so maybe I'll do that first. I did say at the beginning that the nun's community is back and I'm it but that's actually not correct. I'm the only nun, for those of you who mightn't be familiar with the nun's monastery, but we do have 3 nuns in training, at various stages of training. We have Anagarika Elizabeth who's completed over 18 months on 8 precepts in the monastery, and she will be ordained into brown some time early next year. We have also 2 trainees who've been there 6 months on 8 precepts, and after 6 months they have the opportunity to decide whether they want to continue in the practice and staying in the monastery which means that they shave their head and start to wear more monastic-like robes and so one of our present trainees, Julie Lee [?] from Perth, will be taking that step in December, the 14th of December, Saturday afternoon, and you're all welcome to come along and observe that, participate. That will be on the 14th of December at 4 o'clock in the afternoon at the Nun's Monastery. So any of you who'd like to be present, you're welcome to do that.